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J 453
Case Study Essay
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Keeping Olympic Wrestling in the Ring

Summary

In 2013, the International Olympic Committee voted to eliminate wrestling in the Olympic games. Wrestling was fighting for a spot in the Olympics against baseball, softball, and squash. Although wrestling's presence has been greatly valued throughout the history of the Olympics, the sport has since struggled to maintain relevance among modern Olympic viewers. With this issue at hand, Ketchum Sports & Entertainment and CPOW created an increase in support among the wrestling community through traditional media and social media. With the values of the Olympics in mind, staging an international wrestling match between Russia, the United States, and Iran shown on national television was the ideal situation to rally support. This event was successful and resulted in the IOC reinstating wrestling to the Olympics.

Issues at Stake

With the IOC's decision to eliminate wrestling's presence in the Olympics, the relevance and popularity of wrestling diminishes. With the decline in presence of the sport, many stakeholders and organizations are more likely to retract their support. This also affects other organizations that are involved. With a lack of relevance, the reputation of wrestling is at stake, and also inhibits future stakeholders and investors within the sport lack confidence in investing in the future. A lack of media coverage and popularity is seen as both an internal weakness and an external threat to the organizations involved, and the sport of wrestling as a whole. Audience engagement can be achieved through the areas of audience interest, audience participation, audience feedback, a triggering event, and a special event, such as the international wrestling match that raised engagement and popularity and relevance of the sport.¹

Pros & Cons

There are many positive attributes to this public relations campaign. For example, creating support through social media can allow wrestling to continue to stay relevant and gain more supporters, even after the Olympic media coverage subsides. A strong social media presence can allow the sport of wrestling to gain followers and support in the off-season as well. Lastly, a social media presence can prove the

¹ Smith. "Strategic Planning for COnnunications." Routledge, 2013. Web. Oct.-Nov. 2016.

sports' relevance in future. For example, if wrestling's relevance is questioned in future Olympic games, a strong social media presence can be a solid foundation of quantitative support.

However, this one event may not be enough to prove the sport is relevant to stakeholders and other active organizations. Although being recognized in the Olympics is a successful argument for relevance, it may not be enough to prove financially stable and worth investing in.

Recommendations

I would recommend a more complex campaign that focuses more on creating long-lasting support. Although the goal of achieving the IOC's vote to stay in the Olympics was achieved, a more successful campaign, would also raise awareness to stakeholders and other organizations as an opportunity to invest or benefit in ways other than just media coverage.