



Research:

In November of 2024, the Premier Lacrosse League or PLL, announced that it would be launching the Women's Lacrosse League or WLL. The league is a professional women's lacrosse league that is played in the format of sixes, which is how lacrosse will be played in the upcoming 2028 Olympic Games. In this format, there are 6 players on the field that play end-to-end with no offside. The format is much different than the 12v12 style of traditional and college lacrosse, but it is meant to generate a more fast-paced and exciting environment.

The first season of the WLL featured 4 teams: the New York Charging, Boston Guard, California Palms, and the Maryland Charm. The teams were captioned by legends of the women's game, Izzy Scene, Charlotte North, Ally Mastroianni, and Alex Aust Holman, respectively.

Women's lacrosse is one of the fastest-growing female sports, gaining attention from lacrosse around the globe. The game showcases skill, poise, and athleticism while keeping an aggressive and fast-paced nature that attracts fans of all ages. The goal of the WLL is to continue to give women's lacrosse players a space to play professionally and grow the game at a younger level.

Shortly after the announcement of the WLL, Maybelline announced that it would be a primary sponsor of the league. "We were intrigued by lacrosse because it is one of the fastest-growing sports in the U.S. and one of the fastest-growing sports for girls in the U.S.," Jessica Feinstein, Senior Vice President of marketing at Maybelline New York, said. The partnership is an opportunity to showcase women's empowerment and growth. The contrast of a physical sport with a cosmetic brand provided the opportunity to display the duality of women in sports.

The inaugural season of the WLL took place from February 11-17th in Springfield, Virginia, in a round robin format, which resulted in the Boston Guard and captain Charlotte North taking home the trophy. While the games were thrilling and fast-paced and attracted a decent in-person audience, there was an obvious lack of awareness about the league from the rest of the lacrosse community.

Women's lacrosse has a plethora of opportunities to expand as it is an extremely neat and entertaining sport. Because of the growth in both the collegiate and professional world, faces such as Charlotte North and Izzy Scane have become recognizable outside of just lacrosse fans. But because the league had a severe lack in its ability to advertise and obtain awareness prior to the first season of the league, it didn't get the audience and attention it deserved and needed. The league is also in a very opportunistic position because of all its partnerships, in particular Maybelline. Maybelline is a well-recognized brand with a large female audience base. Leaning more into the sponsorship gives the WLL a chance to attract an audience that may not necessarily know about the league and lacrosse in general.

When you search WLL on any search engine, the WLL website isn't even on the first page of suggested websites. In class, we talked about the crucial role of search engine optimization, and clearly,

that is an area the WLL needs to fix and improve on. Its male counterpart, the PLL, however, is the first website that pops up when you search for the PLL.

On a more personal note, I am an avid lacrosse fan and have played the game since 2nd grade. I love watching both collegiate and professional lacrosse and usually know when all the games are. However, I was not even aware of when the WLL would be taking place and missed watching the first two days of play. I follow all the social media accounts and interact with lacrosse-related media on all platforms, yet I had no awareness of when the league was starting. When I discussed the league with my teammates or other girls who enjoy lacrosse, they were unaware that the season was already over. Because high school and college lacrosse take place in the spring, and professional leagues usually occur during the summer, having the league in February was an unknown time. Many of my friends expressed that they were excited for the league and upset they didn't get the chance to watch it, simply because they did not know.

Audience:

While women's lacrosse has the opportunity to attract various audiences, it should focus on two groups: young women in the age range of 10-25 and the Gen-Z sports community. Women's lacrosse is a growing sport, especially for young girls. The WLL wants and needs to be able to promote the success of young girls from elementary school to postgraduate. Not only this, but by focusing on this specific audience, the WLL will be able to encourage more young girls to play lacrosse and grow the community. This audience and age range of women also aligns with the audience of Maybelline, which the WLL could capitalize off of. By focusing their attention on this age range of young women, the WLL will have a greater impact on the women's sports community as a whole and obtain a reputation for empowering and lifting up females, especially athletes.

The sports community is one that is unique in its vast diversity of fans and athletes. But no matter who you are, fans usually enjoy watching more than just their favorite sport and are always looking for the next hot sport. More specifically, Gen-Z is leading the charge in the increase in popularity of women's sports. By producing content and marketing that specifically appeals to the Gen-Z population of the sports world. By producing content and marketing that specifically appeals to the Gen-Z population of the sports world, WLL has the opportunity to increase viewership and attention, all things that are needed to generate revenue and grow their brand.

Goal:

More than anything, the WLL needs to expand awareness of its brand. At the basis of PR is generating awareness for a brand or organization. If the public isn't aware of what you are trying to promote, there is never going to be any interaction. In our current media landscape, awareness is typically pushed through social media platforms. The WLL needs to expand its social media presence and take advantage of its consumer base while staying true to its mission of empowering women in sports and giving them the platform they deserve. By doing this, the WLL will be able to put the league on the map and continue to improve its viewership and increase support for the league.

Objectives/Implementation:

These are three developed campaign components that the WLL could implement in order to meet various SMART objectives that all strive to achieve the goal of generating greater awareness for the league.

The first objective is to increase social media following across Instagram and TikTok by 25 percent as well as improve their search engine optimization. Currently, across both TikTok and Instagram, the WLL has fewer than 100,000 followers. Other lacrosse organizations, such as the WLL, USA Lacrosse, and Inside Lacrosse, have double or triple the follower count of the WLL, some on Instagram alone. From this, it can be concluded that it's not a lack of consumer base because other lacrosse platforms have greater recognition, but rather again, a lack of awareness for the WLL. In order to achieve this objective, the WLL needs to constantly post on all platforms, including in the off-season. A lot of the time, accounts get attention when they are part of a combined post with ESPN or another large sports media platform. The WLL should look to post shared content with bigger accounts than themselves. In terms of the website, the website name needs to be changed in order to increase its appearance in the WLL Google search. Currently, the website is titled Maybelline Women's Lacrosse League, while it's important to acknowledge the sponsorship between Maybelline, that's not the title people associate with the league when they search for it on a search engine. The title needs to be changed to incorporate the WLL acronym, which is what people primarily associated with when thinking about the league. Whether this objective has been achieved or not will be evaluated by social media growth/data and website visit data.

The second objective is to increase viewership and attendance for the second season of the league by 10 percent. Creating an advertisement that will run on ESPN and ESPN+ over the course of this year is the best way to increase viewership. The ad will be sponsored by Maybelline and work in conjunction with the PLL. The ad should showcase all the unique and attention-grabbing aspects of women's lacrosse, such as high-paced play, eye-catching shots, and overall anything that is extremely impressive to the general public. The ad will, in particular, showcase familiar faces such as Charlotte North and Izzy Scene. The ad should strive to be mutually beneficial to both Maybelline and the WLL. More than anything, the ad needs to include when the league is, how to watch online, and opportunities for in-person viewing. The ad should hypothetically be prepared to run during the spring collegiate season to grab the attention of those viewing and let already established lacrosse fans know when the league will be. Another opportunity to run this ad is during the NFL season in the fall. Lacrosse resembles football in many ways, including their shared use of strategy combined with an aggressive nature. The NFL is growing in popularity among women, especially with their participation in flag football. Running this ad during the NFL season would be a great opportunity to increase awareness among football fans who may be interested in tuning in to a different sport or supporting women's sports in general. The timing aspect with the NFL is also crucial because the NFL season ends right before the WLL season begins. This objective will be evaluated by how much viewership and attendance increase during the second season of the league.

Finally, the last objective is to get the community involved by hosting 5-10 in-person events that showcase the league's brand and platform. Over the last few years, women's sports have finally begun to get the platform and attention they deserve. The WLL and women's lacrosse need to capitalize on this momentum in order to do the same for women's lacrosse. One way to do this is to collaborate with a women's sports league that is gaining unprecedented attention, the WNBA. The Caitlyn Clark effect was felt around the world and is often compared to the effect Charlotte North has had on the world of women's lacrosse. The two leagues have the opportunity to help each other grow in popularity and viewership. The WLL and WNBA will plan a pop-up street series that has appearances from both basketball and lacrosse stars. Street lacrosse is a smaller-scale version of the game with less equipment and fewer rules. These changes make it more accessible for those who may not have the resources or space to play larger-scale

lacrosse games. Similarly, pick-up street basketball is popular anywhere you go. The series would visit major cities, including cities where the WNBA and WLL teams are based. Players from both leagues would have the opportunity to play the sport they don't play professionally. These pop-ups would allow anyone who wants to come watch to view the games and even have a lottery system for people to enter to play with the star athletes. The series would also include giveaways sponsored by WLL and WNBA partners, including Maybelline, and showcase local small businesses and restaurants in the various cities. More than anything, the street series needs to generate a buzz and conversation around the world of women's sports and the WLL. By getting the public involved and invested in their home teams, hopefully awareness and support for both leagues will increase greatly. This objective will be evaluated by event turnout and data collected on opinions/interest in the league.

PESO Model:

Media that an effect and organization is classified into one of four categories, paid, earned, shared, and/or owned. It's important for an organization to utilize all four areas of media in order to have the best brand and organization it can be. In terms of the WLL and their media, the WLL has to focus its efforts especially on all four categories. Because the WLL is a new league, its brand needs to work to improve and use all four aspects of the PESO model to optimize brand awareness, which is their main goal.

In terms of paid media, the suggestion of running an ad for the league is an example. The WLL will have to pay for this ad, but they will be able to control every aspect of it. This includes the content/production of the ad, where it airs, and the overall timeline of the ad process. By being able to control their paid media, including a potential ad, the WLL is able to put out the exact message they want their publics to receive. Paid media, such as an ad, can be costly, but being able to dictate precisely what the media looks like in order to attract your target audience is worth the cost for a new company. Also included in paid media would be the WLL's collaboration with the WNBA for a street sports series. The organization is paying for this campaign and deciding what it will look like. However, paid media can directly lead to earned media. The WLL needs to make sure that their paid media, in terms of ads or events, generates enough publicity and buzz that journalists and other non-controllable media want to talk about the WLL and generate even more positive publicity. But because the WLL can't control what third-party media is saying about them, they need to make sure their use of paid media is a positive reflection of the organization.

Similar in that the company can dictate the message, is owned media. For the WLL-owned media is crucial in obtaining awareness and attention towards their brand. Owned media is anything that the organization owns itself, giving them the ability to make every decision about what type of content they want to put out. Owned media includes social media platforms, websites, or any internal communication within the organization. However, social media can also fall under the category of shared media. In this case, as previously mentioned, the WLL needs to focus on producing content that other sports organizations The WLL needs to focus their efforts on bolstering and improving their owned media in terms of social media and their website so others want to share the WLL's content and owned media on their social media to help the WLL reach a broader audience.

Conclusion:

The WLL has the potential to be great and become a landmark for a new era of women's sports. However, first, more than anything, they have to generate broader awareness for the organization. The

WLL has a great message, a thrilling sport, and a roster full of strong and independent women, a perfect storm for an organization to take off...as long as the public is aware of all those things.

The WLL needs to focus on increasing its social media presence, using its sports-world connections to increase viewership, and get communities involved in the organization. Through planning out a more thorough stream of social media content and renaming their website, the WLL will be able to achieve their objective of increasing their social media attention as much as possible. By creating an ad to run on ESPN for the league, they will work to improve their viewership for the next season. Finally, by running a WNBA x WLL campaign, the league will be able to get the community involved and increase their willingness to care and participate within the league.

The potential of women's sports has only scraped the surface, but by implementing SMART goals and utilizing earned, paid, owned, and shared media, the possibilities for the expansion of the WLL and other women's sports leagues are endless.

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“A collaboration with the WNBA to empower Women in Sports everywhere.”

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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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New York City, NY - April 15, 2025: Earlier this morning, the WNBA announced the establishment of a collaboration with the Women’s Lacrosse League (WLL) in the form of a series of street sport events across the country. The campaign, titled “Street Dreams: WNBA x WLL,” is designed to encourage young girls to get involved in athletics while increasing awareness for both professional leagues.

The campaign will begin this summer in June and run through October. The tour will hit 15 major cities that have either a WNBA or WLL home team. The full list of cities can be found on both the WNBA and WLL websites. Each city will have a visiting standout athlete from both the basketball and lacrosse world. During the event, each athlete will have the opportunity to play a street-style game of whatever sport they don’t professionally play.

Caitlin Clark, one of the founders of the series, said, “I am thrilled at the opportunity to collaborate with such a fast-growing sport. Lacrosse has always piqued my interest, and having the chance to visit cities while promoting young girls to try a new sport is really the dream for any professional athlete. I have some great friends in the WLL and I can't wait to start the tour and for the world to see just how intense and entertaining women’s sports are.”

While professional athletes will be participating, there are also multiple opportunities for the public to join in on the street fun. If attending the event, anyone can enter their name in a lottery for the chance to play with the professionals. There are no age restrictions, and all equipment will be provided, so just bring your sports-loving self. If the physical aspect isn’t for you, the event will also showcase vendors from crucial sponsors of the leagues such as Maybelline, Gait Lacrosse, Nike, and other athletic brands. On top of that, in an attempt to showcase the female power in each city, local woman-owned businesses will be selling food and other items during the event.

“Growing up playing both basketball and lacrosse, the opportunity to showcase the talented individuals in both leagues, all while building a greater sense of community, is exactly what I want for women's sports. We aren't all about winning, even though we enjoy it, but we want to empower all women, no matter what your dreams are,” said Charlotte North, captain of the Boston Guard.

Both the WLL and WNBA hope that by getting their feet on the ground in cities and providing opportunities for youth to try the game, both leagues will be able to increase their platform. The leagues' male counterparts, the NBA and WFL, have announced their full support for the collaborative campaign and have stated they “look forward to all the campaign will accomplish for women's sports.” Women's sports have seen unprecedented growth in recent years, but both the WLL and WNBA will not be content until women's sports have the resources to fulfill their unlimited potential.

