

PRTM 3420 Tourism Paper: NCAA World Series

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PRTM 3420: Introduction to Tourism and Event Management

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The NCAA College World Series (CWS) began in 1947 and was located in Kalamazoo, Michigan. It would stay there for another year, until moving to Wichita, Kansas. Then, the following year the NCAA moved the tournament to Omaha, Nebraska. Since moving the event to Omaha, the event has exploded in popularity and is one of the premier sporting events held in the United States today. Many attendees from across the United States make the journey to Omaha annually. Attendees travel to Omaha for this event for many reasons; For some it is a yearly tradition, while for others, they travel to Omaha because their team made it to the event. Regardless of how people got to the event, they all had an experience with the event. Our goal is to look at the overall customer experience of the event and analyze the data and see how we can create a better customer experience while collecting data about the customer's journey to the event and the customer's journey during the event.

Our destination is the College World Series in Omaha, Nebraska. The College World Series is the premier event held at the end of every season to determine the champion.. The CWS is played annually at Charles Schwab Field (formerly TD Ameritrade Park) which is a venue that seats 24,000 spectators with potential for expansion. In addition to hosting the CWS, the Charles Schwab Field is also the home to the division 1 team, the Creighton Bluejays (CharlesSchwab.com). The owner of the College World Series is the NCAA, as they obtain all revenue generated from this event. While the NCAA owns the CWS competition, the City of Omaha and the Metropolitan Entertainment and Convention Authority of Omaha (MECA) jointly own Charles Schwab Field (MECA OMAHA,2019).

Major Players

There are a few major players that help promote and sustain the CWS. The first major players are the owners of the attraction, which as mentioned above is the NCAA. Then the City of Omaha and MECA who jointly own Charles Schwab Field. The next major players are partners and sponsors associated with the CWS. The primary sponsor of the CWS is MECA, a non-profit organization that builds and manages public event spaces and venues in Omaha, Nebraska. Two other associated partners of the CWS are the CHI Health Center and The RiverFront, which is a community project to revitalize the area around Omaha. Finally, the last major player of the CWS is the NCAA. Without the NCAA this event would not exist because the event is a championship event for the NCAA. Also the NCAA is a major player in this event because they bring the most capital to the table to use for event planning, enhancing customer experiences, and promoting the event locally and nationwide.

The Customer Journey

The customer journey consists of the steps taken in order to make the CWS experience happen, also known as “The Road to Omaha”. It can be divided into 5 sub categories that define the moments that create a tourism experience: dreaming, planning, booking, experiencing, and sharing. Each of the five customer journey moments is broken down into three more sections: stages, steps, and touchpoints. The stages of the customer journey broadly describe what the customer is thinking at each of the journey stages, and in general where and whom they might speak with to facilitate a reservation or complete an action. The steps of the customer journey goes into more detail about which sources, or organizations the customer may use to complete each of the five stages. The journey touchpoints are specific sites, organizations, or individuals

the customer will interact with in order to fulfill and accomplish each of the five stages. Each of the five customer journey moments have their own characteristics, but together they make it possible for consumers to enjoy their journey and overall experience at the CWS from start to finish.

Customer Journey Stages

Dreaming Moments

Customers are bound to use the NCAA site as a primary source of information when they are dreaming and thinking about attending the College World Series. Customers are able to use sports channels on tv and other platforms like Youtube to keep up with games and to see what the experience would be like.

Planning Moments

Customers are able to use Google to look up information on the attraction and the host city. They can use this information like what restaurants are in the area, museums, hotels, etc, to better decide on travel dates and times.

Booking Moments

Customers can use various platforms like Expedia, Kayak, and Google Flights to book travel accommodations at a fair price. Customers can also book tickets to the event through sites like Ticketmaster, SeatGeek and others.

Experiencing Moments

Customers are likely to interact with local businesses by visiting attractions and restaurants before and after the events of the College World Series.

Sharing Moments

Customers can share their experiences via social media and include the CWS hashtag to promote the event. The CWS is an annual tradition that continues to live on through people sharing their experiences with friends and family.

Customer Journey Steps

Dreaming Moments Steps

Interaction through media outlets such as websites or Social Media, Exposing customers to the event. In the case of the CWS, customers can see advertisements and news articles about the event, sparking their interest to travel there.

Planning moments steps

Initial interaction and communication with travel and hospitality companies/organizations such as hotels, airlines, restaurants, etc. In the case of the CWS, customers interact with travel intermediaries to see what accommodations and transportation is like around the area of the event.

Booking Moments Steps

Interaction through travel intermediaries to book flights, accommodation, and other experiences at the destination. Customers confirm the timeline of their travel itineraries and officially book hotel rooms, restaurants, and flights into Omaha, if applicable.

Experience Moment Steps

Customers are on location and begin their physical experience at their destination of choice. In the case of CWS, customers will be able to explore the city of Omaha, time allowing, in addition to attending the baseball games and corresponding events at the CharlesSchwab Field area.

Sharing Moments Steps

After the main event, customers reflect on their experience, and share it through social media outlets to their friends. By doing so, customers not only share their own experience(s), but are able to create core memories and even inspire others to make their own journey to Omaha for the CWS.

Customer Journey Touchpoints

Dreaming Moment Touchpoints

During the dreaming moments, the customer consumes information about the CWS through social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook. Most information being consumed through these platforms are commercials or advertisements about the CWS that sparks an interest to attend the event.

Planning Moment Touchpoints

During the planning process, it is important to gather as much and as accurate information as possible prior to departure to ensure that consumers are getting the best deals that

work for them. Review sites, such as Yelp and TripAdvisor, are used in the process when selecting which locations fit best into the consumer's itinerary and budget.

Booking Moment Touchpoints

Similar to the sites used during the planning process, booking sites provide information that allows consumers to compare packages between companies to find and select the best fit. Consumers are likely to use the following sites to compare and book accommodations and travel: Google Flights to easily compare airlines and pricing, Open Table to see availability and reserve a table at restaurants, sites like Kayak and Expedia to see recommendations in the Omaha area and an overview of all pricing categories (can be used for flights, hotels, rental cars), and of course the customer can find information regarding dates, times, tickets, and local events through the CWS and City of Omaha websites.

Experiencing Moment Touchpoints

With the CWS being a sports event, the main attraction is the Charles Schwab Field / stadium. Before and after the customer's selected game, they will be interacting with various forms of transportation ranging from airplanes for those coming from out of state, cars for those who drive themselves, city and rideshare services such as taxis and uber/lyft, and/or city of Omaha public transportation such as the Omaha Rapid Bus Transit (ORBT) and Heartland B-cycle which is a municipal bike sharing system) (NCAA.com, 2022, see also Parking, 2022). In addition to modes of transportation, customers will be interacting with the local business in the surrounding area including local restaurants, museums, hotels, and other attractions.

Sharing Moment Touchpoints

Once the customer experience has come to a close, it is not only a time for reflection, but for the customers' to share their thoughts and experiences with friends and family. Customers are able to share their CWS experience not only by talking face to face with friends and family, but posting on social media sites such as Instagram and Facebook.

Marketing & Communications

Marketing & Communications

Alongside its many partners living in the twenty-first century, the NCAA CWS has multiple social media outlets to spread the word. Our main target market that we focused on are young adults ranging 18-35 years old, which are a prime demographic for actively using modern social media platforms in addition to traditional advertising methods such as tv, radio, and newspaper.

The primary form of contact and source of information about the event/destination can be found through their website. Other professional channels of social media include Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The CWS does not have its own YouTube channel, however, clips and associated content can be found via the channels of the NCAA and ESPN. In addition to social media platforms hosting information about the event, other forms of communication include local, regional, and national television channels and stations such as KETV 7 - Omaha, 1011 Now, Fox24 kptm, and ESPN. 2019 saw the most watched baseball game on ESPN for the year, which was the match between Vanderbilt and Michigan. CWS related events and post game details can also be found in the daily and sports sections of various newspapers such as the Omaha World-Herald, The Daily Record, and any national newspaper.

Data & Figures

Pricing

Similar to other sporting events, tickets for a CWS game vary depending on a variety of factors such as which area of the stadium the seats are located, annual box seats/general admissions, day of the week, single ticket vs package deal, etc. The lowest single day tickets start around \$13 and go all the way up to just shy of \$2,000 for the inclusive and specialty packages; there is a ticket for everyone wanting to enjoy the CWS experience. The ticket purchasing process can be completed through the NCAA site for single day tickets, and a third party site, *OnLocation*, is used to facilitate the purchase of the package deal tickets.

Attendance

Sports fans' eagerness to attend their favorite sports match and support their team(s) did not decrease in the slightest in the face of the global pandemic. This includes many different types of attendees, from annual returners to the event to first timers. Many annual returners usually are customers who attend this event yearly out of tradition. While on the other hand, many first time customers to the CWS are attending the event because their team is in the event. According to an article posted in the Omaha World-Herald, "The 2021 series has had an average of 22,396 per game through Monday's game, the highest since 2013. Through 14 sessions, that brings the total to 313,537. With the CWS championship series going to a third game, the total attendance record is likely to be broken. That number, 357,646, was set in 2017 over 16 games" (Keeler, 2021). If the 2021 season is any indication, the attendance levels of the CWS will continue to pack the stands.

Revenues

Over the course of the past decade, the CWS total revenues have increased by nearly \$2 million. The reported total revenue back in 2011 is \$6,403,220 with a total functional expense of \$5,670,177, compared to a total revenue of \$8,319,455 and a total functional expense of \$7,873,495 in 2019 (Tigas, M., & Schwencke, K., 2021).

Negative Economic Impacts

The negative economic impacts of the CWS are seasonality in employment, and the lack of revenue generated in the region after the event. The College World Series takes place in the 2nd and 3rd week of June annually. Since this event only lasts two weeks, naturally there are going to be temporary and seasonal jobs to staff the event. The seasonal nature of the event often leads to employees being laid off. All of these people being unemployed at one time hurts the local economy because many rely on the local or national government's unemployment stipends. The other negative economic impact is the lack of revenue generated after the event is done since the CWS attracts such a high volume of visitors and tourists, so it makes sense that they bring an influx of cash with them to spend in the region and generate revenue. However, when the event ends, the large influx of revenue stops, and some businesses can be affected severely by this.

Positive Economic Impacts

The overall economic impact of the NCAA CWS has significantly increased from \$63,700,00 in 2014 to \$88,300,000 in 2019. In addition to maintaining a steady revenue and profit margin, the CWS has created over 1,000 year round jobs with total wages and salaries approaching \$29 million, compared to just under 800 jobs back in 2015.

An estimated 70% of attendees come from outside of Nebraska with the leading 5 states being Texas, Michigan, Arkansas, Alabama, and Tennessee. This is a significant rise from only about 12 percentage points from 2010. The College World Series of Omaha Inc. conducted a

research project about the economic impacts of the CWS and they found that types of businesses that were impacted the most by the event were bars, restaurants, hotels, and entertainment and recreation. They also found for bars and restaurants alone, the 2019 Men's College World Series contributed \$6.5 million in wages. This isn't the only benefit for locals however. According to the research project by The College World Series of Omaha Inc, the growing number of visitors from other states helped contribute a total of \$8.7 million dollars in local and state tax revenue from the event. The locals also helped contribute to the success of the College World Series too. They had many local contributors like Bankers Trust, Charles Schwab, Fiserv, and many others. All of these contributors helped with efforts for the most recent CWS.

Outside of the field, the CWS of Omaha, Inc's annual grant program has donated upwards of \$5,000,000 to area baseball and softball groups since 1973; there is also active participation with local organizations and outreach programs such as the City of Omaha Parks Department, Omaha Parks Foundation, Police Activities for Community Engagement (P.A.C.E.), and Omaha Public Schools.

The top five attractions visited by CWS attendees include the Old Market, Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo, the Capitol District, the Joslyn Art Museum, and the Durham Museum (CWS.com, 2022)

There would be no CWS without a continuous stream of new and upcoming talent, which is why the CWS proudly hosts various youth tournaments. Two of the largest events include the Triple Crown SlumpBuster which brought in enough attendees to stay in over 36,000 rooms over 42 hotels, and the Battle of Omaha which was smaller but still brought in enough people to use over 5,000 rooms across 34 hotels. It was estimated that over 41,000 rooms were used in 2019 alone (CWS of Omaha Inc., 2022).

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