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## Bowling Green High School Branding Plan

Michael Wenig  
mwenig@bgsu.edu

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Bowling Green High School Branding Plan

Michael A. Wenig

HONORS PROJECT

Submitted to the Honors College at Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for graduation with

UNIVERSITY HONORS

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor  
J. Lucy Lee, School of Human Movement, Sport, & Leisure Studies

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor  
Ruth White, Marketing

A trend racing throughout high schools all across the nation precludes athletic departments from developing a healthy atmosphere at athletic contests. All across the nation, high school students are losing interest in their school's major athletic teams such as the football team and men's basketball team. The Bowling Green High School athletic department is not free from this crippling trend. Upon visiting several Bowling Green High School boys' basketball games, it became apparent that the student section and fan interest in the games is extremely poor in the way that not many fans attend the games. The following contains an overview of the Bowling Green High School athletic department as an organization and as a brand, and a marketing plan with campaign suggestions that aim to strengthen the Bowling Green High School athletic department brand.

Literature plays an important function in the creation and validity of the marketing plan. Marketing, promotions, and brand management are now considered monumental in importance regarding a business, company, or a product on becoming known to the public, and gaining consumers to actually consume the product. In the case for the Bowling Green High School athletic department, this business requires fans to buy tickets and apparel to help support and sustain the athletic department and generate loyal consumers who will repeatedly come back to their product. Previous research by Achouri and Bouslama (2010) and Khan (2010) play a significant role in developing this marketing plan as they tie together the foundation for what directions and ideas are given to the athletic department. Khan and Achouri and Bouslama both give insight about how a match between consumers' perceptions and a brand creator's perceptions of a brand are very beneficial for that brand. These articles drive most of the reasoning behind the value of having a product brand where both the consumers and the product creators align in their vision of the brand.

**Overview of the Bowling Green High School Athletic Department**

The Bowling Green High School athletic department is part of the Bowling Green City School District. The school district is located in Bowling Green, Ohio, and serves the Bowling Green community. Enrollment in the high school is generally around 1,000 students each year. The high school offers a variety of programs for students including athletics, arts, sciences, and music. The athletic department is comprised of twenty-three separate athletic teams, in which an average of over four hundred students participate each school year.

The SWOT analysis takes a look at the organizations strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that it faces (Table 1). The SWOT analysis offers an in depth look at the overall health of the Bowling Green High School athletic department. As noted in Table 1, the athletic department has a large number of strengths to it that add value to the brand.

Table 1. SWOT Analysis of Bowling Green High School Athletic Department

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large student body</li> <li>• Community support</li> <li>• 400+ student athletes</li> <li>• Skilled coaches</li> <li>• High school campus located in town</li> <li>• Centralized athletic fields</li> <li>• Long tenured coaches</li> <li>• Strong faculty support</li> <li>• Committed coaches</li> <li>• Twenty-three sports</li> <li>• Centralized grades k-12 in one school</li> <li>• High number of student athletes despite play to play</li> <li>• Strong traditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of funding for athletics</li> <li>• Pay to play for each season</li> <li>• Weak methods of communication</li> <li>• Old/outdated athletic facilities</li> <li>• Low levels of athletic success in recent years</li> <li>• Poor student turnout to athletic events</li> <li>• Chaotic internal atmosphere</li> <li>• Poor high school athletics website</li> <li>• No centralized information</li> <li>• Apparent disconnect between AD and community</li> <li>• League opponents have recent winning seasons (Perrysburg, Sylvania Northview, Sylvania Southview)</li> </ul>

*Table 1. SWOT Analysis of Bowling Green High School Athletic Department (Continued)*

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong traditions</li> <li>• BGSU is only a few miles away</li> <li>• Partnering with community businesses</li> <li>• Younger school and less established program at Perrysburg (NLL opponent)</li> <li>• Long drive time for some opponents for BGHS home games</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large schools in conference have more funding</li> <li>• Strong league opponents</li> <li>• Lack of interest in athletics from non-athletes</li> <li>• Perpetuating trend of disinterest from non-athletes</li> <li>• A trend of losing seasons</li> </ul>

This marketing plan attempts determine how the brand of Bowling Green High School athletics can be strengthened so that more consumers identify with and develop loyalty to the athletic department and the teams that comprise it. The benefit of a stronger consumer environment will lead to a higher number of fans to support the athletic teams that comprise and drive Bowling Green High School athletics. The starting point is to determine what we are trying to accomplish, and the first step is to answer the question, “What is the intended brand identity as constructed by the organization, and is it being effectively perceived by target consumers?” This question is important because it gives direction to the goal of this marketing plan, which is to strengthen the brand of Bowling Green High School athletics. This first question helps us establish a base which is to identify what the brand of the athletic program is. Then we can determine what consumers and the target market think the brand of the athletic program is. Once we have answered these questions, we can look for similarities and differences between what the two groups think the athletic department brand is which will dictate how we can best strengthen the brand with suggestions and directions.

### **Method**

Having first determined what question to start with, the next step consists of finding the best method to answer the question. After considering what needed to be known to adequately answer the first question, it became apparent that a questionnaire was the best method to take. It was determined the best way to answer this question is from a large and varied constituency, so that one would be able to ensure that one was getting a fair representation of all the consumers of the Bowling Green High School athletic brand. A questionnaire was created that was short and concise so that people who attempted to answer the questionnaire would not feel overwhelmed or discouraged by the thought of completing a lengthy and time consuming questionnaire. The researcher asked for consumers to consider the Bowling Green High School athletic department, and list and describe three adjectives that aptly define the athletic department as it is and not by what it is supposed to be (see Appendix A). The researcher asked consumers what adjectives they would use to describe the Bowling Green High School athletic department.

The questionnaires were administered to consumers of the athletic brand ranging from parents, student athletes, regular students, community members, and insiders of Bowling Green High School athletics because these demographics of people were deemed most representative of the target market for the athletic program. A goal was set of collecting fifty completed questionnaires all from different demographics of the target market.

To collect data from a representative sample of the target market, a variety of methods was employed. Questionnaires were collected by walking around several high school basketball games and handing questionnaires to willing participants who then proceeded to fill them out and hand them back. During halftimes and in between separate games, questionnaires were distributed throughout the hallways at Bowling Green High School with a folder and pens. The researcher approached people and

politely stated that the researcher was an intern and asked if they were interested in taking a questionnaire to aid the athletic department. These people were asked if they would mind helping the athletic department out by completing one of the questionnaires.

To gather questionnaire responses from students, an email list proc was utilized. The list proc was sent to the entire high school population through a unified Bowling Green High School address. After two weeks and after receiving low responses, another method was attempted to promote the questionnaire for the student population. Printed slips of the questionnaire were administered to students during the school day in a study hall period. Fifty-two questionnaires were collected in total.

Based on the initial questionnaire from sample customers a second questionnaire was modified for internal employees in the Bowling Green High School organization. The second questionnaire was very similar to the first, but instead of asking what consumers thought about the athletic department and adjectives that describe how it is currently, the researcher asked internal employees to the Bowling Green High School athletic department what the athletics brand was supposed to and intended to be. The target number of responses was dictated by the number of faculty that actually have a current say in the athletic department. Questionnaires were collected from the athletic director and the assistant to the athletic director of the athletic department. This second questionnaire served as the method to determine what the athletic brand is intended to be (see Appendix B).

## **Results**

### **Perceived Positions**

The results were varied regarding what people thought about the athletic department for the Bowling Green High School athletic department. The responses were a strong indicator to what the perceived positions of the brand are and what the intended positions are supposed to be as dictated by

the internal employees who generate the brand. The questionnaire results were categorized into three different subsections; Positive, Neutral, and Negative positions. Four higher themed images were derived of the results from the Positive subsection. The higher themed images include proud, hardworking, dedication, and growth and potential.

### Positive Positions

- Proud

This higher themed image from the Positive subsection of questionnaire results was one of the most prominent themes. 21.1% of responses directly related to the athletic department having a sense of proudness. Questionnaire results indicated that students, parents, and athletes are proud of their athletic teams and the athletic department as a whole.

- Hardworking

The theme ranked in at the second higher theme image after proud. 17.3% of responses directly mentioned hardworking as an adjective that described the Bowling Green High School athletic department. Several other responses such as honorable, passionate, perseverant, and maximum effort closely related to hardworking also show that questionnaire takers believe this to be one of the core theme that describe the athletic department. The athletic teams always give full and total effort in practice and competition, and they do not give less than all they are capable of.

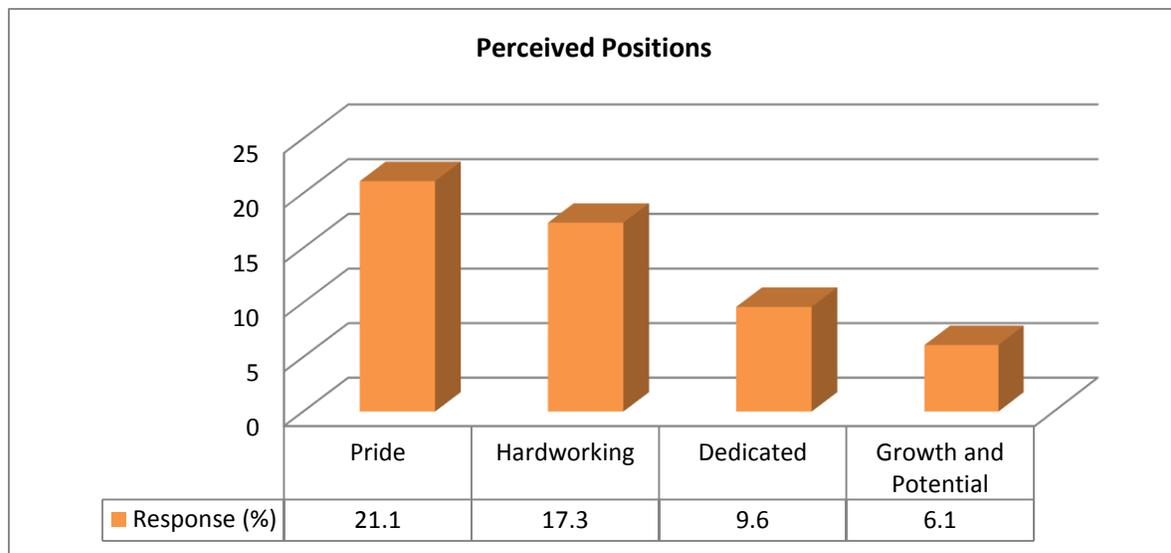
- Dedicated

A third theme gathered from the questionnaire results is dedication (9.6%). This theme became apparent as an outcome of the number of times dedication was directly mentioned throughout the questionnaire results and because of other nearby words such as competitive, disciplined, and growth. All of these words convey a general sense that the athletes for the teams and the parents

are dedicated to Bowling Green High School, the athletic department, the sports teams, and to competing at the best of their abilities. The athletes are driven by their dedication and they are dedicated to their goal of winning, achieving success, and competing, and they persevere through all and any setbacks that befall them. Dedication sets the tone for athletic progress that ultimately enhances the teams’ chances of success and victory.

- Growth and potential

Questionnaire results such as growth, improving, and maximum effort indicate that one overall theme that stands out that describes the athletic program are growth and potential (6.1%). After spectating a few games, or reading through a midseason win-loss column for Bowling Green High School will prove that at this point, their athletic teams are merely average. There is an overwhelming, collective sense that the athletic department and the teams within are sitting on the cusp of being really great and successful. The athletic department has a sense of being unpolished, but also rough, gritty, and not willing to go down without a fight. Figure 1 puts the results of the perceived position questionnaire in perspective.



*Figure 1. Perceived Positions toward BGHS Athletics*

These four higher image themes comprise the general and overarching sense and attitude consumers have toward the Bowling Green High School athletic department from the Positive subsection of questionnaire results. While a majority of responses were considered Positive, there were a number of responses deemed Negative or Neutral toward the athletic department in the minds of the consumers. One higher image theme, unorganized, was derived from these results.

### Negative Positions

- Unorganized

A large number of questionnaire results categorized in the Negative subsection were designated as either unorganized or disorganized. A large factor playing into these results stem from poor communication inside the athletic department, unestablished communication channels, and a consistent sense that the department scrambles at the last minute to finish tasks. A second factor contributing to a higher theme of disorganization is the lack of funds and poor funding teams receive. As a general sense, each team could use more funds whether for uniforms, supplies, or travel expenses. This persistent need for more funds plays into a large sense of questionnaire results reporting a theme of disorganization.

### **Intended Positions**

The second questionnaire was given to internal employees of the Bowling Green High School athletic department in an attempt to conclude the intended brand of the athletic department. The three most common themes denoted on the second questionnaire were proud, dedicated, and hardworking. These results clearly show what the internal faculty members intend for the athletic department to be. These employees desire for when a person walks into an athletic contest inside a Bowling Green High School venue, or if they were around Bowling Green athletics they would say the

whole program is dedicated to their student athletes, hardworking on the field and behind the scenes, and overall proud of the program and the teams.

**Position-Congruity between Perceived and Intended Positions**

Compared together, the results of the two questionnaires regarding perceived positions and intended position illustrate significant congruence. There are three congruent higher theme images between how the consumers perceive the athletic department and what the Bowling Green High School employees intend for it to be. Table 2 provides the higher theme positions that describe the Bowling Green High School athletic program based on the results from the two questionnaires. Intended Position displays what the brand image of the athletic program brand is supposed to be as provided by the internal employees at the Bowling Green High School who manage the brand. Perceived Position displays what consumers think about the Bowling Green High School athletics department brand and what defines it.

*Table 2. A Comparison between Intended and Perceived Positions*

Intended Positions	Perceived Positions
Proud	Proud
Hardworking	Hardworking
Dedicated	Dedicated
	Growth and Potential
	Unorganized

### Discussion

There are three positions of congruence between the perceived and intended positions including hardworking, dedicated, and proud. It is shown that the consumers are picking up and consuming the athletics brand as the school intends it to be. Since there are not major discrepancies between the higher theme image results, which signifies that to make the athletics brand stronger, managers and executives should avoid repositioning myopia. As a result of the brand consumers understanding and grasping what the people who created the brand intended the brand to be, the purpose of the marketing plan will be to take those congruent themes, and strengthen them.

The benefit of discovering the three higher image themes that are congruent is significant in the way that the Bowling Green High School athletic department. Another way to describe the overlap between the consumers' perceived brand and the athletic department's intended brand is congruence. The first way in which high congruence between the intended and perceived positions is that consumers are more likely to choose that product over another product. Khan (2010) claims that the self-congruity between what a consumer deems important and the aspects of a brand's personality enhances the chances that the consumer will choose that product over another. That is, when there is congruence between consumers and the product, the consumer will be more likely to choose that product. This finding is beneficial for the athletic department because the target market will be more likely to choose their product over other competitors, which eventually results in additional growth of people watching and attending their athletic teams compete and in generation of more revenue.

Secondly, high congruence between brand creators and consumers bodes well for the creators in the way that consumers identify with the product more. The nature of the brand created by the Bowling Green High School athletic department is unique, and it does not conform to the typical laws that other products follow. Unlike a product that can be consumed multiple times again, an athletic

event can only be used once. Therefore, consumers who choose to consume product such as an athletic event are more likely to consume it because they psychologically connect with it in some way. Achouri and Bouslama (2010) reported that brand personality is closely related to consumer personality. They state,

The consumer seeks certain congruence between the features of a brand's image and the way his personality is presented (Belk, 1988; Sirgy, 1982). In other words, the consumer would express his self-image by choosing brands the personality of which appears to him close to his own personality (Verette, 2008, p. 5).

That is, the authors are insinuating that consumers choose brands and products to consume that match their own personality. In the circumstance of the Bowling Green High School athletic department, fans and consumers choose to consume the brand because it is something they identify with. The target market identifies with a brand that is proud, hardworking, and dedicated. Achouri and Bouslama's idea is significant for the athletic department because it proves how crucial it is for the consumers to perceive the same images as it is intended to be.

Through positioning data analysis, the researcher tries to explore what the intended brand identity by the organization is, and whether the target consumers effectively perceive it. Two questionnaires have been created and administered to measure and gather data on what consumers perceive the athletic department brand to be, and on what the athletic department brand is intended to be by Bowling Green High School athletic department employees. In the next section, the researcher developed a marketing plan to strengthen the brand of Bowling Green High School athletics based on the results of position-congruity (i.e., proud, hardworking, dedicated).

## **Marketing Plan**

In the following section, the researcher will discuss an overview of the product, place, and promotions regarding the athletic department brand. Of the marketing mix, price has been omitted from the marketing plan. Due to the nature of high school athletics, a high school athletic department is not seeking to make large profits to grow their business. Therefore, price mainly from tickets and merchandise sales does not play any big part in the marketing plan. The marketing plan will be designed to help the Bowling Green High School athletic department enhance their brand in the higher themed images discussed previously—proud, hardworking, and dedicated. The marketing plan will be a guide and resource for the athletic department to follow that will give them detailed action to take that will make their brand stronger in the eyes of their target consumers. The promotions section of the marketing plan will contain first an overview of promotions in the athletic department currently, and secondly it will contain three promotional campaigns with each different campaign focusing on one specific higher theme image the high school can focus on.

## **Product**

The product centered on in the marketing plan is the Bowling Green High School brand. The product is what students, student athletes, parents, faculty, community members, and the entire Bowling Green community identifies with and thinks about when they think of Bowling Green High School athletics. The athletic program serves to provide high school students with an opportunity to compete in a variety of sports, some individually or as part of a team, and to gain valuable life experience in sportsmanship, competition, and hard work.

While part of the product that the Bowling Green High School athletic department offers is the opportunity for student athletes to compete in a sport, the other part of the product is the experience that fans interact with when they attend and watch the competitions. While parents, community

members, and other students sit at a basketball game or watch a cross country meet, they are consuming the product. The product is unique because it is consumed simultaneously as it is produced. There are several aspects of viewing a live sporting event that are considered as part of the product including promotions, announcements, concessions, parking, the venue itself, and several other ancillary factors.

The Bowling Green High School athletic department product satisfies consumer needs. Of the most obvious consumers of the product are high school students who participate in the athletic teams provided by the athletic department. These students have a need to compete, achieve success, and have fun while participating on an athletic team. The athletic department gives student athletes a way to engage in a competitive environment with teammates while striving to achieve success against an opponent.

Non-student athletes also consume the product, but it satisfies a different need for them. Students who are not athletes desire to support their school's teams and friends as they compete on the field or court. Watching a competitive sporting event provides spectators with exciting entertainment. While non-student athletes do not necessarily desire to compete, they desire to watch, to cheer, and to root for the team they feel psychologically associated with. These students vicariously want to feel the thrill of victory, success, great plays, and one way to achieve this is through watching a sport. These students consume the brand by spectating a sport, specifically one of the athletic teams associated with their high school. While they spectate, they are simultaneously filling and satisfying their need vicariously.

Other brand consumers watch the athletic contests to satisfy their own needs as well. Parents, Bowling Green High School faculty, and community members all have desires to support players, specific teams, and the Bowling Green High School. Even though community members are not part of Bowling

Green High School, they can still associate themselves with one of the high school athletic teams. Community members experience a benefit from viewing athletic contests in the way that they see the team they associate with win. Community members see students they care about succeed and give maximum effort to a task, and they also get to watch exciting entertainment at a low cost. These consumers, who comprise a large part of the target market for the Bowling Green High School athletic department, satisfy this desire and interest through spectating games.

The brand of the Bowling Green High School athletic department exhibits the higher image themes of hardworking, proud, and dedicated. One way the athletic department displays the hardworking higher image theme is through its athletic teams. Each team works diligently in their effort to win games. The teams practice five or six days a week during the season, students go through extra conditioning and practice in the offseason, and the athletes work hard to compete during games. The athletic department employees also work hard at making sure teams have technical details accounted for that allow them to play in games such as transportation, scheduling, and referee payments. The athletic department employees put in innumerable hours of work preparing for and executing games so that student athletes have a chance to participate.

The athletic department displays the higher image theme of proud. The athletic department from the internal employees to the student athletes to the coaches shows proudness in their effort and their work. Athletes, internal employees, and coaches all display their proudness by putting in hours and hours of hard work to help the athletic department be the best it can be in terms of success. These groups confidently wear Bowling Green High School logos on their clothing, and they talk frequently about the teams and how they are playing.

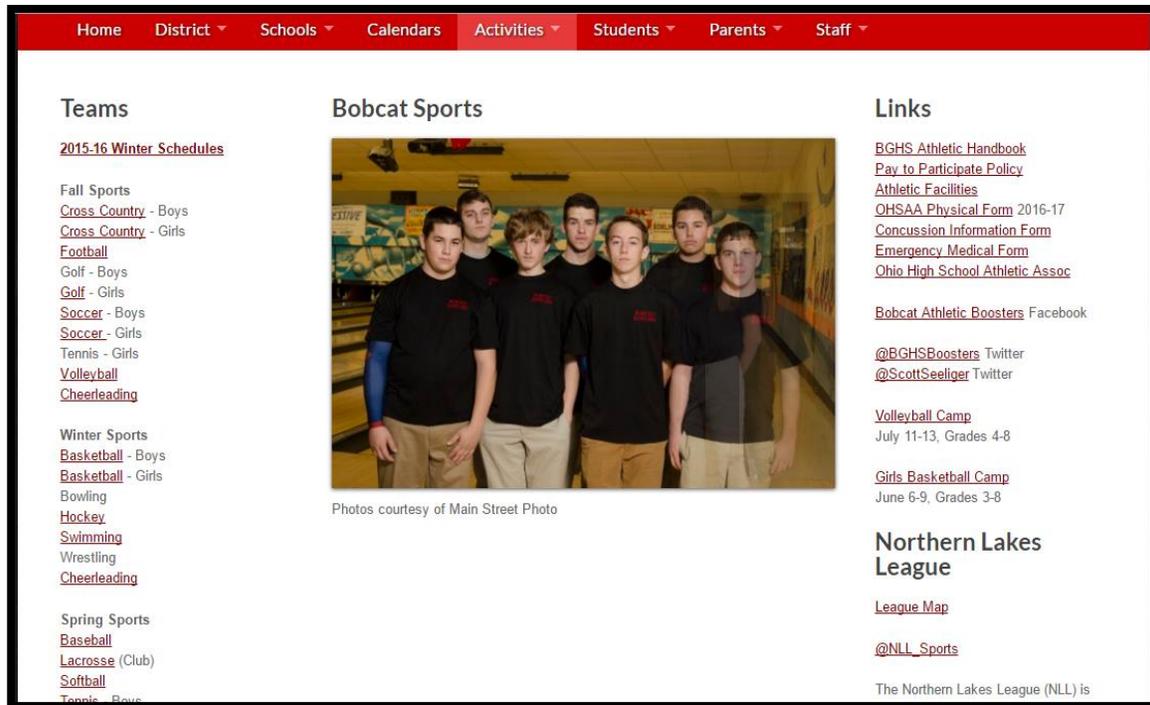
The athletic department shows dedication in the way that those who comprise the product, such as the athletes, spend time working at making the athletic department better. Each athlete is

associated with at least one team that comprises the athletic department, and the athlete makes the athletic department better by focuses on making the team they are on better. The Bowling Green High School athletic department displays the higher theme images of hardworking, proud, and dedicated throughout their product and brand.

### **Place**

Consumers of the Bowling Green High School athletic department consume, experience, and interact with the product in a myriad of ways. The main way students, parents, and community members consume the brand is by spectating athletic competitions for the teams that comprise the athletic department. Some athletic contests are at opposing team's campus sites, which requires fans to travel to a different town or city to consume the product.

Consumers can also find the product and experience it indirectly through media and online platforms. The Bowling Green High School has a large online presence through the Bowling Green City Schools website. The website offers information regarding teams, rosters, game scores, schedules, updates, and reviews of previous games. The high school athletics page on the Bowling Green City Schools website gives links to additional resources pertinent to the high school such as the Northern Lakes League website, links to the athletic department handbook, information about pay to play, concussion information forms, emergency medical forms, pictures of the athletic teams, and information regarding important dates. A picture of the athletic department web page is in Figure 2.



*Figure 2. An Example of a Web Page on BGHS Athletics Website*

While the athletic department is comprised of teams that play different sports, the athletic department also offers apparel merchandise with the Bowling Green Bobcats logo. The athletic department, and teams within it, offer team shirts for the sports. Fans can purchase and wear sweatpants, shirts, jackets, coats, hats, hoodies, bags, and other miscellaneous items that depict the Bowling Green athletics teams or the Bowling Green High School athletics logo. Consumers often look for these products at games or in local apparel business called Prep Sports on Main Street in downtown Bowling Green.

The product of the Bowling Green High School athletic department such as merchandise or tickets for admission into games are distributed in several ways. Tickets can be bought at the high school office, at the door, or at gas stations located throughout Bowling Green (Marathon, Circle K, Speedway, etc.) Apparel merchandise can be purchased online through the school website or at spirit

shacks at sport events. Consumers need internet access or simply to go to one of the athletic department's athletic contests to have access to merchandise.

The Bowling Green High School athletic department exhibits the higher theme images of hardworking, proud, and dedicated through the places that consumers experience and consume the brand and product. The people who comprise the athletic department including athletes, coaches, grounds workers, and janitorial staff all display the hardworking higher image theme in the way they diligently work to set up and prepare the athletic venue sites for competitions.

The athletic department exhibits the higher theme image of proudness in the way their venue sites are set up and how they look. Bobcat and paw logos are painted on all available surfaces including concession stands, basketball courts, safety pads, press boxes, signs, posters, and countless other areas throughout venue sites at Bowling Green High School. People associated with the athletic department take care of their fields, courts, and locker rooms because they are proud about their facilities and they want the facilities to look at their best when opponents come to Bowling Green High School. The website is developed with clarity and appeal that helps consumers enjoy using it. Those associated with the athletic department display proudness in the way that they want others to see and know the Bowling Green High School athletic department as one of the best athletic departments around the area.

While the Bowling Green High School athletic department displays the higher theme image of hardworking and proudness, the department also shows the higher theme image of dedication. Coaches remain dedicated to the program for years and years. One example of this is the Bowling Green hockey coach in that he has coached the program for over twenty-five years. The athletes show dedication to the athletic department over the course of their high school careers in that they compete on a team from freshman year to senior year. Internal employees prove their dedication through the

services they provide including the service they provide through the responsibilities as dictated by their positions, but additionally through the services they provide through volunteering and putting in extra work.

### **Promotion**

The following will consist of three promotional campaigns that the Bowling Green High School athletic department can implement that will strengthen their Intended Position of hardworking, proud, and dedicated higher theme images. The following section is an overview of what promotion looks like at the athletic department currently.

The process of communicating marketing messages happens in a variety of ways for the Bowling Green High School athletic department. The main product of the athletic department are athletic contests and games, so the information consumers want to know the most concerns are game schedules and game start times. Sport game schedules cover the surface of countless Bowling Green High School athletic department merchandise and products through several media channels. One way product information like game schedules are communicated is orally through announcements. Upcoming games are addressed over announcements during classes at the high school and games are announced immediately after one game ends. A second way the athletic department communicates schedules is through print media. Game schedule cards are printed and distributed, and schedules are printed on tee shirts, magnets, posters, newspapers, and game programs. A third method schedules are distributed and available to product consumers is online through the athletics website, and through social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook.

Promotion of the athletic department and athletic teams happens on a year round depending on what sports are in season. There is a new sports season that starts in the spring, fall, and winter each year which means there are new sport teams going to be competing consistently throughout the year.

The nature of how high school athletics runs requires year round creation and promotion of game materials like schedules, apparel, and other print media. Promotion and distribution of products before the fall season typically begins mid-summer, during the fall season for the winter season, and during the winter season for the spring season.

The athletic department has an advantage over other businesses (e.g., Bowling Green State University Athletics, Toledo Walleye, Toledo Mudhens, Perrysburg High School, etc.) in the way that they can directly market to high school students while preventing outside advertisements from interfering with their own marketing efforts. Bowling Green High School can post information and promotional materials throughout the high school that will garner a lot of views from the students, and at the same time, the high school can prevent other businesses' from promoting to high school students inside the high school if they chose.

The best choice of promotional activity for the Bowling Green High School athletic department comes in the form of print media. The small, foldable schedule cards include details about every sport team, and consumers can put the cards in high traffic areas that students will come into contact with frequently such as bathroom doors, around the cafeteria, or in the library. Another promotional strategy, and one of the largest identifiers of the Bowling Green High School athletic department is the bobcat logo and the slogan. The bobcat logo is a picture of a growling bobcat head with barred teeth. The school colors are scarlet and grey, and the school slogans are, "bobcat proud," and, "paws up."

The Bowling Green High School athletic department exhibits the three higher theme images – Proud, Hardworking, and Dedicated -- throughout its use of promotion next to the bobcat logo and slogan. The athletic department displays Hardworking in the way that the internal employees to the athletic department work hard to promote games to the students. The employees put in effort to promote the games in a variety of methods such as talking about the games, inviting students to the

games, and wearing clothing that supports the athletic teams on game days. Additionally, the athletic department displays pride in its promotions. Promotions include the catch phrases and, “Bobcat PROUD,” on promotional materials such as flyers, announcements, and t-shirts. The Bowling Green High School athletic department shows the image of dedication in their promotional efforts as well. Internal employees are dedicated in the way they promote and advertise high school athletic games. Employees put in effort to dress to spirit days, attend games, and decorate their rooms and offices in Bowling Green High School Bobcat gear. Throughout the three athletic seasons, the employees and the athletic director tweet, promote, and advertise games. The athletic director attends as many athletic contests as possible and shares pictures of athletes on social media platforms.

### **Promotional Campaigns**

The researcher developed three promotional campaigns to help the Bowling Green High School athletic department begin to strengthen the higher theme images of Hardworking, Proud, and Dedicated (Table 3). The first promotional campaign was developed to promote the Hardworking position by heavily marketing and promoting games to the high school students while they are inside the school. The second promotional campaign was developed to promote the position Proud by way of creating service projects for athletes to serve the community of Bowling Green. The promotional campaign is unique in the way that it can be modified to fit several other teams so they can carry out service projects throughout Bowling Green. The third and final promotional campaign was developed to promote the Dedicated position by creating an atmosphere that high school students enjoy so they come back and eventually dedicate themselves to the athletic teams. The three promotional campaigns give the athletic department a foothold and starting point to strengthen their brand position among the target markets.

*Table 3. A Summary of Promotional Campaigns*

Promotional Campaigns	Main Brand Positions	Target Market	Descriptions
<b>Student Outreach</b>	Hardworking	Bowling Green High School students in grades 7-12	Heavily market and promote athletic contests to high school students
<b>Athletes in the Community</b>	Proud	Bowling Green community members age 25+	Immerse athletes into community to do service projects that benefit community
<b>Incentivizing Atmosphere</b>	Dedicated	Bowling Green High School students in grades 9-12	Create a fun and exciting atmosphere that makes students want to come back over and over

### **Campaign 1: Student Outreach**

The campaign is geared toward students in grades seven through twelve in an effort to increase the number of students who attend sporting events. The campaign will reach out to these students through printed posters and flyers and public announcements within the high school buildings. The goal of the campaign is to show high school students the athletic department and the teams within it are hardworking so that the students will be more likely to come to sporting events.

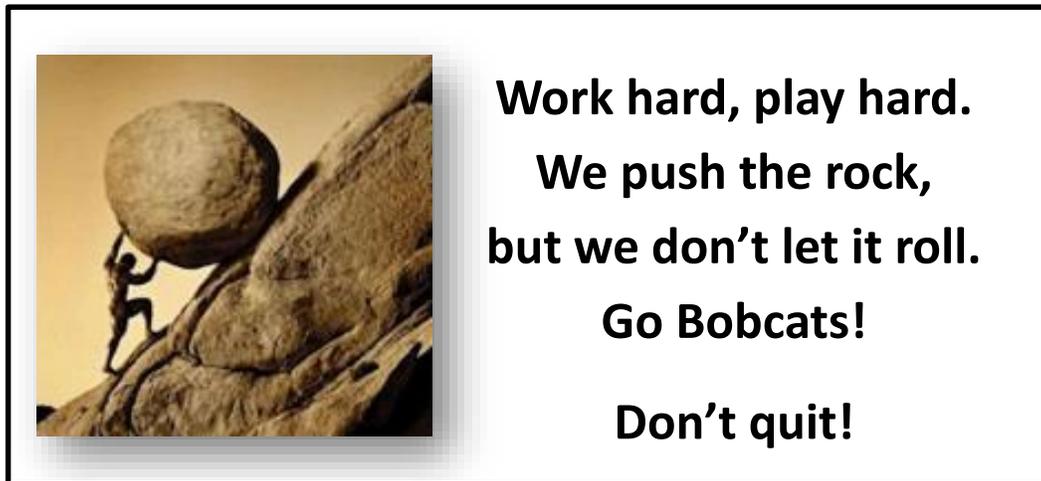
Target Market: High school students grades seven through twelve. The target market for this promotional campaign is all junior high and high school students regardless of involvement with several activities or no activities. The target market is only specific to all students in seventh grade through seniors in high school.

Communication channel: Posters, flyers, school announcements through the speaker system, and social media messages on Twitter. The method of communication between employees of the Bowling Green High School athletic department and the students in the junior and senior high school will be through

posters that can be hung up around the school and through public address via speakers during school wide announcements. Posters specifying sport team schedules, game day, and spirit rousing flyers will be distributed throughout the high school. Additionally, announcements detailing game days and start times will be broadcasted over the speaker system leading up to the days and the day of games so that students will hear of the events. The Bowling Green High School athletics department and the athletic director will tweet information about games leading up to the start, and the accounts will post pictures of players in action and live updates throughout the game.

Goal: The marketing goal for the promotional campaign is to increase the number of students who attend Bowling Green High School sport events by 200% over the course of the next three school years. It is focused on giving the athletic department enough time to heavily advertise and market athletic events to high school students, with the intention that younger students, mainly freshmen and sophomores in the senior high school, will start to attend games so that by the time they are upperclassmen they will consistently support the high school athletic teams by attending games.

The overarching objective of this promotional campaign is to bolster the idea that Bowling Green High School athletics are hardworking and tough. This can be achieved by developing posters that are hung around the high school that depict the team being advertised as tough whether the team members stand in a menacing pose or the words on the flyers portray toughness and grittiness (Figure 3).



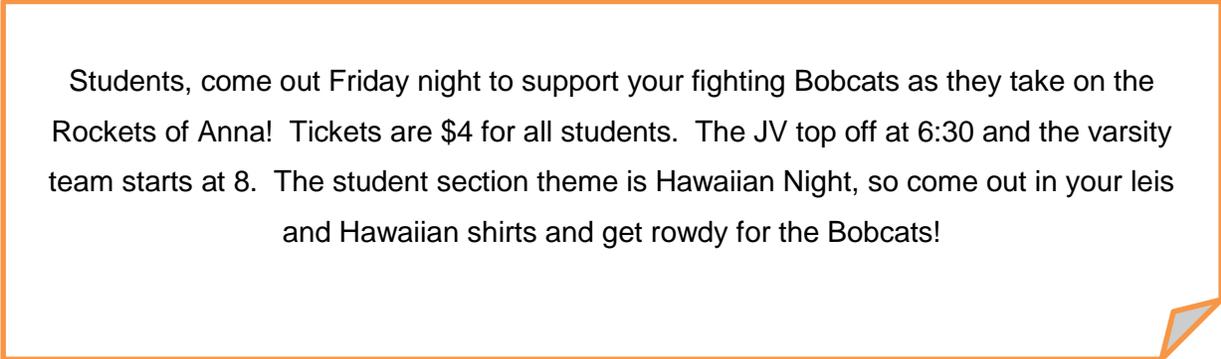
*Figure 3. An Example of Hardworking in Promotional Flyer*

Promotional Mix: The promotional mix will consist of advertising. The goal is to create an environment in the high school so that students will hear about an athletic event several times before it happens. They will be exposed to the date, team, and time and any other necessary details that will properly inform them of the athletic event. Advertising will consist of print materials and public address announcements, and tweets (see Table 4).

*Table 4. Samples of Tweets from BGHS Athletic Director that Advertise Athletic Contests*

Example Tweets from BGHS Athletic Director			
Boys Tennis heads into NLL Championships tomorrow@BGSU on a roll after big win vs Cent.Cath. Good luck boys! #Bobcatproud	Messenger and Ray are 6-4, 6-4 winners vs Anthony Wayne #bobcatproud	Preston serving against the cold, wind, and Anthony Wayne. #bobcatproud	Bobcat Baseball beats A-W 5-4 in 8 innings. Schaller drives in winning run and is winning pitcher #bobcatproud

The promotion is intended to be carried out through flyers and posters that will be hung throughout the Bowling Green High School, and specifically crafted announcements that can be broadcasted through the public address system. An example of a public address that can be broadcasted before a boys basketball follows in the Figure 4.



Students, come out Friday night to support your fighting Bobcats as they take on the Rockets of Anna! Tickets are \$4 for all students. The JV top off at 6:30 and the varsity team starts at 8. The student section theme is Hawaiian Night, so come out in your leis and Hawaiian shirts and get rowdy for the Bobcats!

*Figure 3. Example of a Public Address at the High School for a Boys Basketball Game*

### **Campaign 2: Athletes in the Community**

The campaign is constructed to immerse the Bowling Green area community with service projects carried out by student athletes. This is one way of Public Relations, the practice of managing the spread of positive information and relationships between public and the organization. The goal of this campaign is to put the athletes in position where they benefit the community through service so that the community members of Bowling Green develop proudness in the athletes and the teams that comprise the Bowling Green High School athletic department.

**Target Market:** The target market for the campaign constitutes Bowling Green area community members who are age 25 and older. Age 25 was determined to be sufficient for the promotional campaign because of the fact that Bowling Green is predominantly a college town, and most people who are between the ages of 18 and 25 are college students. It will not be effective to advertise to this demographic because they will most likely be interested in the university athletic teams. This target

market ranges from single people to families, business owners, and community citizens that utilize public facilities such as the library, downtown sidewalks, or park areas.

Communication channel: The communication channel will depend on what type of project the student athletes participate in. In the case that a team does a project with a specific business, then the communication channel will be through telephone calls or face to face communication. Telephone calls and face to face communication are apt for this promotional campaign because it cuts down on miscommunication and it allows for immediate feedback. Another channel of communication between the athletes and a particular business' customers would require printed signs. If an athletic team were to do a service project that would aid a more general population, then print advertisements and flyers will be more ideal. Newspaper ads and flyers that would be hung around town and throughout local businesses would suffice as long as they were put into circulation with enough time for the citizens of Bowling Green to read them.

Goal: The goal of the promotional campaign is to immerse all Bowling Green High School athletic teams into the community by way of service projects that will benefit local businesses or the general community in Bowling Green. Each athletic team, boys and girls, will need to complete one three hour service project each season that will benefit a local company such as a restaurant or business, or complete a service project that will benefit the community as a whole such as planting trees, working at a park, or picking up litter alongside area ditches. One goal of this campaign is that students will start to "give" to the community, even if the community does not respond. Table 5 provides three examples of service projects that Bowling Green High School Athletics can employ to establish and maintain good relationships with community members.

The overarching objective for this promotional campaign is that consumers of the Bowling Green High School athletic department and the target market for this campaign will develop pride

for the Bowling Green High School athletic teams. The teams can donate plaques at the sites of their service projects that explain which athletic team carried out the service project. The plaques can state phrases that will evoke proudness such as, “Bobcat Proud,” or, “The Pride of Bowling Green High School.” Additionally, the Bowling Green City newspaper could feature an article and a picture of the teams who completed the service project. The articles can discuss how the athletic teams wanted to serve the community because they are proud of it. This promotional campaign’s goal is to start to foster proudness for the Bowling Green athletic teams where there might not have been proudness before.

*Table 5. Examples of Service Projects*

Service Projects	“PROUD” Strategy	Descriptions
<b>Tree Planting at City Park</b>	Proud will be addressed in this service project in the way that the football team will work hard at providing a benefit to the community, and the community will develop proudness in the team as a result of their desire and hard work to serve the community	The boys football team holds a car wash to raise funds to buy three saplings that they plant in city park. The boys can hold a car wash on one Saturday early in the practice season where people drive through and pay \$10 for a car wash. Then the following weekend the team can take all their earnings and go to a local arborist business and buy several trees and mulch so they can plant trees at the park.
<b>Snow Shoveling</b>	Proud will be addressed in this service project in the way that the swimming teams will recognize a need the community has, and they will work hard to satisfy that need. The community will see the benefit the team provides and they will be proud of the team.	The boys and girls swimming teams get shovels and walk down several streets in town and shovel snow away from sidewalks and driveways. The teams can pinpoint three blocks downtown and go out one afternoon after a heavy snow and shovel driveways for people. They can drop off flyers to houses and businesses that describe they are the swimming teams doing a shoveling service project.

*Table 5. Examples of Service Project (Continued)*

Service Projects	“PROUD” Strategy	Descriptions
<b>Roadside Trash Cleanup</b>	Proud will be addressed in this service project in the way that community members will see the benefit the track teams provide the community, and the community members will develop a proud affection toward the teams as a result.	The boys and girls track teams can spend a Saturday morning walking down the nearby county roads cleaning up and removing trash from ditches. One Saturday morning the teams can gather at a central location and spread out in cars and walk down roads picking up trash.

Promotional Mix: The promotional mix for the campaign will centralize around public relations and publicity. The Bowling Green High School athletic department and each athletic team will receive positive publicity in the community as they provide a service or benefit to the community at large. This campaign is putting the high school students to work in a way that will garner favor and potential interest from people who otherwise might not take notice of the team or the athletic department. The promotional campaign aims at putting Bowling Green High School athletes in the community where community members can see them carrying out a service that will benefit the community.

**Campaign 3: Incentivizing Atmosphere**

The campaign is constructed to create an atmosphere at boys’ basketball and football games that is fun, electrifying, and exciting so that students will be more encouraged to come to these games. The goal is to get students to associate with these teams so that they will be more likely to come out to the games and support them because of their own desire. The campaign will also create an environment in which the students who support the athletic teams are dedicated to supporting them and dedicated to being the best student section around.

**Target Market:** The target market for this promotional campaign is all the students that comprise Bowling Green High School in grades nine through twelve.

**Communication channel:** The communication channel for this promotional campaign will have so revolve around what methods of communication are effective in reaching a large number of the Bowling Green High School students. The three best communication channels to reach these students are print advertisements, Twitter, and announcements of the public address system. Printed flyers can be put up throughout the high school and in areas that all the students will see them such as the cafeteria, outside of bathrooms, and in the office. Additionally, a big banner inside the main entrance to the high school could be hung that promotes a grand prize giveaway at a specific athletic event. Twitter accounts for the Bowling Green High School athletic department can hold an active presence on Twitter by tweeting updates of games, players, and scores. Public address announcements promoting theme nights or giveaways at specific home games could be made to the entire high school.

**Goal:** The goal of this promotional campaign is to incentivize high school students to support the athletic teams through the utilization of theme nights, giveaways, and contests. The goal is to create an itinerary for the football team and men's basketball team. The itinerary will include theme nights, giveaways, and contests that will double the number of students who attend football and boys' basketball home games over the course of two seasons.

The overarching objective of this promotional campaign adheres to the higher theme image of dedication from the questionnaires. Ideally, students will start to attend games consistently, and they will then develop loyalty to the athletic teams and they will be dedicated fans that show up at all the games and cheer for their team to compete and win.

**Promotional mix:** The promotional mix for this campaign will mostly be advertisement. Students need to know that theme nights are happening, or that there will be a prize giveaway at a specific home

basketball game. This will be achieved through the print advertising described above. Additionally the athletic department will be able to promote the football and basketball team by promoting the giveaways and items that students can win through Twitter. Table 6 is a list of the boys' basketball team's home game schedule and a promotional campaign that could potentially work.

*Table 6. Boys Basketball Promotional Schedule*

Dates	Campaigns	Description
<b>December 10</b>	Red Out	Every student in the student section wears red clothing
<b>December 11</b>	Hawaiian Night	Students wear leis, Hawaiian shirts, and grass skirts. PROMOTION GIVEAWAY – one student gets to shoot a half-court shot to win a \$50 gift card to Jed's if they make it.
<b>January 11</b>	Grey Out	Every student in the student section wears grey clothing
<b>January 19</b>	Superhero Night	Students dress up like their favorite superheroes. PROMOTIONAL GIVEAWAY – one student get to shoot a half-court shot to win a \$50 gift card to Jed's (if it was not won the previous night) or a \$50 gift card to Buffalo Wild Wings
<b>January 22</b>	Red Out	Every student in the student section wears red clothing
<b>January 23</b>	Camouflage and Jort Night	Every student in the student section wears camouflage clothing and jean shorts.
<b>January 26</b>	Neon Night	Every student in the student section wears neon or bright colored clothing. PROMOTIONAL GIVEAWAY – One student gets to shoot a half-court shot to win a \$50 gift card. If the other gift cards haven't been won, this prize will be a \$50 gift card to Wal-Mart.
<b>January 30</b>	80's Night	Every student in the student section dresses up like it was the 80's

*Table 6. Boys Basketball Promotional Schedule (Continued)*

Dates	Campaigns	Description
<b>February 2</b>	Promotional Giveaway	PROMOTIONAL GIVEAWAY – Four students are randomly selected from the student section, and they each get consecutive turns at making a half-court shot. The first person to do so wins a Fit Bit.
<b>February 5</b>	Sweatband Night	Every student wears a head band
<b>February 6</b>	Red Out	Every student in the student section wears red clothing

### Future Directions

It is apparent that the target market for the Bowling Green High School athletic department perceives the brand of the athletic department as the brand is intended to be as determined by the athletic department. These results are good news for the athletic department because that means instead of completely repositioning the brand, this plan can focus on strengthening what is already in the consumer's mind regarding the brand. Some suggestions to strengthen the brand include increasing the number of consumers, partnering with other departments such as the music department, art department, and other academic clubs and organizations within Bowling Green High School, and revitalizing the atmosphere at athletic events to be more appealing to Bowling Green High School students.

### Final Thoughts

The marketing plan analyzes the Bowling Green High School as an organization and a product that holds values in the minds of consumers. This plan also extrapolates how it was determined what the perception of the athletic department brand is in the eyes of consumers as well as what the brand is

intended to be as put forth by internal employees for the athletic department at Bowling Green High School. Upon comparison of the results, a marketing strategy and three promotional campaigns were created to help the Bowling Green High School athletic department strengthen their brand through these strategies.

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Appendix

**Appendix A.**

Bowling Green High School Athletics Brand Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to gather opinions regarding the Bowling Green High School athletics brand so that it can be repositioned to strengthen and embolden the brand, and create a brand that is more identifiable to those associated with Bowling Green High School athletics.

What three adjectives do you think of when you think of Bowling Green High School athletics? Please provide a description of each adjective.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B.**

Bowling Green High School Athletics Brand Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to gather opinions regarding the Bowling Green High School athletics brand so that it can be repositioned to strengthen and embolden the brand, and create a brand that is more identifiable to those associated with Bowling Green High School athletics.

What three adjectives describe what the Bowling Green High School athletics brand is intended to be?

Please provide a description for each adjective.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_