

Know the Feeling: Marketing Campaign

Sebastian Diaz-Tafel

University of Colorado Denver

Principles of Marketing

Professor Randy Rovegno

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Executive Summary

“Know the Feeling” is a marketing campaign designed to reintroduce ESPN’s prime time football broadcasts to a younger, more casual audience. Instead of focusing on things like tradition, rules, and team knowledge, this campaign focuses on drawing people in with emotion, energy, and being a part of something.

The goal of this campaign is to raise awareness that ESPN is now hosting prime time NFL Broadcasts. Aiming to attract an audience that is younger and does not follow sports religiously. The idea is to make a message that makes intense sports like football more welcoming to a more laid-back audience.

The target audience is young adults aged 18-29 with a focus on first-time viewers and more casual fans. These are young adults who use streaming services mainly, are active on social media, and are looking to join for the “experience” rather than the more traditional viewers.

The angle of this campaign is to sell the feeling of the game rather than all of the rules and regulations. This campaign will focus on the more energetic moments and emotions, like game winning touchdowns, impressive catches, and audience reactions. Focusing on these moments and the reactions of the audience will help to capture viewers who don’t necessarily understand what is happening, but can feel the excitement and will want to join in.

The tone for this campaign is to be relatable, fun, emotional, and self-aware. Avoiding sayings that can be seen as gimmicky, and focusing on meme-style humor, and cultural fluency.

This audience is perfect to go after as they are under targeted by traditional sports marketing. They are not excluded but are looking for a reason to join in on the fun on their own terms. “Know the Feeling” gives them a reason to show up, feel included, and stick around.

Target Audience

The target audience for the “Know the Feeling” campaign is young adults aged 18-29, college students or young professionals, with diverse backgrounds. This demographic typically lives in cities, in dorm buildings or shared apartments. They mainly use streaming services than traditional cable and are constantly multitasking, whether working, or just on their phones.

These individuals are casual sports fans, or completely new to sports with no loyalty to a specific league or team. They choose to watch sports for the social aspect, rather than tradition or more technical knowledge. These young adults spend a lot of time on social media, looking at memes, viral moments, and being tuned into cultural moments. They prefer more natural content, rather than polished corporate campaigns directed towards their age group. This group values belonging over legacy and wants to feel “in on the action” even if they don’t understand it.

The target group mainly utilize streaming services like Netflix, Hulu, YouTube, or ESPN+. They are engaged more easily by short clips on social media platforms like, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. During games they typically are on their phones scrolling, while still watching together and have short attention spans. They are more influenced by content creators rather than game commentators.

This is a perfect demographic to target because of the fact that NFL viewership has been declining in younger generations (Kirschner, 2024). This group is also under targeted by more traditional marketing techniques which could be a reason for the decline in ESPN’s Prime Time NFL viewership by 5% from 2022-2023 (Kirschner, 2024). Leveraging less traditional tactics like social media is integral to reach this group with social media accounting for 62% of NFL engagement for fans under 30. (Kirschner, 2024).

Marketing Strategy

The strategy for this campaign is to focus on the most emotional parts of football. These moments include game winning plays, celebrations, and crowd reactions. The tone of this campaign is to focus on the hype around the game, rather than the more technical side. This matters as “Nearly 70% of fans say they watch sports for entertainment rather than technical knowledge” (Giorgio et al., 2025). The campaign will be loud, energetic, and relatable focusing on clips that feel like they were taken on phones.

The platforms to focus on for this campaign are TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts. With short attention spans and 77% of Gen-Z multitasking while watching sports (Giorgio et al., 2025), short engaging clips will engage them most effectively. ESPN+ can host longer content but promote through these social media platforms. Trending audios, memes, and internet challenges will boost engagement.

This campaign should partner with micro-influencers, meme pages, and creators like vloggers rather than just sports figures. Prioritizing creators that emphasize the idea of watching for the emotional factor will help push this message. These influencer campaigns deliver 11x more ROI than traditional banner ads (Mighton, 2020). Integrating pro athletes into these campaigns is important as well as “80% of Gen-Z fans follow pro athletes online and are influenced by what they post” (Giorgio et al., 2025).

Interactivity is key, using live polls, hashtags, and memes to make viewers feel involved. “About 1 in 3 of Gen-Z fans want interactive, behind the scenes content and athlete POVs” (Giorgio et al., 2025). Using stories and live streams to host communal watch parties or fan

reactions is integral as well as “61% of Gen-Z watch sports socially – even from home” (Giorgio et al., 2025).

Budget

The total budget for this campaign is \$4 million. Rather than using this on TV ads, this campaign focuses on social platforms, streaming, and creator partnerships. The purpose of this strategy is to maximize reach, drive engagement, and create viral cultural moments.

Social Media Advertising (about 1.2 million / 30%): Focused on TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts. CPM is about \$5-8 million buying about 150-200 million impressions.

Influencer and Creator Partnerships (about \$1 million / 25%): Working with micro influencer who have between 50k to 500k followers and meme pages, with a focus on creators known for humor, reactions, or sports content. Effective as influencer marketing generates 11x more ROI vs banner ads (Mighton, 2020). Their authenticity results in more trust and ultimately more reach.

Content Creation (about 800k / 20%): Producing raw footage like touchdown reactions, edits, and crowd shots. Focusing on making them look like they were shot on a cell phone. This allows ESPN to repurpose content across channels creating more long-term value.

Engagement and Optimization (about \$700k / 17.5%): This supports interactivity like polls, hashtags and watch parties. Supports analytics as well to adjust campaign performance in real time. This helps to maximize reach and adapt content to what is working.

Contingency (about \$300k / 7.5%): This is reserved for boosting viral moments, influencer reposts, or last-minute paid placements. This ensures flexibility without sacrificing consistency in the campaign.

ROI Plan

This campaign is expected to generate high engagement in young viewers, leading to increased viewership and ESPN+ subscriptions. Social media advertisements are projected to generate 150-200 million impressions, and influencer partnerships will further extend reach while reducing cost. Prioritizing platforms that Gen Z already use like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube will allow ESPN to avoid high-cost traditional advertising with lower impact. Real time optimization and shareable content allow for sustained engagement and adaptability, making sure every dollar spent continues to drive measurable results.

Creative Concepts

The “Know the Feeling” campaign is centered around raw, emotional moments that make football feel universal. The creative direction focuses on vertical, “raw” cell phone footage that looks like it was taken by fans. The goal is to lean into authenticity rather than polished ads. The tone will be high energy, self-aware, and emotionally charged, with meme culture integrated.

One concept is a hashtag like #TheBallisEverything, which takes football and treats it like more of a lifestyle. Videos for this would be like dramatic voiceovers by fans of plays, or videos showing fans drop to their knees or cry over successful plays. It turns the sport into more of like a religion, appealing to hardcore fans and people who want to be a part of something bigger.

Another concept is a hashtag like #BettingMyFeelingsAway, which captures more of the chaos that a lot of younger fans who sports bet feel. Showcasing videos of fans flipping out over missing their \$5 parlay, or content creators making skits about convincing their fans to make bad bets and showing their reactions.

Conclusion

The goal of this campaign isn't to teach new viewers about rules or player stats, instead it is to remind people why they watch, which is to feel something. By focusing on emotion over tradition, and creators over traditional ads, "Know the Feeling" engages younger audiences directly through their phones. It gives them a reason to care about something they would otherwise swipe past while they are on social media. This campaign doesn't just promote football, it invites new fans to join in on the exciting moments, celebrate the highs, and laugh through the losses. If we can pull this off correctly, this can become more than a campaign, it can become a movement.

References

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