

# Blurred Lines Define New Opportunities

One of the most frequent refrains from the stage at any sports conference over the last few years has been that sport is now firmly part of the entertainment industry.

And it's a fact that the lines between sport and the wider worlds of entertainment, lifestyle and popular culture are continuing to blur, driven by advances in technology and connectivity, in particular the rise of the smartphone. Behaviors, attitudes and habits are changing, creating overlaps between spaces that were previously seen as much more distinct.

That makes for a more complicated world for anyone in the business of serving consumers, but these overlaps, or collisions, are also creating new opportunities for sports organizations, major brands and everyone else operating in the entertainment sector.

It's that search for where new business growth can be found that is the rationale behind SBJ and sister companies Leaders in Sport and SportTechie joining forces to create 4se, a two-day event experience scheduled for New York next May, where the collisions between sport, entertainment, lifestyle and culture will be explored, dissected and debated.

It's also what Katie Survanche spends much of her time thinking about. Survanche leads the Human Insights team within Constellation Brands' Growth department. Constellation is the parent company of Modelo, Corona and an array of other beer, spirits and wine brands. In the fast-moving consumer packaged goods space, understanding, translating and anticipating habits and behaviors is fundamental, particularly as it relates to how people spend their time and disposable income.

Blurring of sectors, activities or "occasions" is on Survanche's mind, too. "We talk about this concept quite a bit because it's been quite disruptive to our category," she said. "Not just in the products that are out there, but the disruption to how people think about occasions. Since 2020, there's been a blurring of occasions which range from people vacuuming their house while drinking alcohol to people drinking non-alcoholic beverages at parties. Having a finer point on how we think about what occasions we have opportunities in is really important for our business."

The parallels are clear for sports organizations trying to engage existing fans and reach new ones. And the modern concept of fandom is a fluid one.

"There's also something about rebellion here," Survanche continues, "as in, 'I don't have to be pigeonholed into one thing.' There's a fluidity in society now which is also about the idea of pushing against whatever has been normalized, of pushing against the established norms of how you wear this clothing, how you express yourself, what you consume and when."

Survanche is one of a group of leading thinkers helping to shape and refine a major sports and entertainment trends report to be published in January as a precursor to 4se (pronounced "force") New York. And with sports and entertainment entities now targeting consumers leveraging fashion, lifestyle, music and sometimes even politics, the canvas is undoubtedly broad. "There are so many things going on, the challenge is how to bring them together in a really tight story," she said. "We see a lot of things — behaviors, signal, and patterns — that are almost orbiting around the same sun. That sun is a fundamental trend, and what we have to do is identify what that sun is and what human motivations created it."

To help make her point, she uses the example of wellness. It's an area on which Constellation is spending a lot of energy, as attitudes to alcohol shift. "We talk a lot about whole body wellness and this trend of advancing the definition of what it means to be healthy," she explained. "We used to define it more narrowly as calories in, calories out, but whole body includes managing your mind and connections. It's not just the physical aspect, it's the mental and spiritual and emotional connections — see the rise in more passive types of sport, like yoga. We've focused a lot on how we continue to evolve our business to meet people where they're going."

"But we know that with every trend, there's a counter trend — and here it would be indulgence, or 'goblin mode,' which is the newest meme about if it just feels good it can also be healthy; everything in moderation including moderation. So, we always look at both sides of the trend."

Figuring out precisely what consumers want and how they want it has never been more challenging. 4se New York in May aims to help show how by working more closely together with sports and entertainment organizations, as well as the brands associated with them, to solve the puzzle.

