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From the NBA to destination marketing: leveraging data, innovation, and technology

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About the Author



Lindsay Milne is a results-driven professional experienced in partnership strategy, marketing innovation, business development, and brand management. Originally from Manchester-by-the-Sea, Mass., Lindsay is a graduate of the Isenberg School of Management at the University of Massachusetts. She has traveled extensively across the US and internationally on various projects with some of the world's premier global brands including the NBA, NBC Olympics, 2K Sports, adidas, NIKE, Sperry Top-Sider, and Merrell among others.

Lindsay spent 10+ years in the NBA on the league and team sides in addition to holding roles with global footwear giant Wolverine Worldwide. In her time as Vice President, Marketing for the Minnesota Timberwolves and Lynx, she was named a 2015 nominee for Ad Fed Minnesota's 32 Under 32 award and garnered numerous industry awards. Under her leadership, she and her team were recognized as 2017 WNBA Marketing Franchise of the Year and won the 2017 IDEA GMA Best Overall Video Show award, a 2019 NBA Digital Innovator award, and a 2019 CLIO Silver award for the Timberwolves x Nike x Prince campaign.

In the spring of 2022, Lindsay was hired by Meet Boston where she now serves as Vice President, Marketing overseeing the organization's advertising, brand, content, digital platforms, and creative services teams. She currently resides in the Greater Boston Area with her dog, Walter, and her fiancé, Kevin

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Lindsay, how easy or difficult was it to transition from sport marketing to hospitality and destination marketing?

There has definitely been a lot to learn! Like any change in industry, there are nuances that take some time to adjust to and plan for. The marketing principles, though, in my mind, are very similar. On the sports side, we were consistently talking about delivering emotional transportation to our fans day in and day out – while we are looking to deliver a bit more literal transportation in the hospitality and destination marketing industry, it's still about creating memorable experiences.

What are some of the innovative approaches you utilized in your sport marketing and how do you know if they were effective or successful?

I was very fortunate to be a part of the NBA for ten years between my time at the league offices and on the team side, and they are definitely the industry leaders in terms of

innovation, data, and technology. The league has dedicated resources within their offices to support league-wide and team-specific initiatives to help nurture an innovative mindset that can help grow all areas of the business. As the innovation lead in my time with the Timberwolves, I was a part of the inaugural group pursuing new technologies in game experience and in content development that would help attract new audiences. I worked closely with several business unit leaders internally to help us launch one of the first venue-specific mobile apps in the NBA to give fans in the building a tailored experience in the arena. We were also one of the first teams in the country to go to an entirely digital ticketing system.

Are there destinations around the world that you believe are innovative markets for tourism?

The industry as a whole has been challenged more than a lot of others coming out of the pandemic, and it's been really fun to see how destinations are trying to win travelers' minds, hearts, and, ultimately, dollars. With international travel still on the climb back to pre-pandemic levels, I focus more on what's happening here in the U.S. and a few destinations come to mind immediately. Savannah, Georgia, has done a wonderful job with their strategic marketing partnerships and has even taken their destination on the road! You can find Savannah's experiences at various consumer and industry events nationwide. They were even here in Boston at the Head of the Charles Regatta 2023. Sioux Falls launched a subscription model delivery program showcasing local products, Sonoma County has been doing a wonderful job in terms of public relations around their efforts to make travel more sustainable, and finally, Seattle, Washington, has completely leaned into its reputation for being a city with a lot of rain on the forecast by embracing it. What I love about all of the efforts is that they are anchored in authenticity which is key in marketing in any industry.

How has Boston evolved its marketing to distinguish itself from other international cities?

Our marketing plan has been evolving quickly over the past few years. With new ways to highlight things to do in our city, including digital passports and a revamped website for our organization, we are looking to new channels and markets to promote Boston as a Tier-1 global destination. Boston is uniquely positioned to attract travelers and events from Europe and the Middle East thanks to the number of daily flights coming in and out of Logan International Airport. To help amplify this, we have agencies in key European markets to help us promote on the ground and are investing in more this year. In the past two years, our investment in digital marketing and interactive OOH (Out-of-Home Advertising) channels, in particular, has helped us better define and understand our

target audiences and how to deliver to them the experience of a lifetime while staying true to the experience of Boston.