

Methods to Maintain Fans' Loyalty Based on Shanghai Sharks' Fixed Match Scandal

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Abstract. Based on the Shanghai sharks' fixed match scandal, the comments on the team have plummeted. Therefore, the psychological connection between the team and the fans will relatively goes down. As a result, the comments sections of social media and video accounts are filled with complaints and blame for the team. Which comes after is the decrease of the consumption of the fans and the population of the loyal fans. The fans loyalty will also relatively get lower, high loyalty fans might even turn into spurious loyalty fans. Due to this condition that Shanghai Sharks is now facing, this paper aims to deal with the problem that fans' loyalty is going down, so there are some methods illustrated in this paper. In this paper, 4P marketing strategy is used to analyze the brand disadvantages. AI tech are used to create new logo, new website preview and new slogan are created artificially.

Keywords: Shanghai Shark; fans' loyalty; fixed match; new logo; new website.

1. Introduction

In 2023, during the competition for the top 8 in the CBA playoffs, Shanghai Sharks was against JiangSu Dragons, both teams were found guilty of negative played by the Basketball Association's disciplinary and ethics committee, and Shanghai Sharks was punished by reducing the league fund by RMB 5000000 and Shanghai sharks' coach Li Chunjiang was suspended the registration of a coach for 5 years from the date of the punishment decision [1].

Due to this condition, Shanghai sharks' fans showed their disappointment towards the team and the managing apartment on various social medias or websites which reduce their psychological connection with the team. From Shanghai Sharks' managing perspective, methods should be made to maintain the psychological connection with the fans.

2. Preliminary Analysis and Solution

2.1. Definition of Fan's Loyalty

Fan's loyalty, which can also be considered as customers' loyalty was first pointed out by Kuehn [2]. He proposed that a customer's loyalty towards the brand can be represented by the times he or she consume for the products or the service of the brand.

2.1.1 Methods to distinguish different degrees of loyalty

		Psychological Commitment	
		Strong	Weak
Behavioral Consistency (Attendance Frequency)	High	High (True) Loyalty	Spurious Loyalty
	Low	Latent Loyalty	Low (Non) Loyalty

Fig. 1 Factors that distinguish the degree of loyalty.

According to Therese Fessenden (2018), psychological commitment and behavioral consistency determine the degrees of fans' loyalty. Figure 1 is made artificially in order to illustrate the relationships between psychological commitment, behavioral consistency and the degrees of loyalty. In order to maintain fans' loyalty and trigger the consuming activity to happen, here are some marketing strategies for different degrees of fans.

2.1.2 Suggestions for marketing to the four loyalty segments

(1) High loyalty

Marketers should implement a strategy that reinforces behavioral loyalty through economic incentives and attitudinal loyalty through personalized encouragement. With the purpose of increasing the yield from this segment and preventing any potential loss, this strategy has been designed. Although fans with high loyalty will not likely get the psychological connection rid of the team after the fixed match scandal, actions are still needed to keep the population of the fans with high loyalty since they have higher consuming ability and are more likely to pay for the team.

(2) Spurious loyalties

Marketers should prioritize the utilization of rationalization strategies to enhance the psychological commitment of fans. Promoting the positive attributes of the product or service, having the fans express their reasons for supporting the team, and/or connecting attendance with backing a pertinent social cause enable this to be achieved. To increase fans' psychological commitment, rationalization strategies can be employed by highlighting the positive qualities of the product or service and facilitating fans' explicit expression of their reasons for supporting the team. In this way, the psychological commitment can be improve stronger which can turn the spurious fans into high loyalty fans.

(3) Latent loyalty

A market inducement strategy should be used by marketers to increase the positive behaviors of the latently loyal fan. Removing significant barriers to behavior and providing economic incentives to engage in certain behaviors can accomplish this. By using market-inducing strategies to increase positive behavior among potentially loyal fans ensure the fans who might lose the interest of being a Shanghai sharks' fan can keep the possibility of becoming a loyal fan.

(4) Low (Non) loyalty

Although some might suggest marketers use a confrontation strategy, which requires a direct attack on the fan's existing attitudes, others believe this may only lead to strengthening the fan's low level of commitment. Many strategists instead recommend focusing on using either a rationalization strategy to increase commitment or an inducement strategy to increase behavior as a first step to high loyalty. Use proportional strategies to increase commitment or inducement strategies to increase behavior as the first step to achieve high loyalty.

2.2. Perspectives that the Shanghai Sharks Should Change

Due to the fixed match scandal, the Shanghai sharks' brand awareness turned very bad. When the CBA audiences or the Shanghai sharks' fans think of the team, they will associate the team with the fixed match. The result is that Shanghai sharks' brand awareness comes out as a cheating figure. Therefore, some methods are mentioned in this paper to illustrate how Shanghai sharks should change to maintain their brand awareness and keep the psychological connection among the fans. Respectively are "the logo and the name", "the slogan" and "the website".

2.2.1 The logo & name

Since Shanghai Sharks had suffered the fixed match scandal, the brand image rapidly went bad, so when people think of Shanghai Sharks, they would link to the dishonesty. That's Shanghai Sharks' currently brand image which will cause a brand association that the Shanghai Sharks represents cheating. It has a negative impact on the brand, so what this paper plan to do is to change the logo and the name of Shanghai Sharks. This paper planned to change the name from "Shanghai Sharks" to "Shanghai Megalodons", which means the team will be bigger and stronger. AI technology are

also used to create an appropriate logo for the Shanghai Megalodons. By changing brand logo to Figure 2, people's brand awareness with the team can be eliminated since people always associate their brand awareness with specific brand image such as the logo. That's the ideal effect that nobody will still think of fixed match or dishonesty while seeing the team's logo. What's more, the logo is still kept as a shark to preserve the local fans. The slogan is recreated to resonate with the local population and to reestablish what the franchise stands for.



Fig. 2 Shanghai Megalodons' logo

2.2.2 The slogan

The new slogan will be changed into “The feared, the buried, the monster”. Since this paper is proposing ways to help Shanghai's basketball team to maintain their fans' loyalty, the old brand image is essential to be thrown away.

(1) The feared

“The feared” represents a fearful opponent that throws away the old perception of low competitiveness, the aim is to get rid of the stereotype or the inflexible brand image that Shanghai sharks used to be a team that are not competitive. The new team Shanghai Megalodons will lead the fans think of a more fierce team which can change the previous brand image.

(2) The buried

Shanghai sharks is actually a very seemingly competitive team since there are Wang zhelin, who is the 2022 CBA league MVP. What is buried is these capable and talented players' guts to fight hard. The changing of the new slogan means the team is going to get rid of the laziness and practice more harder.

(3) The monster

Shanghai is commonly known as the city of monster. As a Shanghai local basketball team, the team identification should be considered as a scary monster that nobody want to mess up with. In this way, it will be easier for the team to maintain the fan base and loyal fans' psychological connection by linking the team with a championship competitor.

2.2.3 The website

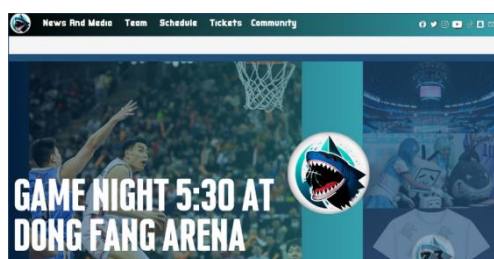


Fig. 3 Shanghai Megalodons' new website preview

According to the observation of Shanghai sharks' official website, it is found that there are many disadvantages about the design of the website. Figure 3 is the ideal website design which has six

improvements based on the old one. They are: “Aesthetics in design”, “Merchandise Selling”, “Highlight video clips”, “Game Schedule”, “Players latest updates” and “Official authorized ticket channel”.

(1) Aesthetics in design

A more designed website page can help to attract viewers’ attention, which means the population base of the potential fans will increase. The possibility of having more loyal fans relatively goes up.

(2) Merchandise selling

According to some successful NBA teams’ website designing, the merchandise selling section is essential to exist. Thanks to the rapidly growing social purchasing technology, more and more people choose to buy items online. Since the selling of team’s merchandise is also a part of the team’s income, setting a merchandise selling section is necessary.

(3) Highlight video clips

Putting some highlight video clips of the team or the players can cause the vibration among the viewers or sport fans. They might be thrilled or fell excited after watching the highlight clips with some fast-pace background music, which can be a factor of increasing fan’s population.

(4) Game schedule

Showing the game schedule of the team for the following season to the fans can cause the fans to consider the game as the centrality. This will also help them to put everything away and schedule their time on game days in order to have a better game-watching experience.

(5) Players latest updates

The reason why most fans are fans of the team is that they are mostly in favour of a particular athlete. That’s why updating players’ latest vlog or training videos are important. This will strengthen the psychological connection and the attachment between the fans and their favorite players.

(6) Official authorized ticket channel

Due to my research, only 37% of the audience go to the arena to watch the game by buying tickets online and most of the audience actually enter the arena by the tickets that were given directly by the Sports Department. That obviously shows that why a official authorized ticket channel is needed since a person who buy ticket with his or her own money is more likely to become a loyal fan than a person who go to the arena only to use the ticket that was given by others.

3. Further Analysis on the Brand

3.1. Analyze the Measurements by Marketing Mix Theory

3.1.1 Marketing mix theory

The marketing mix refers to the process where an enterprise, after carefully evaluating the environment, capabilities, and competition it can influence, chooses the optimal combination to achieve the goals and objectives of the enterprise, once it has identified its target market. When enterprises engage in marketing activities, they must consider both the various external environments of the enterprises' market and formulate a marketing mix strategy. By implementing the strategy, the enterprise achieves its objectives through adapting to the environment and meeting the needs of the target market. It was first proposed by Professor Borden of Harvard University in 1964. In this paper, the analysis will be conducted in the “4Ps” and “4Vs” [3].

3.1.2 4P strategy

The 4P strategy consists of “product”, “promotion”, “place” and “price”. It is a marketing theory once published by professor Jerome Macarthy in his book 《Marketing》 at about 1960. The 4P theory provides a useful framework for making marketing plans of enterprises. However, the 4P is on the side of the business, not the customers [4].

(1) Product

The product is the business's creation, design, or acquisition that fulfills the needs and desires of customers. From a marketing standpoint, a product refers to something that can be provided to the

market for people to use and consume, while satisfying their needs. This category includes tangible products, services, individuals, organizations, ideas, or any combination of these. As a basketball team, the product, is the game performance. From the perspective of the consumers, the product they receive is their experiences to watch the game. In order to improve that, there are something for the team to do. As the paper has already mentioned, the website should be improved. According to the 4C strategy which includes the factor of convenience, having an authorized ticket channel is giving convenience of consumers' purchase process [5]. Besides adding convenience to the consumers, the equipment and facilities in the arena for the audiences to use are also considerable and important factors. The DongFang arena where the Shanghai sharks plays their games have barriers to block the audiences and the players, that means it is hard for the fans to interact with their favorable players during the game. On the contrary, the NBA league's teams' arenas all have no barriers between the audiences and the players. It is obvious that there are less humanistic feelings existing in the CBA league than that in the NBA league [6].

(2) Promotion

Promotion is the process of informing, persuading, and influencing a customer to buy's the business's offering. Promotion also should be a series of marketing behaviors including brand publicity (advertising), public relations and so on. Briefly speaking, promotion is actually the communication between the brand/team and the consumers. Based on the fixed match scandal which happened on the Shanghai Sharks, one thing they need to do in the aspect of promotion is to use the public relation skills to deal with public opinion. Additionally, the advertisement of the team is undoubtedly essential, the advertising department should use the aforementioned social media to keep the team or players updated to the public.

(3) Price

Price refers to the price when the customer buys the product, including discount, payment period, etc. Price or price decision are related to the enterprise's profit, cost compensation, and whether it is conducive to product sales, promotion and other issues. According the data from China's statistic apartment, the per capita GDP of Shanghai has reached 180,400 yuan, and each ticket of the game is ranged from 100 to 500 yuan. So there will be few financial burden for the Shanghai local fans to watch the Shanghai Sharks game offline [7].

(4) Place

The place actually means the sales channel which refers to the sum of all links and driving forces experienced in the whole process of transferring goods from production enterprises to consumers. Since the products received by consumers are performances and experiences, so the products can be directly delivered to customers, which means the role of "place" is not so obvious and can be ignored [8].

3.2. 4V Strategy

The 4V marketing strategy is a kind of strategy that is consists of "Variation", "Versatility", "Value" and "Vibration".

3.2.1 How 4V strategy comes into use

With the constant changes of social structure and consumer consumption habits, as well as a deeper understanding of consumer loyalty, the main theory used in marketing has changed from the brand-centered 4P theory to the 4V theory with consumer loyalty as the main consideration [9].

In this paper, it will only take the factor "vibration" into consideration.

3.2.2 Vibration

The act of vibration serves as a means of connection between consumers and brands, bringing together brands' innovative capabilities with consumers' values and expectations in an unavoidable manner. Enterprises need to provide consumers with products and services that offer maximum value and innovation from a value-based perspective, enabling them to truly experience the value and utility of such offerings. As the paper has shown that a change by producing highlight video clips on the

newly designed website can cause the thrilled feelings needed by the consumers, that's how a brand attract its consumers and cause the vibration [10].

4. Summary

This paper shows methods to maintain fans' loyalty based on the fixed match scandal of Shanghai Sharks. Degrees of loyalty are divided to analyze the ways to maintain different groups of fans' psychological connection. New brand image and brand awareness are planned to change by creating new logo and new website artificially. The marketing mix theory is also used to propose the parts that the brand should do and what it should consider for their audiences.

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