

Guangzhou Team Maintains and Continues to Increase the Number of Fans

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Abstract. This article will explore how Guangzhou Football Club can maintain and increase the number of fans. After being relegated to the lower tier league in China, Guangzhou Football Club (formerly known as Guangzhou Evergrande) saw a decrease in the number of fans and a change in their confidence and attitude towards fans. This article will analyze the current Chinese football market, as well as the behavior of Chinese Super League, Serie A, fans, and consumers. Based on the theory and practical experience of sports management, a discussion was conducted on the current number of fans in Guangzhou Football Club, and a series of strategies and measures were proposed to help Guangzhou Football Club maintain and increase the number of fans. This helped Guangzhou Football Club aspire to return to the highest level league through fans, allowing Guangzhou FC fans to bring more economic and profit to Guangzhou FC in different ways, Achieving the goals desired by the team and fans.

Keywords: Chinese Super League; Guangzhou FC; sports management.

1. Introduction

Since the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, Chinese sports have been increasingly valued by the public. However, Chinese football has always been ignored or even belittled by the audience, and the attention of China's top football leagues has also decreased significantly. The Chinese Super League was once popular among the public during its golden period, but in recent years, it has experienced a recession [1], and there is a lot of capital behind the "Golden Yuan Football". The top teams in the Chinese Super League are supported by Fortune 500 companies, such as Hengda, which is one of the sponsors of the Guangzhou FC. The peak of attendance in the Chinese Super League was from 2013 to 2019, but when the Chinese Football Association required teams to use neutral names, many teams reduced or even went to sponsor.

2. Background

With the relegation of the Guangzhou FC from the Chinese Super League to the Chinese First Division, market share has always been the focus of the Guangzhou FC. Since winning the Asian Champions League in 2013 and 2015, the attention of the Guangzhou FC and Chinese football has become increasingly high, and watching football matches has become a way of life for some people. However, as Hengda Group, as the investor of the Guangzhou FC, has incurred a debt of RMB 2.58 trillion, in 2020, the "Three Red Lines" were launched for real estate enterprises, which prevented Hengda from increasing its interest bearing liabilities. Even if relevant indicators were adjusted below the red line, attention should be paid to controlling the growth rate of interest bearing liabilities, and it was not possible to quickly and massively obtain funds to support the continued development of the enterprise [2]. The club department has been severely affected by the financial problems of China Hengda. In the past 18 months, several key players have left. This led to a decline in the performance of the Guangzhou FC and the home stadium was moved from the Tianhe Stadium, which can accommodate 60000 spectators, to the Yuexiu Mountain Stadium, which can only accommodate 30000 people. Even though the survival environment of the team and the environment for fans to watch the game have deteriorated, this is not a reason to defeat the team and fans. In the Chinese League One, the Guangzhou FC still has about 70%, which indicates that the Guangzhou FC has a

great fan base. Compared to Shanghai Jiading Huilong, who finished last in the Chinese Bundesliga, the Guangzhou FC has 30 times more fans than the Shanghai team.

This study is based on the Chinese Super League: attention, pricing, and team performance to analyze how to maintain the fan base of the Guangzhou FC to increase the number of fans [3]. Now, how can Guangzhou FC maintain and increase the market share of the Guangzhou FC in Chinese football.

3. Method 1

Firstly, the Guangzhou FC should maintain its position in Chinese football. The history and achievements of Guangzhou Hengda make it difficult for Guangzhou Fuli to truly compete with Guangzhou Hengda in attracting fans. According to the attendance data of the 2018 season, among the Chinese Super League clubs, Guangzhou Hengda has the highest average audience (47002 people), while the Fuli team has the lowest average audience (10255 people) [4]. This is rare in Chinese football and even world football. As the former home stadium of Guangzhou Hengda, Tianhe Stadium does not have a professional stadium, but Guangzhou Hengda can still have a seating rate of over 70% and an average number of people exceeding 40000. When the Guangzhou FC moves to the Yuexiu Mountain Stadium, there will still be a seating rate of over 60% (Sina Sports, 2021). To ensure that fans and spectators can watch the game on-site, the Guangzhou FC can upgrade the stadium facilities and convert non-professional football fields into professional football fields. According to a study on the attendance rate of Iranian football leagues, one of the main factors affecting the audience's on-site viewing of the ball is the service of sports venues and stadiums [5]. The highest attendance rate in the Iranian league is only 36000 people, while seven factors affect attendance in the Iranian league, They are (1) Lack of ideal access and transportation services to and from sports venues; (2) Inadequate execution of league and club road plans; (3) The impact of low-quality dance performances and the advantages of television services over sports facilities; (4) Improper venue services; (5) The atmosphere of the stadium is not suitable; (6) Economic issues for the audience; (7) Pay more attention to the edges of the media from the perspective of a critic. As one of the more important factors in sports competitions, sports stadiums, and other updates should be advanced. The current home stadium of the Guangzhou FC - Yuexiu Mountain Stadium, which was completed in 1957, was last renovated in 2016. Such an ancient stadium makes the renovated Yuexiu Mountain Stadium, which has been renovated dozens of times, quite dilapidated. The most obvious detail is that more than one-third of the audience seats at Yuexiu Mountain Stadium are outdoor. If the Yuexiu Mountain Stadium were to undergo a major renovation and become a professional football field, the number of fans and spectators would increase with the upgrading of the facilities. As Guangzhou FC, the investment company of the Guangzhou FC, no longer has sufficient capacity to renovate the stadium due to debt issues, when advocating for public financial assistance for the new stadium, franchise owners usually use the reason of increasing attendance and improving team performance on the field [6]. On the other hand, Yuexiu Mountain Stadium is located at the top of Yuexiu Mountain in Guangzhou. Fans need to walk into the stadium to watch the ball, but cars or buses cannot enter the stadium. Therefore, the Guangzhou FC can apply for the construction of a road and a parking lot, so that fans can easily enter the stadium by driving or using public transportation.

4. Method 2

The Guangzhou FC entered the Chinese Super League in 2011 and was relegated to the Chinese First Division in 2022. In the Chinese Football League, for example, only teams playing in the Chinese Super League are eligible to use famous advertisers such as Nike for promotion. After entering the Chinese First Division in the second year, they will lose Nike's sponsorship. So, in terms of advertising, the platform of Chinese Super League larger than that of Zhongjia.

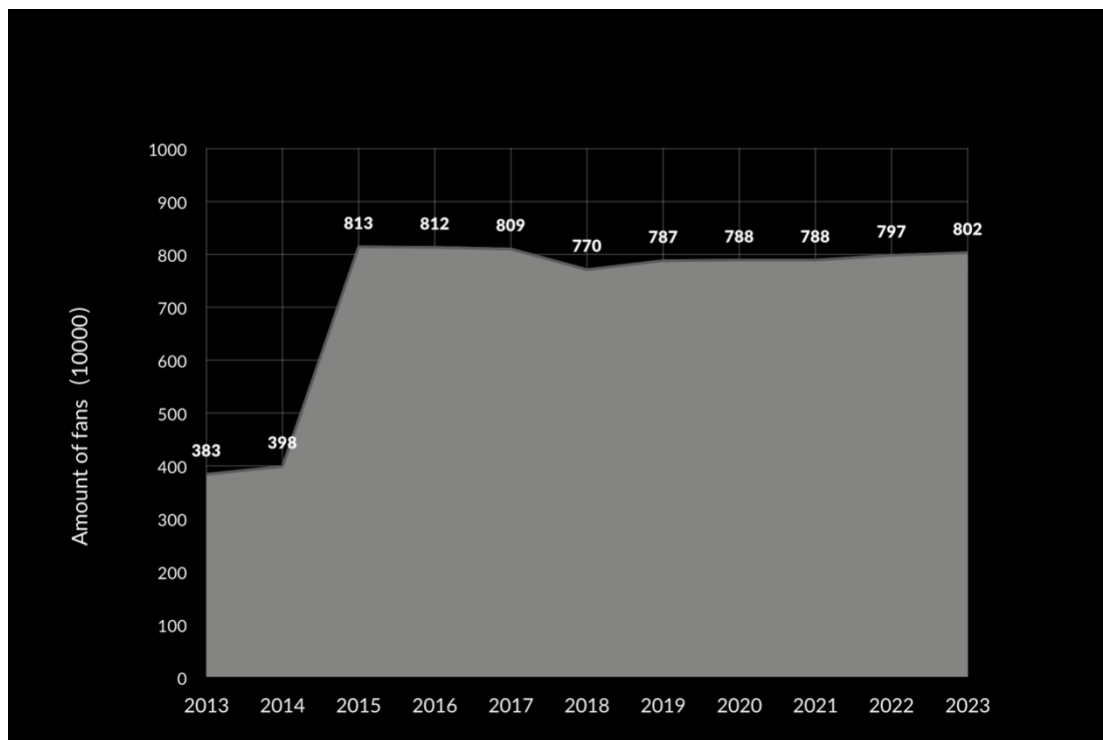


Fig. 1 Amounts of fans of Guangzhou FC between Year 2013 to 2023

So based on the reduced level of competition in China's top tier team and the decrease in attention in China, the Guangzhou FC can try to use the internet and promote the Guangzhou FC through the internet. Fan engagement vis à vis CSL clubs, players, and matches is limited in its context, our results indicate that the international fan base of the CSL remains largely underdeveloped [7]. Figure 1 shows the number of fans of the Guangzhou FC on social media. As the Guangzhou FC gradually declines, the slope of fan increase becomes slow and even decreases. Undoubtedly, information and communication technology has had a huge impact on the development of global sports, and has also created new prospects for sports promotion, marketing, sports followers, and income generation [8], and using the internet to disseminate team information is one of the most efficient ways. For fans, it is difficult to go to real stadiums to watch games, as fans may have a certain distance or time from home, or may not be in the same area. So many fans cannot have direct interaction with the team or players, so fans need to interact with the team through a medium. So social media is a low-cost and convenient way to connect with teams. For example, according to Mary Meeker's report last year, mobile phone usage in the United States has skyrocketed to over 3 hours per day [9]. Many teams enjoy using social media, such as Barcelona and Real Madrid in the Spanish league, which have a fan base of over 100 million people, and the price of social media is also over 20 million US dollars. Barcelona and Real Madrid are both La Liga giants, so Real Madrid and Barcelona can gain more attention through the use and promotion of social media. On the other hand, as the world's number one football league, the interest in the Premier League coincides with the digital revolution, which has changed the way we consume football-related content. The trend is driven by the rapid growth of social media channels, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat platforms. Footnote fans expressed a preference for interacting with football clubs through social media. It can be said that due to the impact of the epidemic, the usage of social media continues to increase, with 98.8% of social media users accessing the platform through mobile phones [10]. Therefore, the Guangzhou FC can use online advertising and promotion to increase their fan base and attract new fans. For example, interacting with fans on social media, increasing the frequency of posting on social media, and so on. Clubs unanimously believe that further development of social media strategies may bring about interaction and participation, community development and a sense of belonging, traffic to official websites, and commercial benefits [11]. If a team has sufficient connections with fans and even the audience on social media, it can not only gain or attract more fans but also enhance fan loyalty.

5. Conclusion

In summary, although the level of the Guangzhou FC in the league has decreased significantly, they still need sufficient support from fan groups and provide both encouragement and financial support. Utilizing social media and upgrading to improve the football home field is feasible enough. When the Guangzhou FC can maintain and increase the number of fans, they can use enough fan base to attract more fans. To have more foundation to continue attacking champions in the Chinese football market. To return to a more advanced league and have a larger market.

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