

# Revitalizing Lakers' Home Game Attendance: Challenges, Strategies, and Future Directions

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**Abstract.** From 2020 to 2024, attendance at the Lakers' home arena diminished as a result of the epidemic. The objective of this study was to examine the causes contributing to this situation and propose feasible remedies to resolve this issue for the Lakers. This study employs qualitative analysis and case study methodologies to identify attendance difficulties, examine possible constraints encountered by the Lakers, and determine the reasons for the reduction. The research will then provide solutions to each specific problem. The investigation revealed that a potential decrease in the impact of the all-star player could be a contributing factor, which could potentially be addressed by acquiring another exceptional player. Secondly, insufficient imaginative advertising may result in diminished attendance; nevertheless, creating a mascot might serve as a feasible remedy. Ultimately, evolving consumer behaviors adversely impact the Lakers' attendance; hence, the Lakers should prioritize stadium advertising. This research aims to offer advice to the Lakers' management or marketer regarding the decline in attendance at their home arena.

**Keywords:** Lakers, Attendance, Decrease.

## 1. Introduction

During 2020-2024, the Lakers' home arena attendance decreased gradually; this phenomenon is based on the pandemic period. The pandemic's influence brought about a significant shift in people's lifestyles. The government has imposed restrictions on people's ability to go outside, and employers are now required to work remotely. Businesses and entertainment activities close or even go bankrupt, forcing consumers to make purchases online. This situation has significantly impacted the National Basketball League (NBA). Specifically, the pandemic had a significant impact on the attendance at each team's home arena, which in turn caused significant problems for the entire sports industry. During this period, there was a significant drop in overall attendance, leading to a disruption and suspension of the NBA season for several months, with games resuming in the "bubble" district at Disney World. Additionally, the NBA had to modify the game schedule, changing the game date and season length, which had a negative impact on the engagement and viewership of NBA fans. The Lakers, an NBA team founded in 1947, have a rich and distinguished history, but they have recently faced significant challenges. From 2020 to 2022, the Lakers' home arena attendance decreases gradually. After this period, some teams have eliminated the pandemic effect and resumed their regular home attendance. However, the Lakers' home arena attendance still dropped in 2023-2024. Humphreys and Candon Johnson have conducted a study on the impact of superstars on NBA attendance [1]. They use empirical analysis to "identify the potential superstar," and they indicate some variables for home and away games in which superstars appeared [1]. As a result, they discovered that the superstar has a positive effect on home and away arena attendance, as well as the league's profit [1]. Another study by Mehmet Sahin discusses the demand for sports attendance [2]. This article shows over 20,000 games from different leagues, including the NBA and other kinds of sports [2]. Mehmet Sahin collected 7288 games from 2013-2019 and analyzed the data by using Z-score normalization from those games [2]. This article proves that the success rate is less effective for the NBA compared with other leagues [2].

While some research exists on the NBA and other sports industries, the majority of it focuses on the factors that impact attendance. However, there is not enough research on the Lakers, including why and what happened to their home arena attendance during 2020-2024. It appears that this

phenomenon and the lack of research on the Lakers' attendance have gone unnoticed, leaving a research gap regarding the reasons for the Lakers' declining attendance and potential marketing strategies to address it. This article will delve into the reasons behind the decline in Lakers' home arena attendance and explore potential marketing strategies to boost it. This article aims to provide suggestions and references for the Lakers to increase their attendance, thereby contributing to the development of the sports industry. Additionally, this article aims to provide valuable marketing plans or promotions to enhance the competitiveness of the Lakers.

To bridge the gap, this paper will describe the phenomenon of a decrease in the Lakers' home arena attendance from 2020 to 2024, using several reliable data sources and detailed information. This article will draw upon various references and website data to examine the reasons behind the low average attendance during this period. Finally, the analysis of the reasons leads to the provision of several specific and reasonable suggestions for problem solving.

## 2. Case Description

The Buss family founded the Los Angeles Lakers in 1947, and they have their headquarters in California. They compete in the Western Conference. The Los Angeles Lakers are one of the most well-known teams in the NBA. The Lakers are well-known for their basketball superstars, including Kobe Bryant, LeBron James, and Shaquille O'Neal. In addition, the Lakers have a large global fan following, with over 300 million followers on social media. The official Facebook account has 12.06 million followers, while the X has 21.81 million admirers.

The Lakers accomplished a historic achievement by winning three straight championships from 2000 to 2002, a feat shared only by the Bulls and Celtics. This club had a genuinely spectacular career, winning 17 NBA Finals victories and garnering a stellar reputation, with the Boston Celtics following soon behind. The Lakers have maintained their competitiveness this year after making the playoffs the previous season. The Lakers finished eighth in the Western Conference, winning 47 games. Furthermore, the Lakers won their first in-season tournament with no losses.

However, there have been concerns about the attendance at the Lakers' home venue. From 2020 to 2024, the Lakers' home game attendance decreased while other teams rose, especially the Golden State Warriors. The results reveal that home game attendance fell from 99.7 to 97.6 in four years (2019-2023) [3]. From 2002 to 2024, the average TV rating for NBA finals games in the United States was the lowest in 2020, when the Lakers faced the Miami Heat in front of a mere 4 million viewers. This suggests that the Lakers receive little attention, even in the closing games. Over the next four years, the popularity of other final games grew. This year, the Lakers have used a variety of tactics to boost fan interest at crucial times. For example, they improved the endorsement to attract viewers. In 2018, LeBron James joined the Lakers, and in 2019, they traded for Antony Davis. These two players are all-stars with a strong fan base, and they receive a lot of attention in the NBA. According to CNBC, after LeBron joined with the Lakers in 2018, ticket prices at the team's home venue rose by 400% [4]. The Lakers earned \$516 million in the 2022-2023 season, placing second among NBA clubs. Nonetheless, average attendance has declined since 2021, with total attendance falling from 764631 to 763168 [3].

## 3. Analysis

### 3.1. The Influence of The All-star Player Decreases

One of the factors contributing to the decline in Lakers home arena attendance from 2020 to 2024 was the Lakers' poor utilization of their players' influence, which resulted in a decline in the attractiveness of their all-star players. From 2020 to 2024, the Lakers signed a single all-star player named Russell Westbrook. Despite his poor performance, his average of 17.6 points was lower than any previous player's average statistics, with a drop of 3.7 points per game. The Lakers traded him in 2023, after he played only two seasons.

Cory Metcalfe's paper explores the impact of an all-star player on attendance [5]. Using quantitative research, Cory Metcalfe investigated the relationship between attendance and the influence of all-star players [5]. The results show that LeBron James and Kevin Garnett play an important role in influencing their teams' attendance [5].

### **3.2. Lack of Innovation in The Promotion**

Additionally, the Lakers' recent promotion lacked creativity, and the arena's activities were unremarkable, leading to audience boredom and a simultaneous decline in the home average attendance rate.

During the 2020 pandemic, attendance was relatively low for most NBA teams. The Lakers' average attendance in the 2020-2021 season was 648, which is the lowest in 10 years [6]. However, the Golden State Warriors' attendance was nearly 300 more than the Lakers. Despite not playing that season, the Golden State Warriors managed to garner a higher average attendance due to their creative promotional efforts during that period. For example, the Lakers post pictures related to the players and the team on social media such as Instagram and X. The posters primarily feature basic photos of players training and playing games, a practice they repeat every season.

Westerbeek and others studied the importance of marketing in the sports arena [7]. They stated that the promotion's unpredictability is critical for attendance [7]. This is due to the diverse needs and desires that fans have, making it more challenging for the team to devise effective promotion or marketing strategies. Unlike other forms of entertainment, games are often characterized by their spontaneity and dramatic nature. The reading demonstrates how crucial it is for companies or teams to implement various promotional strategies [7].

### **3.3. The Change of Habits of The Consumers**

The pandemic has encouraged more fans to watch games online. Fans change their habits, and more choose to watch the games on the application or some online platforms.

The average TV rating for the NBA finals increased. The data increased from 4 million to 5.8 million [8]. This indicates that more people are watching the games on TV or streaming instead of attending in person, and these changing viewing habits could potentially jeopardize the average home attendance of the Lakers. The environment and societal conditions will impact arena attendance.

According to Muhammad Abdullah's research, over 50% of people worked or studied at home during that time, and only 11.7% did not change their behavior [9]. According to the research, the environment is empowered to change people's preferences and behaviors [9]. Gustafsson and Li gathered data from a variety of respondents in a different study [10]. The majority of these respondents expressed a preference for saving money during the COVID-19 pandemic, indicating a decrease in spending on clothing and social activities compared to their previous habits. Instead, they shifted their purchasing habits to focus on internet-related purchases [10]. This interview shows that people were more focused on online viewing, and their behavior will change when the environment is not stable [10].

## **4. Suggestion**

### **4.1. Suggestion on Utilizing Superstar Influence**

According to the first aspect that causes the average attendance of Lakers to decrease, it can be deduced that all-star players indeed affect attendance. In other words, if the teams utilize the influence and the market attraction of the players wisely, allowing more fans to engage in the arena and watch the games offline. Therefore, the teams or the companies need to sign players with high superstar power and enhance the competitiveness of the teams. Thus, this paper suggests that the Lakers ought to sign one more player who has high market value in the league and form a super team similar to the "Big Three" in Miami.

Brooklyn Net did the same thing to gather Kevin Durant, James Harden, and Kyrie Irving to make topics and advertise. LeBron James and Davis Antony have not lost their influence yet, while the Lakers need to catch this chance and do some advertisements and endorsements to produce a Championship atmosphere.

#### **4.2. Suggestion on Lakers' Innovative Promotion**

As this article mentioned, the Lakers lack creativity in marketing and promotion. During the pandemic period, the Lakers did not change their strategy quickly, which may have led to the loss of home arena attendance. Given the current circumstances, the pandemic's problems and effects will gradually disappear, prompting the Lakers to innovate or alter their promotional strategies to engage more fans on the court.

"Innovation" typically refers to actions that no one else has taken before. Mascots are quite common in the sports industry; characters can help the teams promote the atmosphere and interact with the fans by the side of the court.

Mondello and Gordan once discussed the "motives of attendance" [11]. They interviewed some Orlando Magic fans. A respondent explains why a family attends Orlando Magic's home games. The respondent said that the Magic mascot visits his daughter's school to do some community service; his daughter likes the mascot and insists on participating in the Magic's home games [11]. This demonstrates the mascot's ability to draw in more fans or spectators. Although the Lakers do not have a mascot, Lakers have the opportunity to design a special mascot that is related to its own team culture, enabling Lakers to attract fans to attend the arena.

#### **4.3. Suggestion on the Lakers' Home Arena Attendance**

The shift in consumer viewing habits has a negative impact on average home attendance. The data indicates that an increasing number of audiences are viewing NBA games on television, leading to an indirect decrease in attendance. Maintaining Lakers fans' repeat attendance and enhancing their commitment is critical. As a result, the Lakers must transform their latent or temporary fans into more loyal fans who will attend games over time. Filming a documentary about their home arena and implementing a suitable decrease in ticket prices can achieve this.

According to John Douvis, the ticket price and the televised game will have a negative impact on attendance [12]. Turley previously investigated the effectiveness of advertising in sports arenas [12]. He collected data from the last 4 NCAA games and conducted some interviews with spectators in the arena [12]. This study's data confirms that individuals in sports arenas take notice of at least some of the advertisements they encounter.

Therefore, if the team excels in stadium promotion, it will inform fans about the amenities and benefits of attending the games. The fans will then know what they can earn by attending the competitions. The name of the Lakers' home arena changed from Staples to Crypto.com in October 2021. Therefore, the Lakers should film a documentary about the home arena and the reason for renaming the arena, introduce some features inside the arena, and invite the spectators to visit the arena instead of just watching on the TV.

### **5. Conclusion**

This paper examined the decline in the Los Angeles Lakers' home game attendance between 2020 and 2024, highlighting key factors that contributed to this phenomenon. The research identified three main reasons: the diminished influence of all-star players, a lack of innovation in promotional efforts, and changes in consumer habits post-pandemic. By exploring these issues in detail, this study aimed to fill the gap in the literature on the Lakers' declining attendance and suggest practical marketing strategies to address it.

The paper's contributions lie in providing a deeper understanding of the Lakers' attendance challenges, offering insights into how teams can better utilize superstar influence, innovate their

marketing strategies, and adjust to changing fan behaviors. The research implications extend beyond the Lakers, offering lessons for the broader sports industry, particularly in maintaining fan engagement in uncertain times.

However, the study has several limitations. First, the focus was primarily on the Lakers, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other NBA teams or sports organizations. Second, the study relied on historical data and qualitative analysis, which may not fully capture the complexity of consumer behaviors in real-time. Future studies could use quantitative methods and more diverse data sources to deepen the analysis. Additionally, a closer look at the role of social media and digital engagement could offer more insights into maintaining fan loyalty in the digital age.

Further research could explore the long-term impact of the Lakers' marketing adjustments on fan attendance and analyze the effectiveness of similar strategies across other sports teams. Moreover, investigating the potential of virtual experiences as a complementary strategy to in-arena attendance would be valuable, particularly as technology continues to evolve.

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