Solutions for The Lack of Social Attention on The Chinese Women's Basketball Team

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Abstract. The Chinese women's basketball team is one of the most important women's sports organizations in China. It maintained a high ranking in international competitions for decades, but there is a lack of social attention to it. The purpose of this paper was to discuss the cause of this situation and provide solutions to increase social attention on the team to benefit the future development of the women's basketball industry in China. This paper reviewed the marketing mix theory from past research and determined the relationships between each factor of the theory and the customer purchase behavior. Current situation evaluation and future development strategies of the team were performed using SWOT analysis. This research concluded that instead of "strength" which is the internal superiority of the team, all of the three factors: weakness, opportunity, and threat have an impact on the social attention of the team. Thus, the absence of enough exposure was directly linked to the lack of social attention to the team. As a newly introduced communication channel, the role and application of social media exposure within the field of social attention will be later discussed.

Keywords: The Chinese Women's Basketball Team; Marketing Mix Theory; Social Attention; SWOT Analysis.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

In the past few years, there are growing appeals for social concern to the women's sports teams in China and the national women's basketball team would be a typical example. However, most of the time this kind of growing attention wound only happened during a special period—just after the team accomplished a good ranking in the international or intercontinental competitions. The increasing attention would dissipate within a relatively short time. For instance, in the 2021 Fédération International de Basketball (FIBA) women's Asia Cup, the national women's basketball team came second. Although there are more than half a million people have searched the term "Chinese national women's basketball team came second", the term has just stayed on the trending topic list for 109 minutes. It's worth mentioning that in the 2022 FIBA Asia Cup, the national men's basketball team lost to Lebanon. Thus, it has been ruled out of the semifinal. However, the term "Chinese men's basketball team lost to Lebanon" has stayed on the trending topic for 670 minutes.

Chinese national women's basketball team refers to a traditional futsal women's basketball team. This team was founded in 1951. It is composed of 12 high-level domestic women basketball players. Since the team formed, it has always maintained a high ranking in international or intercontinental competitions. The teams have maintained the top 10 worlds ranking and top 2 Asia ranking since its establishment [3,4].

Most of the previous studies related to the Chinese national women's basketball team would concentrate on tactical aspects based on international or intercontinental competitions. Wang Jinguo researched the performance of the team in the 28th Olympic Games. This paper makes technical statistics on the six matches between the team and the world's top teams in the 28th Olympic Games and analyzes the current situation of the women's national team from multiple perspectives. Ou, Yueshan in 2013 showed the competitive ability of the team with the world's top four ranking teams in the 30th Olympic Games. However, there are still some passages talking about the social concern of the team. By investigating and summarizing the literature about the Chinese national women's

basketball team retrieved from the CNKI database within the time limit of 1996 to 2015, researchers found that there is little women's basketball literature published in core journals, and institutions do not pay much attention to women's basketball. Moreover, previous studies have reported the research trends of the team and the characteristic of the contents of present papers about Chinese women's basketball. Looking at the marketing perspective, most of the paper would concentrate on the women's Chinese Basketball Association (WCBA). For example, Chen, and Binrong did research on the WCBA league's brand promotion strategy. This paper places the league as a brand and studies the current situation, the main obstacles, and the promotion strategies of the brand.

1.2 Research Gap

Although there are many papers based on the social concern of the national women's basketball team in China, the popularization of the internet has changed the way to measure the attention on the team. In this case, why there is always little attention to the national women's basketball team? Also, how to increase social attention on the Chinese national women's basketball team? These have become valuable questions to discuss.

1.3 Fill The Gap

The purpose of the article is to illuminate the answers to such questions to attract more attention to the Chinese women's basketball team. This social attention could firstly improve the current situation in the women's basketball industry. More specifically, attracting more commercial sponsors for the team and promoting the equal pay of female basketball players. Because, on the current situation, there is a huge gap between the average salary of male and female basketball players, which is in great measure due to the lack of commercial attention to the Chinese women's basketball industry. Secondly, social attention could enlarge the number of potential women's basketball players in China. Zhou and Zhixing 2013 showed that there is a serious shortage of youth players in the Chinese women's basketball industry, which leads to a serious gap between new and old players in the national team. This is due to the absence of social attention paid to Chinese women's basketball. Thus, this paper will fill this gap and set up the research question as "how to increase the team's social attention based on the present marketing environment.

The next section is going to introduce the marketing mixed theory. And how will the “4Ps” in theory affect the social attention of the team respectively? The paper is going to study the Chinese women's basketball team and then detect conclusions and solutions to the lack of social attention on the team.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition

The first serious discussions and analyses of marketing mix emerged in 1964 with McCarthy defined it as a combination of all of the factors that a marketing manager would command to satisfy the target market. He also identified 4Ps which are price, product, place, and promotion as components of the marketing theory. The introduction of marketing mix theory enables people to translate marketing plans into practice. In other words, it separates a fuzzy concept into four aspects that can be easily handled.

In the theory of marketing mixed product refers to things that can be offered to the customers for attention, acquisition, or consumption and could satisfy their want and need. It includes both tangible products and services. According to Yudelson in1999, the price should be defined as everything given by the acquirer in measured by money, time, and effort to obtain the product. Another element, place, is defined as the products' availability to the targeted customers. Promotion, the last element of the mix, can be defined as all of the shared information. Promotion is a selling strategy that includes advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, and direct marketing.

Borden is the first person who applies the term "marketing mix" . However, Borden's theory has included 12 different components which include elements like product planning; pricing; distribution; selling; promotions; and so on. Then later in 1961, Frey suggested separating these components into two groups: offering, which includes product, packaging, and price. Also, the methods and tools, which consist of promotion, and publicity. McCarthy in 1964 organized the 12 elements into four, which are known as nowadays 4Ps. To be specific, product, price, place, and promotion. Later, due to the gradually competitive environment of marketing, researchers added a new "P" into the theory to face up to the new situation. Judd in 1987 proposed a fifth P—people. Booms and Bitner later added 3 other elements, which are physical evidence, participants, and process, to the initial 4Ps theory, thus composing their 7Ps theory.

2.2 Important Results

Many researches have shown that there is a positive on product quality which also includes service quality and consumer satisfaction and loyalty. In 2009, Chai and his colleagues analyzed the effect of products' quality and services' quality on customers and the result showed that the quality of products and services is one of the most influential factors in customers' satisfaction and loyalty. Later in 2011, Jahanshahi showed the existence of a positive linkage between customers' satisfaction and customer loyalty by studying the automotive industry in India. However, in 2017, Ganiyu indicated that high quality did not directly lead to customers' loyalty. In his paper he mentioned that the high quality of the product or service would increase the satisfaction of customers then customer satisfaction affects brand loyalty.

Some scholars have demonstrated that price is an important factor that affects customers' purchase intention. Hermann's studies in 2007 showed that price would greatly affect customers' purchase intention and satisfaction. Also, consumers' satisfaction is impacted by the perception of price directly and indirectly affected by price fairness. According to Khraim's study in 2011, the price would firstly change the brand loyalty of a customer which then effect customers' purchase intention. However, in 2003, Keller's research indicated that the purchase intention of customers with high loyalty will not affect by price easily. Even if the price increases, they are still willing to purchase. They have a strong belief in the products. In this case, to maintain the constant situation, they can pay a higher price.

For promotion, research demonstrated the positive relationship between it and customers' purchase intention. For example, Neha and others in 2013 mentioned that sales promotion plays a significant role in customers' purchase decisions. In promotion, there are 4 different ways namely: advertising, sales promotions, personal selling, and publicity. Lovelock has shown in 2010 that advertising has a great effect on customers' purchase intention. To be specific, advertising is generated by giving information about the products or brands on media. To shape the image and attitude of the customers toward the products or brands. Later on, this well-shaped image will influence customers' purchase behavior. Clow in 2010 also states that promotion is a very influential marketing strategy for firms that help to differentiate the brand or product from other competitors. Thus, enhancing customers' purchase intention.

Past studies have implied that place, an element of the marketing mix, has a positive linkage with customer satisfaction and loyalty which would then influence their purchase intention. In 2015, Parseghian has indicated that a good store image could both attract customers' attention and increase their purchase intention. Then later in 2017, Verma and Singh verified the statement that place would greatly affect customers' satisfaction and customers' loyalty in a positive way. On the other hand, Niharika has shown in his research in 2015 that inconvenient locations led to dissatisfaction among the customers which would later on transfer into a decrease in customers' purchase intention.

2.3 Summary

All of the studies reviewed here support the hypothesis that four elements in the marketing mix all have a great impact on customers' purchase intention. More specifically, all four 4Ps have a positive relationship with customers' satisfaction and purchase intention. Although within the "price" aspect,

when it comes to the customers with high loyalty to the brand or product, the positive linkage disappears and the price won't be an important factor that affects customers' purchase intention.

However, with the expansion of the marketing mix, people should pay attention to other elements despite 4Ps. As the paper mentioned before, many researchers have demonstrated the 7Ps theory which includes a very important factor that affects customers' purchase intention—physical evidence. According to

the research done by Zeithaml, Valarie, Bitner, and Gremler in 2009, reveals that physical evidence is the environment where services are delivered and companies meet their customers, all visible components that enable the performance or communication of these services to undergo. Physical evidence will have a great impact on brand image and thus influence customers' purchase behavior.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

A variety of methods are applied to assess the social attention on a sports team or brand, each has its advantages and disadvantages. However, this paper is going to utilize one qualitative method which is a "SWOT" analysis. According to Merba is a tool applied to an organization's planning and management strategies. It can be utilized effectively for the future development of the organizations. The four letters in "SWOT" stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The SWOT analysis evaluates an organization, a brand, or a project based on two dimensions which are internal factors and external factors. For internal dimension, it includes strengths and weaknesses; external factors contain opportunities and threats.

Qualitative methods offer an effective way to evaluate the current situation of an organization. It provides a framework to let the manager identify the factors that influence the organization's situation and help the manager to do reasonable future decisions. This quality of SWOT analysis matches the requirement of the paper very well. The objective of the paper is to evaluate the current situation of Chinese women's basketball in order increases the social attention on the team. Moreover, there are some studies based on sports organizations that have applied SWOT analysis. Bo's

the paper was released in 2010, it applied SWOT analysis to evaluate the current situation and problems of the Beijing E-sports industry and give out some suggestions on the future development of the organization.

3.2 Chinese Women's Basketball Team

The team consists of 12 high-level Chinese women basketball players. The history of the present Chinese women's basketball team can be traced back to the time that the People's Republic of China has just founded. The team has maintained the status of Asian hegemony and has got 12 Asian championships. Take recent ten years as an example, the team has won the championship in the 16th and 18th Asian Games; the second place in the 26th Asian Championship. In international competitions, the team is also one of the most competitive teams in the world. For instance, the team has become the fifth in the latest 2020 Tokyo Olympics and the sixth in the 17th World Championship. It's worth mentioning that there are some current players on the team who have reached the level of WNBA which is the highest-level women's basketball league. For example, Li, and Meng joined the Atlanta Dream, and Han Xu joined the New York free.

However, for the current Chinese women's basketball team there are still some problems. In detail, the team has just finished the replacement of the old players and the new players. In this case, most of the main players in the team are very young. They are not familiar with each other and lack experience in international or intercontinental competitions. Thus, the score of the team is unstable.

3.3 SWOT Analysis

3.3.1 Strength

The strength of the team is obvious. To begin with, the physical quality of a player stands among the top ones in the world. The average height of the team is 185.6cm which is much higher than other teams in Asia and most of the teams in the world. Moreover, in the past few years, China has had considerable development in women's basketball youth training. In this case, the age structure of the national team is relatively young. For example, in the latest 2021 Tokyo Olympics, the average age of the team is 25 which is the youngest in the final eight teams. However, this internal strength is more relative to the theoretical side or tactical side. In other words, these superiorities have little to do with social attention. Due to the lack of exposure to the whole Chinese women's basketball industry, these superiorities of the physical quality are difficult to recognize by the customers.

3.3.2 Weakness

The younger age of players could also be a weakness. For half of the players, it is the first time joining the national team. Based on this situation, many main players in the team don't have any international or intercontinental competition experience. Thus, the possibility of athletes' mistakes would increase due to nervousness and apprehensiveness. Plus, these players who are new to the national team are not familiar with each other, so the cooperation between them is immature. In fact, these weaknesses would have some impact on social attention. To be specific, the immaturity of the team could have a negative impact when it comes to the key games even the final. The team would miss the championship resulting in immature mistakes. However, most of the spectators would only pay attention to the champion. Thus, this immaturity of the team will eventually affect their social attention on them.

3.3.3 Opportunity

Although there is a lack of exposure on the team, the team has a good reputation among the public. In other words, women's sports have a positive image among the public. In this case, even if the team didn't win a good score in the competition, the audience still praised the team as hardworking and glorious to fail. This good reputation would have a strong impact on society's attention. Cause the reputation would link with the potential spectators of the team. According to Sloan spectators are those who just watch and observe. Due to the positive image of the team, there is a great chance to switch those potential spectators into real fans who will pay attention to the team.

3.3.4 Threaten

The main threat to the team’s future development comes from the lack of exposure for the whole Chinese women's basketball industry. The competitions that Chinese women basketball players participate in could divide into two types, the WCBA league, and international competitions. For the WCBA league, there isn't a clear broadcaster, CCTV (China Central Television) would only relay some of the key games, so it can be hard to watch the rest of the game on TV. Based on this situation, Chinese women basketball players will gain less attention than other sports athletes, like football and men's basketball. Furthermore, not only for sports competitions, in recent years there is a television program called "Dunk of China" which invited male basketball players and celebrities to compete with each other. However, within the history of Chinese women's basketball, there wasn't a television program to let society get familiar with it. Consequently, this would have a great impact on social attention. According to Jensen's study in 2014, the amount of exposure to a sports team has a positive linkage with social attention to it . Thus, the lack of exposure to the team would decrease the social attention on it.

4. Results & Discussion

In conclusion, the advantages of the team are that the team itself is a competitive team with high physical quality and ample youth player resources. Thus, the team could always maintain a high

ranking in international competition. Furthermore, the team has accumulated a good reputation among the public. These masses are the potential spectators who can transform into fans. However, the team is still facing some serious problems from both the internal and external dimensions. For the relatively young age of the main players, the team is lack international competition experience and is immature in cooperation. Plus, from the absence of an official broadcaster, social media account, and TV programs whole, it can be found that the Chinese women's basketball industry has lacked exposure.

There is some advice for the team to increase the social attention on them. The central idea of this advice is to increase the exposure of the team to enlarge the possibility to attract social attention. Firstly, it's better to have an official broadcaster for the WCBA league who completely relays the competitions within a season. Moreover, the team needs to create an official account on social media. This would not only benefit the fans who want to search for the latest information about the team but also create a new way for spectators to to get known the team. Thirdly, it's an effective method to let some of the high-level players in the team, like those who entered the WNBA mentioned in the previous section, participate in TV programs. This would be a good way to create superstars. Later, these superstars could exploit the star effect to promote the team and attract social attention.

However, there are still some limitations to this paper. The paper is based on an objective perspective, so most are personal opinions and evaluations. Moreover, the paper hasn't considered the "three vs three women basketball" as one of the research objects. The main reason for this is that three-player basketball has a different system compared to traditional futsal basketball. To be specific, the history and rules of three players' basketball are completely different. It has just become an Olympic sport in 2017 and has distinctive rules and player requirements. Furthermore, three players basketball has a special city culture background. Based on this situation, Chinese women's three-players basketball doesn't have a professional league. Besides international competitions, most of the games are city invitational tournaments. In conclusion, there is no comparison of the superiorities and problems between these two women's basketball teams.

5. Conclusions

Based on the fact that the Chinese women's basketball team hasn't gotten enough social attention even though it maintained high rankings in international competitions, the paper set the Chinese women's basketball team as the research object and discussed "how to increase the social attention on the team". In literature reviews, the paper reviewed the marketing mix theory which is also known as the "4Ps" theory. Plus, the paper has discussed the relationship of customers' purchase intention with each element of the marketing mix theory base on previous studies. Then by using SWOT analysis, the paper evaluates the strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of Chinese women's basketball respectively. Also, the paper reveals how will these factors affect the social attention of the team. As a result of SWOT analysis, instead of the "strength", all of the three factors would have a strong impact on the team's social attention. Then the paper provided some ways to rise social attention by increasing the exposure of the teams. The most crucial one is finding an official broadcaster to relay the league.

The paper has filled in the research gap that is the reason for the team's lack of social attention with the prevalence of the internet as a background. Furthermore, the paper advises on the team's future development including the internet as a factor that is valuable for organizations that still struggling for lack of attention. For implication, the paper has validated the application of SWOT analysis in an organization's current situation evaluation and future development strategies. However, there are still limitations to the research. The paper is mostly based on personal evaluations and hasn't included three players from women’s basketball teams in China in the research.

Future studies can focus on the relationship between social media exposure and the social attention of the team. Also, the effects of different kinds of social media exposure. Social media, as a new

communication channel, has a strong potential customer base and plays an important role in attracting social attention. Nonetheless, at present, there aren't enough papers in this research field.

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