Chapter 18
Getting Supporter Engagement in Sports:
The Role of Digital and Mobile Marketing in the Real Madrid F.C.

Veronica Baena
Universidad Europea de Madrid, Spain

ABSTRACT

This chapter attempts to provide a better understanding of the impact that sport marketing is having on achieving customer engagement. To accomplish this goal, the case of the Real Madrid F.C., estimated at having over 200 million supporters worldwide, is analyzed. Moreover, the team is among the top three clubs of the world in terms of followers and engagement on social media. As regards brand value, the Real Madrid F.C. is worth more than any team in the world. The combination of the aforementioned factors made the Real Madrid F.C. the appropriate brand to choose for this study, representing a leading organization in sports, business, and marketing. A number of methods were used to collect data for this study; specifically, information about the team was gathered by repeatedly browsing its website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram accounts, and apps. Data from interviews published in business press and posts were also compiled. Additionally, a focus group was conducted to discuss the customer engagement of Real Madrid's fans.

INTRODUCTION

Brands are a strategic choice for companies that operate in markets where technological innovation is a basic premise (Jensen & Beckmann, 2009). This is especially relevant in the 21st century, as due to the globalization of the economy, companies nowadays have the possibility to consider the entire market instead of just focusing only on their local region (Ratten & Ratten, 2011).

Regarding sports, globalization has enabled teams to expand their fan base throughout the globe. Specifically, teams are becoming increasingly commercialized, while at the same time sport entities have become more professional. Moreover, the distinction between fans (those who are highly identified with the team, coach, players, etc.) and spectators is crucial; as supporter fervor gives rise to an irrational rather than a rational economic way of consuming football (Rodriguez-Pomeda, Casani & Alonso-Almeida, 2015). To shed light on this issue, literature argues that good marketing plans should focus on and accentuate connection with the team in order to capitalize on this type of emotional attachment. However, only recently have researchers started to address the understanding of the brand-supporter relationships or consumer connections to brands (Wallace, Buil & De Chernatony, 2014; Baena, 2016).

Among the different constructs related to the brand consumer relationship, it has been posited that consumers may experience passion, obsession and dependency in particular (Fournier, 1998). More recently, brand commitment has been found to be positively linked to desirable post purchase behaviors among satisfied customers (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Nevertheless, to date, most literature within the field of sports branding has been limited to the area of brand equity or brand extensions, and little research has examined the relationship between supporters' emotional attachment and branding strategy (see. i.e., Baena, 2017b).

Particularly, prior sports literature has conducted single case studies to analyze Manchester United as an example of network orchestration (Shaw, 2007), David Beckham as a brand (Vincent, Hill & Lee, 2009); the brand elements and local inspiration of FIFA World Cup (Weszka, 2011); the global marketing strategy of Bayern Munich (Baena, 2017a); or the effect that CSR practices carried out by the Foundation Real Madrid may have on brand love (Baena, 2017b). However, to the author's knowledge, very scant literature has addressed the analysis of branding strategy to achieve fan commitment. To achieve this goal, this chapter attempts to contribute to the identification of the effects of cutting-edge digital and mobile marketing on the emotional relationship to a sports brand.

As stated, the present study analyzes whether digital (online and social networks) in conjunction with mobile marketing actions performed by sport entities may increase brand commitment and have an impact on the emotional attachment that supporters have towards their clubs. We also consider the effect of brand communities (through website and social networks). To do so, we focus on the Real Madrid F.C., a team that has truly realized the importance of branding and as such has developed the ability to market in a way not seen anywhere else in the world of soccer. Specifically, with millions of followers throughout the different channels, Real Madrid is among the top 3 teams of the world in terms of followers and engagement on social media as published in the latest Top Forbes' Social Media Rankings. Moreover, as regards brand value, since 2013 Real Madrid has usurped Manchester United's long-held title as the most valuable soccer team in the world.

We have structured the present work into various sections. Firstly, we discuss the role of Internet as a tool to transform the traditional company's communication strategy. Subsequently, the marketing strategy implemented by The Real Madrid FC through digital (website and social networks) and mobile marketing is discussed, as well as its effectiveness in terms of customer commitment. The present study ends with the conclusions of the research and some thought on its limitations, as well as suggestions for future lines of research.

Related Content

Institutional and Cultural Implications of Mexican SMEs Internalization

José G. Vargas-Hernández (2017). *Organizational Culture and Behavior: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 1163-1187).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/institutional-and-cultural-implications-of-mexican-smes-internalization/177621

The Information System within the Organization: A Case Study

Bruce R. Campbelland G. Mike McGrath (2003). *Critical Reflections on Information Systems: A Systemic Approach (pp. 209-225).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/information-system-within-organization/7272

Sexual Identities in the Workplace: Avoiding Organizational Trauma When Disclosure Occurs – Current Perspectives

Robert A. Cleve, dil Ikand Viviane de Castro Pecanha (2017). *Impact of Organizational Trauma on Workplace Behavior and Performance (pp. 188-220).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/sexual-identities-in-the-workplace/175078

The Valuation of Knowledge in Public-Private Partnerships

J. W. Vasbinderand Th. P. Groen (2001). *Knowledge Management and Business Model Innovation (pp. 250-266).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/valuation-knowledge-public-private-partnerships/24941

A Case for Ethical and Administrative Considerations on Grade Inflation: A Review

Helen G. Hammondand Gary R. Almy (2021). *International Journal of Responsible Leadership and Ethical Decision-Making (pp. 1-16).*

www.irma-international.org/article/a-case-for-ethical-and-administrative-considerations-on-grade-inflation/308453