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Building relations with sport participants through the Facebook: The case of badminton clubs in Ho Chi Minh City

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the use of Facebook by members in the T_T Badminton Team page as a brand-management tool in the badminton clubs. The current research involved a content analysis of the branding, marketing, and management strategies provided on the page in the three main places such as Labor Cultural Hall, Ky Hoa Sports Club and Le Hong Phong High school Sports Club in Ho Chi Minh city. The data analysis was conducted with SPSS version 19 using descriptive statistical analysis. Frequencies and percentages were reported for all categories. The findings from this study revealed multiple approaches to evaluating communication, branding, and marketing-management techniques through social media. Facebook users experience the content posted on the page T_T Badminton Team in real time. The practical applications of the findings illustrate the impact social-media content can potentially have on sport consumer behavior and their potential to manage brand presence and identity through Facebook.

Keywords: sport participants, Facebook, badminton clubs, marketing-management

1. Introduction

The Internet is the fastest growing communication medium and provides an important marketing vehicle for the sport industry (Rainie, 2005) [5]. During this time, consumers' expectations have changed. Today's sport marketers operate in an environment where consumers of all demographic groups are increasingly literate with social media and have significant advancements in technology at their fingertips (Meadows-Klue, 2008) [2]. Many sports organizations have embraced relationship- marketing approaches (Stavros, Pope & Winzar, 2008) [4] and recognized that their consumers are highly involved "with a desire for long-term association with a team sport" (Shani, 1997) [3].

The use of social media as a means to communicate and engage with others has grown significantly in the past 5 years. Social-media sites such as Twitter and Facebook have changed the way individuals interact and provide a central location for online social engagement. Williams and Chinn (2010) [6] illustrate the advantages of social media for sport entities, particularly in regard to fostering strong relationships with sport consumers, noting that "the potential value and benefits of using social media to meet relationship-marketing goals is significant".

Scholars have long linked brand identity and brand management to enhanced loyalty among consumers and sports fans. Coyle (2010) [1] indicates that sports teams must actively use social media to enhance brand management, encourage social interactions among fans, promote ticket sales, and cultivate a more favorable online experience. In sports clubs, social media provide a unique and strategic means for managers, staffs and coaches to cultivate relationships with customers and build and maintain a strong brand presence, and their use in this regard warrants examination. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the use of social media as a brand-management tool in the badminton clubs. Specifically, this study examined the use of Facebook by members in the T_T Badminton Team page.

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2. Methodology

The current research involved a content analysis of the branding, marketing, and management strategies provided on the page of T_T Badminton Team which provides badminton services for customers in the three main places such as Labor Cultural Hall, Ky Hoa Sports Club and Le Hong Phong High school Sports Club in Ho Chi Minh city.

There are 572 members of the T_T Badminton Team page including people who are training at the three badminton clubs. The data collection process involved taking a screen shot of the content items from the respective pages, printing the items, and assigning an item number to each. Content items were reviewed for emerging categories and themes until theoretical saturation was reached (Lindolf & Taylor, 2002). Because of the nature of content on Facebook and the theories analyzed, some categories elicited multiple brand and marketing strategies simultaneously and were not mutually exclusive. Such as, Form of communication includes status update, picture, video, link, notes, other; or Brand-association factors includes brand mark, tournament, training place, social interaction, commitment, organizational attributes, other.

The data analysis was conducted with SPSS version 19 using descriptive statistical analysis. Frequencies and percentages were reported for all categories. The groups of members Facebook pages we examined represented three groups with different purposes. The members from Labor Cultural Hall (*N* = 95), Ky Hoa Sports Club (*N* = 251) and Le Hong Phong High school Sports Club (*N* = 226) yielded substantial data.

3. Results

The type of communication used determines the way the information is viewed and can influence the way the Facebook users interact. A large proportion of the content was uploaded by members of T_T Badminton Team using as

Facebook communication tools such as link status, picture, video, notes and other.

The members of Labor Cultural Hall used the following tools most frequently: picture with 20.1%, status 18.2% and video 10.2%. Link, notes, and other communication tools were not frequently used. Then, the members of Ky Hoa Sports Club used the following tools most frequently: picture with 45.4%, status 40.6% and video 15.3%. Link, notes, and other communication tools were not frequently used. Lastly, the members of Le Hong Phong High school Sports Club used the following tools most frequently: picture with 53.8%, status 32.1% and video 18.9%. Link, notes, and other communication tools were not frequently used.

Table 1: Types of Facebook Communication Tools Used in the Page

| Form of communication | Labor Cultural Hall | Ky Hoa Sports Club | LHP Sports Club |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Status | 18.2% | 40.6% | 32.1% |
| Picture | 20.1% | 45.4% | 53.8% |
| Video | 10.2% | 15.3% | 18.9% |
| Link | 2.3% | 5.2% | 4.8% |
| Notes | 0.1% | 1% | 1% |
| Other | 0.1% | 0.5% | 0.8% |

These findings indicate that a variety of communication tools in combination with different types of content may enable brand managers to appropriately communicate using these formats.

The top six brand associations used in the content are reported in Table 2. Content items were coded according the multiple categories of brand association. The frequency and percentage represent the number of times these associations occurred throughout the content.

Table 2: Top Brand Associations

| Brand-association category | Labor Cultural Hall | Ky Hoa Sports Club | LHP Sports Club |
|---|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Tournament: official championship, friendly matches | 28.9% | 52.1% | 33.7% |
| Socialization: online or face to face, discussion with customers or questions, pictures of members or group | 20.7% | 38.7% | 18.7% |
| Brand mark: image has logo or recognizable image | 22.5% | 10.8% | 37.3% |
| Training place: hall, indoor stadium or any mention of the facility | 33.5% | 5.7% | 20.7% |
| Commitment: support, loyalty, commitment showing support, thanking members/customers | 12.1% | 21.1% | 4.2% |
| Organizational attributes: gives to community, charity, goodwill, positive characteristics | 15.6% | 27.3% | 5.1% |

The members of Labor Cultural Hall used the following brand associations most frequently: training place 33.5%, tournament 28.9%, brand mark 22.5%, socialization 20.7%, organizational attributes 15.6%, and commitment 12.1%. Then, the members of Ky Hoa Sports Club used the following brand associations most frequently: tournament 52.1%, socialization 38.7%, organizational attributes 27.3%, commitment 21.1%, brand mark 10.8%, and training place 5.7%. Lastly, the members of Le Hong Phong High school Sports Club used the following brand associations most frequently: brand mark 37.3%, tournament 33.7%, training place 20.7%, socialization 18.7%, organizational attributes 5.1%, and commitment 4.2%.

The different organizational goals and uses of brand associations are identified through the content examined. Page used Facebook to portray the experience most frequently through tournaments, socialization, and training place. These strategies offer unique opportunities to actively mediate and manage a favorable public perception.

Facebook user interaction was described within each group and with a frequency distribution in Table 3.

Table 3: Facebook Users interaction with Content on the Page

| Interaction with Content of Page | Labor Cultural Hall | Ky Hoa Sports Club | LHP Sports Club |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Like | 15% | 45% | 40% |
| Comments | 20% | 50% | 30% |
| Share | 10% | 35% | 55% |

On the like interaction, the members of Ky Hoa Sports Club is the most active with 45%, then the members of Le Hong Phong High school Sports Club with 40% and the last one is the members of Labor Cultural Hall with 15% interaction to the Page. Then, on the comment interaction, the members of Ky Hoa Sports Club is the most active with 50%, then the members of Le Hong Phong High school Sports Club with 30% and the last one is the members of Labor Cultural Hall

with 20% interaction to the Page. Lastly, on the share interaction, members of Le Hong Phong High school Sports Club is the most active with 55%, then the members of Ky Hoa Sports Club with 35% and the last one is the members of Labor Cultural Hall with 10% interaction to the Page.

These findings suggest that the audiences for these three groups of members may be characteristically different. However, the management techniques reveal that even though these groups have different sizes of audiences to entertain, their management techniques are relatively similar. The use of the communication tools and type of coverage in brand-related attributes signifies that the use of Facebook tools and strategy to engage Facebook users was similar regardless of member size. Furthermore, the significantly different member's interaction between the three groups reinforces the idea of managing content and online consumer interactivity.

4. Conclusions

The findings from this study revealed multiple approaches to evaluating communication, branding, and marketing-management techniques through social media. Facebook users experience the content posted on the page T_T Badminton Team in real time. The frequency of posting revealed a difference in the techniques these three groups of members used to manage their content coverage. These results indicate that content was uploaded according to events and time frames that were relevant to the specific Facebook audiences.

The practical applications of the findings illustrate the impact social-media content can potentially have on sport consumer behavior and their potential to manage brand presence and identity through Facebook. Essentially, the findings suggest that the management of communication techniques and the content posted to these sites can potentially increase brand exposure and, as a result, facilitate two-way interaction.

It is important to note the limitations with the design of this content analysis as well as frequency statistics. Facebook pages represent only one media outlet for examination. Facebook user-interaction levels provide a way to describe the current interaction but are not controlled for any type of covariate. In addition, a qualitative analysis of actual Facebook user comments may provide more specific information about consumer behavior. Future research should include a qualitative analysis of content posted to Facebook pages and Facebook users' comments on it. Last but not least, the study just is a pilot study on the one sport page related with badminton team. In the future, the researcher should try to collect more pages as well as more sports for studying.

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