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Research into the source and representation of the powerful brand of professional football clubs

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ABSTRACT

Powerful brand is one of the most outstanding representations of the professional football clubs, and the brand of professional football clubs is the most outstanding feature, namely, its intangible asset. The brand of the professional football club is obtained by virtue of the quality of the competition products and marketing capability. None of the powerful brands may be formed spontaneously, even the clubs having high quality products also need to market their brands, expand their influence among the public to gradually grow the brands into powerful club brands.

KEYWORDS

Professional football clubs; Powerful brand; Product quality; Brand marketing.



DEFINITION OF THE BRAND OF PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL CLUB

Professional football clubs carry the rich cultural content and spirit pursuit of football sport, and their brands not only contain such visible elements as symbols, brands and so on, but also imply such hidden elements as the passion for football sport and unity, and embody the concepts and values specific to the football sport.

The brand of professional football club is a multi-level concept. In a narrow sense, the brand of professional football club means creating, maintaining and developing a whole set of long-term overall strategies and actions by making the best of internal and external resources to expand the consumer group and obtain the profits and values from the difference and form the unique marks different from those of other clubs based on the great achievements made in the league games and cup games. In a broad sense, the brand of association is the result formed under the joint actions of the brands of professional football clubs. If each of the brands does well, the reputed brand of associations will be naturally formed.^[1]

SOURCE OF THE BRAND OF THE PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL CLUBS

Quality of game products

Any brand of professional football clubs similar as other industries shall be based on quality. However, different from other industries, the professional football clubs are special as the product quality is the most important source of the powerful brands of the professional football clubs, and should the clubs fail to provide the game products of high quality above general level, no powerful brands will be formed. On the contrary, should the game product quality of a club fails to reach the average level, the club will be eliminated in the competition of the market.

It can be seen that almost all of the successful big clubs in today's international football business are based on extremely high quality games, and the high quality games are based on the great power of the football teams. On the contrary, few medium or small-scale clubs make breakthroughs in their game quality, and exert very limited influence among the football fans, and it is difficult for them to make a difference.^[2] The third and the greatest particularity of the professional football club is the model for creating unique brands, more specifically, the particularity is a precondition, namely, all of the brands of the clubs are managed around the football teams. Should the game product quality of the clubs be low so that no breakthrough is made in the competition of the association and cup, it is difficult to create the powerful brands of professional football clubs however great abilities the clubs have or whatever brand strategies they adopt.

Differentiation

Compared with similar brands, the brands of professional football clubs have unique elements, which make it convenient to form their unique brand culture so that the football fans and sponsors will select the brands of the clubs among the clubs in the market. Clubs may display their own characteristics in one or several of the following aspects: tactics, extended products, social public services. Undoubtedly, the most desirable situation is that the clubs should have their own characteristics in several aspects. In terms of the source of the professional football club brand, differentiation is not the most important aspect.

Brand marketing

The quality and differentiation of the game products of professional football clubs are the bases of the sources of powerful brands. In order to create powerful brands, brand-related marketing activities must be carried out. Brand marketing of professional football clubs is to create the link between the clubs and the public, effectively improve the fame of the club brands in the public wherein the public includes not only the fans, but also the sponsors and media and so on closely associated with the clubs.^[3] The marketing of the professional football club brands includes promotion and marketing, public relation, services and sales promotion and others. Organic combination of the aspects above may improve the brand assets of the enterprises in an optimum way. Like the source of the competitive power of the professional football clubs, the market competition intensity does not play an important role in the source of the club brands, and the club brands shall be created by virtue of their own abilities.

REPRESENTATIONS OF POWERFUL BRANDS OF PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL CLUBS

Consumers' royalty

Consumers' royalty means the consumers' long-term preference to the products or services of the brands of the professional football clubs, which is expressed as the repeated buy of the products or services of the club brands. The consumers of the professional football clubs may be equivalent to football fans as should the consumers be uninterested in the football sport, the club brands, however powerful they are, will not be consumed by the consumers. The club fans may be divided into two classes: the super fans of the club; general fans. The super fans are the most royal consumers of the club, whether the clubs wax and wane, these fans always support the clubs. For them, watching games on the field is necessary, so it is difficult for their consumption habits to be changed by other factors. General fans are consumers interested in football sport, and they support certain football teams, they only watch the games that attract them, and will change their supported teams when the situation changes. The main factors that affect general fans' royalty are the product quality and differentiation.

1. Quality of game products

General fans watch the football games simply to expect to see their supported teams play football excellently and win the games. Accordingly, should the professional football club want the royalty of the fans, the quality of the game products will be the most important decisive factor.

2. Differentiation

Objectively speaking, it is unrealistic for any club to win all of the games, however, if the clubs may cater for the preference of the consumers in tactics, spirits and wills so that general fans may be attracted, the differentiation may also play a great role in obtaining the royalty of the fans. Should the clubs keep the advantages of high quality of game products and differentiation permanently, general fans may probably be transformed into super fans.

Market shares

Market share means the proportion of the sales volume of the professional football clubs' products among similar products, which directly reflects the extent that the products and services of the club brands meet the consumers' requirements. The products mentioned here not only include the admission tickets and season tickets of the game products^[4], but also the extended products associated therewith. The higher the market share is, the more powerful the club brand is. However, the market share of a club's product is limited to a range, and there will not be any one club brand that will monopolize the whole market. Should the football clubs provide equal quality products, the major factors that affect the market shares will be their brand marketing abilities and the competition intensity: brand marketing may increase the brand assets of the clubs, and consumers always prefer to selecting the brands with higher values; like other industries, the higher the competition intensity is, the lower the market share of a club is.

Brand premium

Brand premium means the added values of the powerful brands compared with weak brands. Every consumer is not willing to pay premium for brands while super fans of the clubs tend to be more willing to pay premium for brands^[5]. The factors affecting the brand premium of a professional football club include the quality of game products, differentiation and brand marketing level.

1. Quality of game products

Should the quality of game products not be improved, the professional football clubs will not be able to bring the brand into play as a credit carrier, or reinforce its function to pass high quality information to the consumers and improve the brand premium.

2. Differentiation

Football fans always like unique games. Should the professional football club be able to show their uniqueness in tactics, spirits and wills, and meet the requirements of the fans, as well as provide extended products associated with the game products, fans will probably be willing to pay the premium for the clubs' products.

3. Ability to market brands

When the professional football clubs market the brands successfully, the public's recognition is improved. In order to avoid the risks of buying the products of other club brands, public are more willing to buy the products of the club brands they accept. Accordingly, the more successfully the brands are marketed, the more premium the brands will have.

Brand extension

Brand extension means extension of powerful brands from the field of game products into other fields. By using the extension tactics, new products other than the game products may enter the new market by virtue of the game products, thus further saving the costs.^[6] The main factor that affects the extension of brands is the clubs' abilities to market brands: whether the clubs may maintain their dominant state in the highly related industries, such as shirts and souvenirs, or make use of the powerful brands to successfully enter the fields of catering, entertainment and even finance.

CONCLUSIONS

In a word, in the professional football club brands, the quality and differentiation of game products affect the consumers' royalty, and their brand marketing abilities and the competition intensity affect the market share, and the quality, differentiation of the game products and the brand marketing brand affect the brand premium and the brand marketing abilities affect the brand extension.

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