

Effective promotion through official Facebook pages: a case of Major League Baseball Teams

Authors: Jun Woo Kim (1), Jongchul Park (2)

Institutions:

1. Loughborough University, UK
2. German Sport University Cologne, Germany

E-mail: j.kim-13@student.lboro.ac.uk

Aim of paper and research questions

Professional sport teams have popularly utilised social media as a medium of retaining fan relationships and attracting new fans (Pronschinske, Groze, & Walker, 2012). Major League Baseball (MLB) teams are not exceptional. All MLB teams have managed not only their websites but also their social media such as Twitter, Youtube, blogs, and Facebook. In building effective social media environment which is suited to engage fans, types of contents posted on social media play an important role. However, research investigating different promotional effects on contents which are essential for marketers to equip with appropriate strategies is limited. This study sought to examine the impacts of various Facebook contents by comparing the numbers of Likes, Comments, and Shares on five different promotion types (i.e., external commerce, fan interactivity, organisational promotion, player/personnel promotion, and team information) in official MLB Facebook pages. In addition, the study tested if such impacts were moderated by team performance. For this, two MLB teams, Kansas City Royals, the World Series winner, and Philadelphia Phillies, the lowest ranked team, in the 2015 season were selected.

Literature review

Recently various actions of marketing and promotion campaigns have been conducted through Facebook, and fans have been participating in contents production more actively than ever. For effective promotion through Facebook, fan engagement should be an important indicator (Speyer, 2011). According to Smith (2010), for the content to be relevant and delivered in high quality, different types of posts should be uploaded frequently with attractive and customised contents. Furthermore, it is essential to upload posts reflecting what their fans want and see. Clavio and Metz (2014) developed a coding scheme defining five common Facebook contents which were external commerce, fan interactivity, organisational promotion, player/personnel promotion, and team information. Using this coding scheme, Anchen (2015) conducted a research examining the impact of content type, number of Facebook fans, market size, and winning percentage on engagement with NBA teams' Facebook pages. According to the results from the Anchen's (2015) multivariate multilevel model, player and personnel promotion content received the most number of likes ($M = 4,401$, $SD = 15,682$) and comments ($M = 135$, $SD = 548$) and fan interactivity received the most shares ($M = 248$, $SD = 1,296$). The current research extends these previous researches by applying the coding scheme (Clavio & Metz, 2014) into the context of MLB.

Methodology

Data were collected from official Facebook pages of Royals and Phillies from January 2015 to December 2015. There were a

total of 1,166 posts: 579 for Royals and 587 for Phillies. The numbers of Likes, Shares, and Comments were counted on each post as indicators of fan engagement. As independent variables, all posts were categorized in the five promotion types (Clavio & Metz, 2014). For data analyses, two MANOVA tests were carried out. An adjusted alpha value of .025 was applied to ensure that the overall risk or familywise error rate for all tests remained .05.

Results

In the first MANOVA, for Likes, player/personnel promotion ($M = 9120.20$, $SD = 11866.28$) had a significantly higher mean score than the other four promotion types, and team information ($M = 5800.97$, $SD = 12118.45$) had a significantly higher mean score than organisational promotion ($M = 4542.44$, $SD = 9032.98$), fan interactivity ($M = 2947.95$, $SD = 5054.15$) and external commerce ($M = 1644.24$, $SD = 2513.63$). For Shares, the tests revealed similar results; team information ($M = 1327.47$, $SD = 4558.43$) and player/personnel promotion ($M = 1278.21$, $SD = 3505.82$) reported significantly higher mean scores than the other three. In the second MANOVA, the results revealed For Likes, player/personnel promotion of Royals had a significantly higher mean score ($M = 12418.74$, $SD = 14795.10$) than player/personnel promotion of Phillies ($M = 6124.98$, $SD = 7197.06$). In addition, team information of Royals ($M = 8726.60$, $SD = 15350.88$) had a significantly higher mean score than team information of Phillies ($M = 2242.77$, $SD = 4062.83$). The tests showed consistent results for Share.

Discussion and conclusion

The current study extended the previous research by applying the coding scheme (Clavio & Metz, 2014) into the context of MLB. The findings from this research will help MLB team marketers create and design more effective fan engagement campaigns on their social networking sites, reflecting their fans' preferences and needs of information on their players/personnel promotions and team information.

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