

Development Of A Typology Of The Fans Of The Red Devils And Its Meaning For The Future Marketing Campaign

De Knop, Femke; Breesch, Diane; De Knop, Paul

Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium

E-mail: Femke_dk@hotmail.com

Aim of the study

Recently the Belgian national football team ('The Red Devils') have known several commercial and sportive successes. After the 2014 FIFA World Cup Finals the Belgian team was even ranked number one on the FIFA World Ranking of National teams. To better understand these successes the research project presented here, explores a fan typology of the Red Devils: Who are these fans? What motivates them? Is this a temporary or a sustainable phenomenon? A concrete mapping of the Belgian national football fan can indeed give an insight in the impact of the performed marketing campaign for the brand 'Red Devils' and can provide suggestions for future campaigns. It includes also an international benchmark, to position the Belgian football fan on an international level.

Theoretical background

Smith and Nicolson (2003) have highlighted the importance of understanding the behavior of sport consumers in terms of two-, three- and multidimensional typologies. The past decades sport consumer behaviour has received a lot of attention. Recent research of de Carvalho, Scheerder, Boen and Sarmento (2013) explored the reasons for people going to football stadiums based on a multidimensional fan typology.

Methodology

To explore the Red Devil fan typology a multidimensional approach of ten factors was applied (demographics, underlying motivations, emotional connection, financial connection, identity, loyalty, connective focus, overt experiences, attendance at games, and results). The data collection was retrieved from a survey completed by the Solvay Alumni VUB and ULB (n = 271).

Results

Multivariate analysis — factor- and cluster analysis — delivers the following multidimensional (six-piece) typology: striker, playmaker, midfielder, defender, goalkeeper and benchwarmer^[1]. Each representing a degree of fandom from strong to weak and all supported by seven different factors: football, activities, attention, identity, pleasure, family and loyalty.

International benchmarking shows that the Belgian fan is not very committed compared to other countries, e.g. Spain and the UK. To become a solide and sustainable fan the 'midfielders' and 'defenders' should be targeted with long-term marketing campaigning, in alignment with other initiatives like co-creation, a more transparant management and joining a fanclub.

[1] The degree of fandom is indicated by positions on a football field. This is a pure (marketing) indication, with no intention to discriminate or to position the one above the other. The goal is to have a marketing influence (for the future) and to have a better visualisation of the typology.

References

- de Carvalho, M., Scheerder, J., Boen, F., & Sarmento, J. (2013). *What brings people into the soccer stadium? (Part 1) The case of Belgium from a marketing perspective*. (Sport Policy & Management, 18). Leuven: KU Leuven/Policy in Sport & Physical Activity Research Group.
- Stewart, B., Smith, A. C., & Nicholson, M. (2003). Sport Consumer Typologies: A Critical Review. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 12(4), 206–216.