



PR-Support of Sports Club as Way to Attract Funding and Labor

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Abstract. PR in sports is aimed at creating a positive image of an organization, the reputation of a sports club, or even an individual athlete, as well as to attract public attention to various sporting events and events in the field of sports. Domestic commercial sports is trying to find new sources of funding to facilitate the process of effective development of sports organizations. Among the sources of income for the clubs is implied ticketing, profit from the sale of television rights, merchandise and sponsorships. A set of specialized PR communications and tools is used to attract the attention of a disinterested audience and increase the popularity of a sports organization among fans. These are sports fans who occupy one of the leading positions in financing the activities of a particular sports organization in any country of the world a decade ago and now. Accordingly – the more fans, the better funding for club members, as well as more people who want to work in a well-known and attractive club.

Keywords: Hockey · Loyalty cards · PR support · Social networks · Staff loyalty

1 Introduction

The audience develops a positive attitude to sports events, the sports organization acquires a positive image with the help of thoughtful and planned public relations activities, and thanks to the efforts of internal press services and marketing departments, sports has become one of the most profitable areas of sponsorship and profit. The history of the Dynamo Moscow hockey club brand is inextricably linked with the formation of Russian hockey, as well as the transformation of sports events into a mass and popular product. Hockey has long been a special part of show business, like all professional sports. Professional hockey clubs in the country today are focused not only on sporting achievements, but also on profit. Gradually, the audience began to come to the arena not only for the sake of one hockey game, but also to participate in entertainment events, competitions and activities before and during the match itself, to buy souvenirs and attributes of the club in the lobby, take a photo and get to the big media club in the arena. Fans are one of the most reliable and stable tools for club financing. The commercialization of high-performance sports (elite sports) has made sport a significant player in regional and national economies and political economy.

Sports are the most important public organizations in the social community and social events that unite groups from youth to professional competitions. Sports events compete with other entertainment events, as well as with each other for the attention of fans all over the world. Hockey, however, is the most expensive of the major international team sports. Indoor ice arenas are very expensive to build and operate, and equipment from skates, uniforms, and fall protection costs of the player more than in any other team sport. Ice hockey has a dominant position historically in countries such as Canada, Russia, Finland, Sweden, and the Czech Republic, which is due to the annual performances of the Russian team at the world championships, where the “Red machine” – the nickname of the Russian national ice hockey team, received by the team in Soviet times – is traditionally among the favorites.

According to a study by the global measurement company Nielsen, the hockey audience in Russia is 57 m.p. (or 57%) [8]. This is the number of respondents who are “interested” or “very interested” in this sport, with the highest level of interest expressed by 26 million Russians (or 26% of respondents): they can be considered active hockey fans. The potential audience of hockey in Russia is 83.3 million people (83%) in general - those who are at least a little interested in hockey and follow hockey news [8]. The Kontinental hockey league was created in Russia in 2008 to develop and popularize ice hockey. A project is independent from national federations and the Russian ice hockey Federation in particular. This was preceded by many years of work by Fetisov and Medvedev, and the result was an agreement between the Russian ice hockey Federation and the Kontinental hockey league that the Russian ice hockey championship would be organized by the KHL structures.

The Kontinental hockey league is a domestic and international league created for the development of ice hockey in Russia, as well as in the countries of Eurasia. Currently, the league includes 19 Russian clubs and 6 foreign ones, represented by teams from the Republic of Belarus, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Finland, Slovakia and China. The Kontinental hockey league is one of the leading sports club leagues in Russia. Recognition of the KHL in the country is at the level of 83%, but only 26% of respondents said that they follow the performances of their favorite club or matches on a regular basis. It is also worth noting the features of the so – called “salary cap” - a certain amount for which clubs form a team. There is a reduction in the “ceiling”, aimed at increasing transparency, improving the quality of commercial and sports components and equalizing the financial capabilities of clubs in the domestic league, according to the five-year development strategy announced by the league. This will make the sports competition more spectacular, and the result of the match unpredictable, as the dominance of several single-digit leading teams has been established in recent years, the exit to the playoffs and the victory in the championship of which is predicted before the start of the season. The current situation is explained by the presence of a much larger budget, which allows you to form a team of the strongest players, offer hockey players more favorable financial conditions for moving to your club.

The “salary cap” was set at 850 million rubles for one club per season in the 2018/2019 season, and it was also possible to exceed it by paying the league a 20% additional fee. “The ceiling” will be reduced to 800 million in season 2019/20, exceeding it will cost 30%. Starting from 2020, a strict ceiling of 900 million rubles

will be finally introduced, while the possibility of an additional payment if it is exceeded will be excluded. Conditions of economic instability require rapid transformation and adaptation to new conditions [9].

2 Methodology

The paper uses a secondary analysis of a number of sociological studies conducted by Nielsen. A full-scale survey conducted by Nielsen contains responses from more than 4,700 respondents. The methodology takes into account the territorial zoning of Russia. The general totality consists of citizens of the Russian Federation aged 16 to 65 years. We also analyzed internal documents - seminars on marketing and communications of the Kontinental Hockey League held in 2017, 2018 and 2019. A sociological survey was conducted in 2019 among the club's subscribers in social networks using an online questionnaire. The sample consisted of 372 respondents. Active and potential fans were studied in the aspects of ticket costs and attributes, their typical lifestyle, income group, social activity, attitude to sponsorship and the club. Content analysis of Dynamo club's media behavior in social networks (Facebook Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Telegram) was carried out. Statistics of the club's subscribers, in particular their demographic data, have been studied.

3 Results

In order to correctly determine the direction of the club's development, the possibility of attracting staff and funding, and to place emphasis on working with fans we need to study our audience. The research will be useful not only for the sports organization and the league, but also for potential sponsors: this is how they can evaluate the effectiveness of possible cooperation and investment. After all, the digital age requires us to transmit high quality information through social networks and other digital platforms [1]. Social network analysis was chosen and a traditional study was conducted as a way to study the audience of the Dynamo Moscow hockey club – an online survey was launched, which was attended by subscribers of the Dynamo Vkontakte group. In Russia, the Internet is still growing, including at the expense of a more adult segment of the audience, which suggests that we need to increase interaction in the virtual space [2]. The software allows you to quantify the social and demographic characteristics of users and their behavior in social networks [3]. The “geography” line shows the cities where subscribers are concentrated, in descending order of popularity in statistical data. This is Moscow and Saint Petersburg in most cases, followed by Latvia's Riga, Novosibirsk and Minsk.

A large proportion of subscribers to club accounts are men, but a fairly large percentage of women are interested in club news. We can conclude that hockey remains a team sport that is interesting for both men and women. The average age of a Dynamo fan varies from 25 to 44 years. There is a hypothesis that the average fan of the club is a family man who occasionally attends matches with his family. The average age of the audience that is interested in hockey is 30–40 years according to the survey.

Most of this audience is represented by married men who most often go to hockey with their family, and sometimes with friends. Thus, attending hockey matches is the same form of leisure as going to the cinema, theatre.

The portraits of the target audience were created using the obtained results. Loyal fans attend all or most of the regular season matches and all the club's playoff games, attend pre-season matches at the sports base or games held within the framework of the Moscow Mayor's Cup, purchase a season ticket for several seasons in a row, and monitor the club's Internet resources. Hockey is interesting as a sports competition, following not only Dynamo, but also other clubs of the Continental and National Hockey League. The whole family supports the club. Attends away games of the club in major cities: Saint Petersburg, Kazan, Minsk. They often buy club attributes on the days of home matches. The average receipt is 1200 rubles. They use the attributes and products of the club in everyday life, on match days they are located in the central stands. Income per family member is 50 thousand rubles. Have higher education. Married with two children. Are rational, would like to save money and participate in the incentive program.

Enthusiasts and fans of the weekend attend some matches, usually with top clubs, regard hockey as a show, go with family or friends. Occasionally they buy the club's products, usually when new products appear or the club produces limited - edition products-attributes with a special design, dedicated to the anniversary of the club or an important event, the team's entry into the playoffs, and so on. Subscribed to the several pages of Dynamo in social networks. The team's guest matches are watched on TV. They are receiving or have already received a higher education. Most fans note that they have an average income (78%). So, fans identified three factors that will attract them to attend a hockey match: the team's sports results (42%), the ticket price (38%), and the opportunity to have fun not only watching the competition. Dynamo fans noted among other things that the privileges available to users of the loyalty program will be able to attract an even larger audience to hockey competitions. They are interested in discounts or increased cashback for purchasing tickets and season tickets for team matches, access to club events: meetings of the team and management with fans, attending team training sessions, post-match press conferences, etc. Bonuses when paying for souvenirs in branded stores will allow loyal fans to use the services of the club on favorable terms, which will be a consequence of their motivation to cooperate.

The fans also want the club to pay great attention to its partners. At the moment, Dynamo's partners are companies that do not have a useful property for fans and are not relevant for the target audience. Cooperation with such organizations has a formal meaning and is provided by the banner space system on the club's website in exchange for monetary compensation. The signing of a cooperation agreement with a chain of restaurants or cafes, car brands, grocery stores and electronics, as well as fitness clubs provided the brand's appeal to the target audience and guaranteed the promotion of the club for people unfamiliar with the club's activities, as noted above.

4 Discussion

The main task of marketing and PR in sports is to establish a link between achievements in sports tournaments and performance outside the competition process. The target groups of the hockey club include the media, general sponsors, partners, fans and internal audience – the players themselves and employees of the club and the league. In order for the club to be able to pay for “expensive” players, it is necessary to work seriously with fans and sponsors, so you can see the specifics of the tasks of managing the club. The product produced by a sports organization is the final result of the competition. Marketing and PR work is based on what is happening on the ice. At the same time, the primary basis is the sale of unpredictability of the result and inextricably linked emotions and sensations.

While sport is considered and most often describes itself as a mass type of leisure organization, it is also the most personalized. Thousands of fans come to the stadium and, in fact, choose one product, but each needs a personal approach. Dynamo is proposed to restart and start implementing a new loyalty program to solve the problem of the club’s poor image, to combat the established opinion of fans about unsatisfactory work with fans, as well as to increase revenue from commercial activities. This is necessary to increase engagement. It is necessary to inform the staff that scientific research accompanies all activities from planning to creating and promoting the product [10].

5 Conclusion

Digital technologies, and first of all, Internet technologies not only significantly transform the business process itself, but also modify its infrastructure and market conditions, when introduced into business: the market, demand features, consumer and competitor behavior, and so on [7]. The future development of corporate information systems based on advanced business analytics depends to a large extent on the level of maturity of business processes in the organization and the readiness of personnel for innovations [4]. In cooperation with VTB Bank, the club will issue multi-service bank cards “Our movement” for the fans of the Dynamo Moscow hockey club. The goal of the card is to make communication between fans and the club not only interesting, easy and memorable, but also as profitable as possible.

Fan card “Our movement” is a debit card. Owners will be able to pay for purchases with its help, including using innovative contactless payment technology, or make it into a mobile device and use it as a digital card, as well as withdraw cash from an ATM, make payments via internet banking. The cards have a special design with the club logo.

“Our movement” is the first card for a sports club in the history of VTB and the first Dynamo card issued on a bank card using modern technologies. Fans will be able to save on ticket purchases with its help, the club, in turn, will increase the turnover from sales of season tickets and products, and partners “Dynamo” and VTB Bank will get new customers. Thus, we work with three main target groups of the club: fans, partners and the general sponsor. This bank card can be used as a fan ID, and you can use it to

record a season ticket to attend matches at the VTB arena sports complex. It also presents a bonus card for participation in the loyalty program of the hockey club.

It will provide a number of privileges for loyal fans. These include exclusive events of the club, having accumulated a certain number of points, fans will be able to participate in meetings with fans and the team, visit the team training, participate in post-match press conference and see the work of journalists from the inside, to visit the club and see the training process and communicate with their favorite Dynamo players, participate in photo and autograph sessions, and view the match from the VIP or press box. This also includes special events and promotions dedicated to the birthday of the "Our movement" cardholder. The program participant will be able to spend the accumulated bonuses on buying tickets, season tickets and hockey attributes with autographs of idols.

If a member of the loyalty program is a season ticket holder, then they not only secure their own place on the podium, but also get the opportunity to be one of the first to purchase a certain number of tickets for matches with top clubs, as well as buy a place in case the team reaches the playoff stage. In this way, the club will be attract a new audience that may have never attended a hockey match, and support the demand for Dynamo's services and products. It is recommended to implement a CRM system, Fanats Relationship Management, to properly work with the data that the club will be able to get later after working with the loyalty program.

CRM has become an indispensable tool for marketers in modern marketing. CRM marketing is always based on unique collected and analyzed information about consumers of a product or service [5]. The system records the history of relationships with customers, information about their preferences, and the pool of collected information forms the features and actions that need to be performed to maintain effective interaction. Recently, specialized CRMS for PR specialists have started to appear on the world market, which have attracted the attention of sports industry workers. This is not just software and computer software at the moment, it is a full-fledged communication tool that simplifies and systematizes communication with the audience.

The fan base is not limited to the usual list of names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses in the Fanats Relationship Management system. Each contact has a personal card, which displays the history of relations with the fan, whether they have a subscription or information about participation in the loyalty program, information about purchases made by them, their interests, and activity regarding the club's mailing lists. This data organization facilitates teamwork with the database: all employees of the PR Department are aware of the specifics of interaction with a particular fan. It is a loyal fan who brings money to the club and at the same time wants to get the services he needs from it, in the form of a sporting event, as well as goods, in the form of souvenirs or branded attributes.

In its turn, the system can integrate into several subsystems and contain information not only about the audience of fans, but also information about journalists and media, as well as partners of the organization. Thus, the system provides templates for press releases and messages sent to both fans and journalists, depending on the tasks set. Fanats Relationship Management allows you to make thousands of contacts. One of the important advantages that the CRM system will give is feedback on the mailing list, since it will allow you to evaluate the effectiveness of the mailing list and provide

information about the number of opened and read emails, the viability of mailboxes, and so on.

Sending out the latest news from the club's life will make life easier for many fans, which will increase their loyalty. Dedicated fans spend a large amount of time on Internet resources, searching for the latest news. If the mailing list is targeted, then the fan will get the impression that the club's representatives tell the news personally to him and if they share such information with him, then he feels that he belongs to the common cause. The mailing tool can also be used to invite fans to traditional meetings of fans and teams, and based on responses to make predictions about the attendance of such events. The automated Fans Relationship Management system will solve a number of important strategic tasks: increase revenue from interaction with fans, attract new audiences and increase the loyalty of existing ones, as well as provide information and analytics. All these measures will attract strong players and increase the number of jobs in the club, as well as increase the loyalty of employees of the organization. When employees feel an internal similarity with the company, its values, goals, and feel satisfaction with their involvement, this is one of the indicators of successful integration of the employee into the corporate culture of the club [6].

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