

The popularity of the university basketball championship

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Abstract

Introduction: The aim of our research was to assess the attitude of the students of the Eszterházy Károly University towards the men's basketball team of the University. Furthermore, our goal was to examine the development of the popularity of the basketball team among the university students, to get to know the opinion of the colleagues working in the university basketball scene in relation to the organization and reputation of the tournament. In addition, we describe good practices that can be adapted in Hungary to increase awareness. **Methods:** The aim of our research was to explore the brand values and awareness of the basketball team among the students of Eszterházy Károly University, to achieve this goal we chose a questionnaire survey and filled in the questionnaire online among the students of Eszterházy Károly University (N=389). In addition, we conducted in-depth interviews with four coaches and colleagues in higher education working in the Hungarian University and College Basketball Championship. **Results:** We found that the team has well-identifiable brand elements, with the brand system receiving the lowest score for all brand creators that needs to be improved. The averages of the most important questionnaire responses to the Liker scale questions range from 4.46 to 4.67. These values also indicate that the students of Eszterházy Károly University know the university team, follow its sporting events and are important in strengthening the university identity. In-depth interviews revealed that the process of advertising university matches should be broadened, bringing matches closer to all students. In-depth interviews also highlighted that developing a program stream around matches could be an important consideration. **Conclusions:** In connection with our previous brand research - which examined the team's awareness among the city's adult population - we found lower awareness results, the present research confirmed the higher awareness and interest results of university students in relation to the university's basketball team. By creating a website that meets the needs of today's modern age, involving merchandising products, and expanding the range of programs that accompany matches, the awareness of the basketball team could be raised to an even higher level not only among students, but also among the population. to strengthen. Additional opportunities arose in the organization of the tournament, which were mainly expressed in the expansion of the advertising scale.

Keywords: basketball, brand building, university championship

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Introduction

In the operation of professional sports clubs, along with becoming a sports business, brand building has become a priority. Creating a sports club that is seen as a brand not only by investors, their own fans, but even those who are less interested in sports. It has become especially important that a professional sports team not only has to be economically suitable for investors, but also has to create an image of itself that becomes attractive to society, by which they can identify with the philosophy and mission of the club. This identification can occur in an investment intent but can also be expressed merely in the redemption of a pass or match.

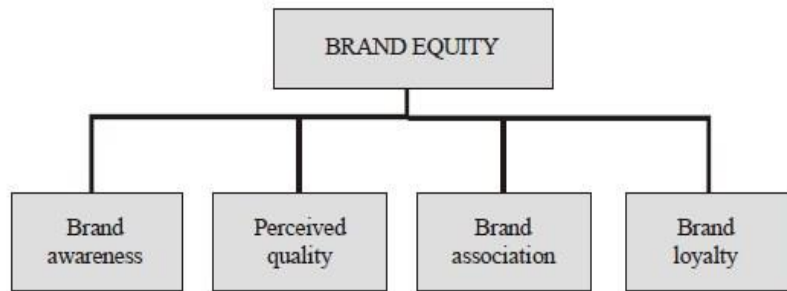
We can talk about brand building in the field of sports from the early 90s, when clubs began to focus more on keeping in touch with supporters, began to assess and highlight the needs of their own fan base, which contributed to learning about demand (1).

Sports teams operating in an increasingly professional environment must continually adapt advanced branding techniques in order to make their brand relevant to consumers, different, and differentiate from competitors (2), i.e., brand elements are unique and easily identifiable. The sports beach is now considered part of the wider entertainment industry (3). While track success remains important, professional sports teams also need to adapt to the ever-expanding entertainment industry by increasing brand value (4,5).

As the basis of brand building, it is important to define the concept of brand, brand building, which has been the subject of many research experiments. One of the most commonly accepted definitions is the

Kotler-Keller definition: “The notional value of a brand is the added value with which we endow products with services” (6). Accordingly, the brand equity of sports teams is derived from the brand creators assigned by sports consumers (7). The definition of a brand term was also coined by Philip Kotler, according to which a brand, i.e. a brand, distinguishes a competitor’s product or service from a competitor’s product or service (8). Not only in the international literature, but also in Hungarian researchers, the definition of brand identity has been extensively addressed (9, 10, 11). According to one of the most commonly accepted definitions, “A brand is a set of symbols whose function is to identify products and services with a specific manufacturer, distributor and at the same time distinguish them from other products” (12). Achenbaum defines a brand as consumer brand value, where the totality of consumer perceptions and emotions about the characteristics of a product is what defines a product as a brand from its unbranded counterparts. (13, 14, 15). It is important to distinguish between the brand and the trademark, which, according to Sándor, reads as follows: “All trademarks are brands, but not all brands are trademarks” (16).

According to Aaker (year number), brand is also a complex concept, accordingly, the basis of brand values is a combination of several factors, which is described in No. 1.illustration. Quality perceived by the consumer that the consumer experiences and recognizes as quality (17). Brand awareness, brand loyalty is also an important factor in brand value. Brand societies, the emotions and attitudes that the consumer associates with the brand.



1. Figure Aaker, DA & Joachimsthaler E. (2000) brand equity model - consumer brand value model

Source: (18). Brand leadership.

There have been several studies on the factors accompanying sports events that can make an event high quality and successful.

Howat et al. (19) examined four factors for sports and leisure sports providers (CERM-CSQ2), which were:

- the basic service (diversity of programs, degree of comfort of the facility, value for money, quality equipment);
- the staff (competence, skills, professionalism);
- the facility (parking, cleanliness);
- and additional services (buffet, food, drink, sports-specific products, babysitting).

Ko (20) quoting (21) identified 4 main dimensions and additional sub-dimensions in the context of which factors need to be considered in a sports service provider:

- program and service quality: how many services there are, opening hours, access to information;
- quality of interaction: by service staff, by other consumers;
- quality of perceived service: change in condition, social factors;
- quality of material elements: environment, design elements, attractive environment, machines, equipment.

In competitive sports, various sports teams now operate in the form of sports companies. For these businesses, an established brand image can provide the following benefits:

- Greater loyalty from the supporters behind the team,
- It is less sensitive to a possible marketing crisis,
- Opportunity for greater trade support and cooperation,
- Better marketability of merchandising products, generating ergo plus revenue,

- Possibility of brand extension.

In summary, the essential basis of branding is the selection of the right tools that are suitable for the unique identification of the product, to distinguish it from other products, but the basis of the brand will be provided by quality.

Objectives, hypotheses

The aim of the study was to assess the awareness of the Eke-Eger-Kok men's basketball team among university students, and the aim of the in-depth interview was to get to know the thoughts of the colleagues working in the league in the light of development opportunities. We hypothesize that the university's basketball team will have a high profile among undergraduate students, which will provide a good foundation for brand building. We hypothesize that the level of visibility of the team is enhanced not only by the guard in the adult second division championship, but also in the national Mefob (Hungarian College and University Championships) championship organized by Mefs(Hungarian University Sports Federation). We hypothesize that there are still many opportunities to increase the national and university awareness of the tournament.

Material and method

For the survey, we selected a questionnaire research and an in-depth interview, the questionnaire was filled in online among the students of Eszterházy Károly University, the in-depth interview was also conducted with a series of questions asked online. In the questionnaire, we formed different groups of questions, which were separated into 5 dimensions. Some of the questions asked about the team's notoriety, there were some that tested its uniqueness, symbolism, attractiveness (on-site or online tracking of events) and that tested the quality elements among the respondents. Respondents were

asked to answer the question or statement on a 1-5 liqueur scale to see how much they agreed with the statement or how true it was, where 1 = not at all, 2 = slightly, 3 = moderately, 4 = very much, 5 = completely extent). From the average values of the statements belonging to each group, we established the team's awareness and main brand values among university students.

Sample presentation

The questionnaire was filled in by 389 (N = 389) university students, of whom 66% were boys (257), 34% (132) were girls, and the students were from different disciplines. In-depth interviews were conducted with four colleagues working in higher education.

Results

Based on the results of the research, we can conclude that the team has well-identifiable brand elements, and for all brand creators, the brand system received the lowest score on which improvement is needed (Figure 2). Previous research (22), which I conducted among the adult population, did not yield such favorable results, as the awareness, attractiveness and symbol system showed only an average value of 3. The reason for this is that among team sports in Hungary, in

the field of passive sports consumption (match attendance), football is one of the spectator team sports whose traditions have a long history and as part of our national identity the active and passive consumer base is much wider (23). compared to other sports, however, there is room for improvement in this audience as well. In the USA, passive sports consumption, i.e. following the sporting events of our favorite team, is one of the most popular leisure activities, while in Hungary spectator team sports have been struggling with spectator problems since the change of regime (24).

In the motivational theory of passive sports consumption (25), it can be observed that there are several motives in the fans' visit to the match, such as success, knowledge, aesthetics, drama, entertainment, family, attraction, performance and belonging to the community, they also return in their brand values (26).

Among the students of the university, the awareness and recognition of the university team is much more pronounced than among the adult population, which can be explained by the fact that real sports belonging to the university means greater attachment among the students.

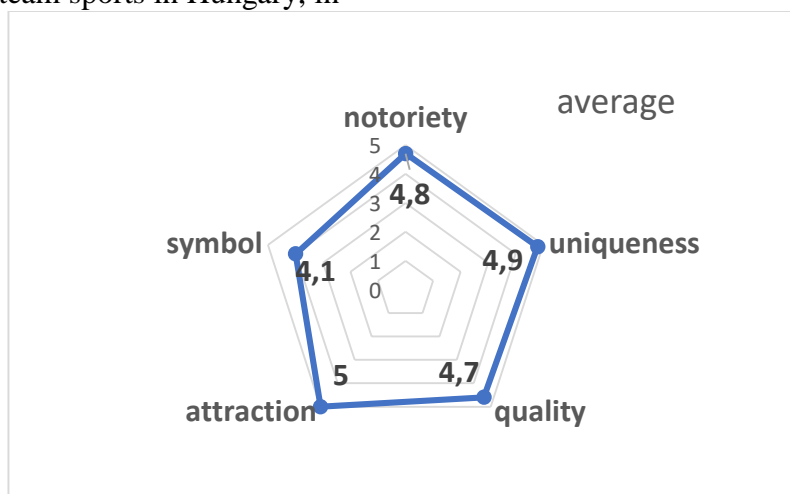


Figure 2. The development of the awareness and brand values of the Eke-Hész basketball team among university students. (1 = not at all, 5 = completely) (Source: own editing)

these results also indicate that basketball matches are important for the students of Eszterházy Károly University. The team

gained a high degree of awareness and appreciation among the students.

Further confirmatory data were provided by the average of the responses to the liqueur

scale questions of the processed questionnaire.

	Item number	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard Deviation
1. In your opinion, does the university basketball team have a good reputation among university students?	389	3	5	4,69	0,555
2. How important do you consider the promotion of the matches of the university basketball team, the deposit programs accompanying the matches?	389	2	5	4,41	0,784
3. How true is the following statement for you? I am a regular visitor to college basketball matches?	389	2	5	4,61	0,679
4. What is your opinion on the following statement? The presence of a basketball team can fill university students with pride?	389	2	5	4,47	0,793

Figure 3. Average and Standard deviation values of the answers to the most important questions of the questionnaire research (Source: own editing)

Deep interview

We asked our questions to the coaches of four teams competing in the Mefob Basketball Championship.

We learned important information from professionals who are busy leading and managing their own basketball association and team every day.

The results of the in-depth expert interview in the light of the Mefob Basketball Championship series of questions

1. How do you rate the popularity of Mefob basketball tournaments among students?

Respondents were able to report a low popularity rate. The tournament is especially important for the players involved. Among the reasons, late start dates, insufficient advertising channels and the University itself should take a more constructive, proactive approach to promoting university sporting events.

2. What measures do you think could be taken to increase attendance at matches?

Respondents unanimously believe that the popularity of matches could be raised if they were tied to other programs. By tying to another sport or another non-Mefob match, held as part of a so-called sporty afternoon. Or the matches could be more popular as a deposit program for a non-sporting event or series of events that is very popular at the university.

3. If they advertise Mefob matches within their own University, by what means and on what interface do these ads appear?

The matches are advertised on social media platforms and through a university newsletter. It can be noted here that the two channels are few to address the masses. The number of advertising channels should definitely be increased.

4. How do you see the quality of the organization of the tournament on the part of Mkosz (Hungarian Basketball Federation) and Mefs?

Despite the aforementioned problems, the responding instructors and coaches feel that their organization is outstanding for the

tournament. It feels extremely good practice to have a multi-round tournament in basketball alone throughout the year, with the number of starting university teams already scratching the 20-team limit for boys. The work of the two major organizing bodies, Mefs and Mkosz, is also appreciated by the participants.

They note that many teams have second-class players, even professionals. There was also a suggestion that the direction of the tournament should be taken more towards the amateur line, which could even result in an even larger number of participants.

Conclusion

In the course of the study, the following conclusions were reached. Unlike previous brand research, university students are more, more in-depth about the university's basketball team than citizens living in the city. However, after the interview responses, we believe that the team's visibility at the university could be further developed, achieving that the high audience for weekend university matches would be maintained for weekend league matches as well. The above-mentioned goal could be achieved with the following tools and procedures - The team does not have its own website; the news is on

the consolidated university sports page. There should be a dedicated website where not only university citizens but also city dwellers can find out the most important news about the team. It would be advisable to produce and sell merchandising objects with the involvement of university teams, which could strengthen the symbol system, awareness, and association as the main brand values. There is a strong emphasis on innovation (R & D & I) in the life of universities (27). This innovation should definitely be applied to the university sports environment as well, for example, matches could be streamed via an internet stream. In addition, even with the drone recordings inside the sports hall, the inclusion of the giant video found in the sports hall during the projection matches could make basketball matches more spectacular, thus more fun and innovative. It is true that we fall far short of the thousands of spectators at North American university championships, but we must constantly work to ensure that college students are proud of their athletic peers, identify with the values conveyed by the sport, and be active participants in sports team matches.

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