Team Sports Brand Management

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Abstract

This chapter offers insights into the branding of sports teams. The importance of branding is explained, and a strong sports team brand is defined, by introducing the concept of brand equity. Based on this definition, which identifies the key components of sports team brand equity, the three fundamental stages of team sports brand management, stragetic brand management, operational brand management and brand system management, are explained and illustrated.

Learning Outcomes of Chapter

1. You will understand the main functions of brands.
2. You will know how to define a strong sports team brand.
3. You will know the main components of customer-based sports team brand equity, and how to assess them.
4. You will know the main stages of strategic sports team brand management.
5. You will know the main components of operational strategic management.
6. You will understand the influence of sports team brands' stakeholders and the brand governance approach.

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1 Introduction

Numerous observers (e.g. Giulianotti and Numerato 2018; Horne 2006) recognise commodification as a significant trend in sports, particularly in contemporary societies. This process has been defined as "the making into a commodity for sale on the marketplace of items or services which were previously not part of market logic" (Miller et al. 2001, p. 130). This illustrates the transformation of sports and sports organisations that are nowadays considered more than sporting entities, and also true businesses and brands, both the biggest and even those with not-for-profit status. Among the diversity of sports brands, this chapter will focus on "sports club and institution brands" (Bouchet et al. 2013). It is notable that team sports brands present common universal characteristics that can be found in other sports and non-sports brands, but that the detail of their analysis and the branding programmes have specific forms and applications.

In this chapter, we first address the brand concept, defining a brand and its various functions (Sect. 2). We then present and analyse brand equity (Sect. 3), the concept and approach that defines a strong brand, and its various components. After defining customer-based brand equity, we examine the management and development of a team sports brand (Sect. 4) at the strategic level based on the identity of the brand, and then at the operational level. The operational level deals with marketing mix programmes that support the development of brand equity. The concepts of brand experiences, the way fans and spectators live the brand and brand touchpoints, which are the interactions creating these experiences, are key to this stage. Finally, considering the importance of branding for sports organisations and the influence that the stakeholders in sports organisations can have on team brands, we discuss the brand governance approach, which consists of managing the relationships within the brand system, which is the network of relationships between the sports team brand and its numerous stakeholders.

2 The Brand Concept

Traditionally, a brand is defined as "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (Kotler 1991, p. 442). The direct association of a song, colour, mascot, person, object, place or city with a team sports brand results in a strong branding process, which can result in a powerful brand. In competitive markets, this helps a sports organisation differentiate its offerings from other similar organisations. This original function is often eclipsed by other functions that make team sports brands even more powerful and central to the lives of fans and spectators.

Kapferer (2008) suggests that brands provide different types of benefits for consumers, which correspond to different brand functions. These functions do not operate independently from each other and some may work simultaneously.

The first function is *identification,* which is the initial branding (or ironing) function that differentiates teams and sports organisations in competition. The second function is *practicality***,** which consists of simplifying consumer recognition and decision-processes by savings of time and energy. The third function is the *guarantee* function, which provides consumers with a kind of psychological insurance about finding similar levels of quality and/or benefits. The fourth function is the *optimisation* function. It relates to the perceived hierarchy between brands and can relate to various aspects such as performance or experience, and thus identify the brand providing the best offer. For instance, it means that attending a game with brand X should provide more quality and entertainment than one with brand Y. Fifth, the *badge* function is the ability of brands to reflect the self-concept or image that people display to significant others. For instance, a Chinese fan of Manchester United FC revealed that he supported the team because it met his personal ambition for success (Bodet and Chanavat 2010). Sixth, the *continuity* function refers to the ability for consumers to create ongoing relationships with brands and to consequently foster familiarity and intimacy. Seventh, brands possess a *hedonistic* function that involves to the pleasurable experiences and feelings they can bring to consumers. Finally, brands possess an *ethical* function that characterises the level of responsibility and citizenship that an organisation is standing for through its activities. For instance, supporting the English football team Forest Green Rovers means being environmentally conscious and committed to sustainability. The ethical function of numerous team sport brands is also related to community engagement.

These functions demonstrate that brands have moved from their initial utility function of identification to more advanced functions that mean they play a very strong role in consumer lives. As Horne (2006, p. 163) observed, “brands become experiences, offering lifestyles and identities”. Brands can be so important that they can even “take the place of religion in more secular societies” (Horne, 2006, p. 158). It takes more than a few years to reach this status, however, many factors are involved in constructing the brand and its strength. The goal of sports team brand managers will be to first understand the components or factors that make such strong brands and to then set up marketing strategies and programmes to establish and maintain such levels of strength.

3 Brand Equity: The Strength of a Brand

According to Keller (1993), the concept of brand equity involves the marketing effects that are uniquely attributable to a brand and thus provide its strength and its power. He sees two main motivations to focus on this concept. The first is financial and offers an appropriate evaluation of the assets that a brand can represent for a company. This brand valuation can, for instance, be used for acquisition purposes. Considering the development of sports as investment markets, these values are increasingly and regularly estimated and often represent attractive data for the media, when they do not produce them. This is, for instance, the case for the Forbes Fab 40 that annually publishes and ranks sports brands according to four categories: business brands, event brands, athlete brands and team brands. According to their website, the "Forbes Fab 40 determines the value of the top brands in sports by quantifying the amount the name contributes to the value of the athlete, event, business or team" (Ozanian 2019). The value of team brands is measured by assessing "the portion of the team's enterprise value not attributable to the size or demographics of the team's market, the venue or league-shared revenue". See Table 1 for the 2019 ranking of sports team brands. As illustrated in this table, this valuation can be somehow disconnected from the sporting results.

The outcome of this approach strongly depends on the methodology used. As such, if there is some interest or usefulness in comparing the values of team brands, there is no guarantee of its credibility. If estimations are reliable, these figures do not say a lot about how value—brand equity—is constructed. Another possible reason for using this approach is therefore to improve the equity of the brand, and consequently: "Marketers need a more thorough understanding of consumer behaviour as a basis for making better strategic decisions about target market

Table 1 2019 team sports brand value adapted from the Forbes Fab 40 ranking

Team brands	Values in US millions $	2017–18 and 2018 sporting achievements
1. Dallas Cowboys	1039	10–6 record, 1st in the NFC East, Won Wild Card play-offs, lost divisional play-offs
2. New York Yankees	815	100–62 record, 2nd divisional League, American Wild Card League
3. Real Madrid	725	3rd in la Liga, quarter-final of Copa del Rey, winners of the Supercopa de España, UEFA Champions League, UEFA Super Cup, FIFA Club World Cup
4. Los Angeles Lakers	674	35–47 record, finished 11th in the NBA Western Conference
5. Golden State Warriors	606	58–24 record, 2nd in the NBA Western Conference, NBA champions
6. New York Knicks	563	29–53 record, 11th in the NBA Eastern Conference, did not qualify for the play-offs
7. Los Angeles Dodgers	554	92–71 record, 1st divisional place, lost in the World Series
8. Boston Red Sox	532	108–54 record, 1st divisional place, Winners of the World Series
9. Chicago Cubs	518	95–68 record, 2nd divisional place, lost in the Wild Card Games
10. (t) New England Patriots	465	11–5 record, 1st AFC East, won divisional play-offs, won AFC Championship, won Super Bowl LIII
11. (t) Barcelona FC	465	Winners in la Liga, and la Copa del Rey, runners up in la Supercopa de España, quarter-finals of the UEFA Champions League

definition and product positioning, as well as better tactical decisions about specific marketing mix actions" (Keller 1993, p. 2).

A focus on the way individual consumers perceive the brand is needed in order to nurture this approach. This is what Keller (1993) called "customer-based brand equity" (CBBE). CBBE is defined as "the differential effect of *brand knowledge* on consumer response to the marketing of the brand" (Keller 1993, p. 8). Brand knowledge comprises brand awareness and brand image.

Basically, *brand awareness* corresponds to the responses to two questions. Do consumers and fans know your brand? And if yes, how much do they know about it? This awareness can be assessed by determining whether consumers are able to remember a brand when it is named (i.e. brand recognition), or when asked to name a brand within a specific category—the sports team—or using cues (Keller 1993). It often represents the first and most basic branding element because, without a brand being known to consumers/fans, it is difficult to influence or grow the fan base. In some countries, being known may suffice when no other teams are known. For example, Manchester United seems to have benefited from its pioneer position as an international football team brand (Hill and Vincent 2006) without having to build a strong image to differentiate from other teams. This is primary knowledge, and more advanced knowledge may involve various attributes of the brand (see later brand associations), and demonstrate more subtle levels of awareness. For instance, knowing players, coaches, former players, board members, or even indirect and sometimes anecdotal information such as the name of the mascot, the nickname of the team (e.g. the Gunners for the Football team of Arsenal, or the Pumas for the Rugby union team of Argentina) or the nickname of the stadium (e.g. "the theatre of dreams" for Manchester United FC) demonstrate higher levels of brand awareness, that in turn reinforce brand equity.

It is important to note that, except for few sports teams that have established themselves as global brands (e.g. Chicago Bulls, Barcelona FC, New York Yankees), brand awareness is mostly characterised as from a specific geographic area. This awareness can be local, regional, national, continental or global, but there may also be variations within a certain level. The primary factor affecting the awareness of a team sports brand is linked to its popularity, the level of passion that fans have for the sports, and consequently its visibility. This popularity is first affected by socio-historical reasons, which can vary greatly, depending on the sport and country. For instance, football (or soccer) is probably the most popular sports worldwide, and therefore numerous football clubs and organisations benefit from very high levels of awareness, worldwide. Obviously the most successful teams will benefit from broader coverage and then awareness but unsuccessful teams can also be well known and/or benefit from high awareness, uncorrelated with sporting results, such as Sunderland FC thanks to a series broadcast on Netflix. There are variations between countries, however. Australian football, for example, is not very popular outside Australia, and therefore Australian football teams will not have high levels of visibility outside the country. This does not prevent them from having high levels of brand equity in their domestic market.

Media exposure and visibility are a correlate to this popularity, mainly through the broadcast of competitions, because the most followed and supported teams attract the biggest TV audiences and thus the highest TV exposure. Media exposure can also come from media attention and scrutiny, which can be both positive and negative, if for instance there are scandals, or through particular media programmes. As we will see later in the sections dealing with brand management and governance, the stakeholders of sports team brands, whether they are direct stakeholders such as players and coaches, or indirect such as other sports organisations, can help to increase this level of awareness.

Example

Simple questions to evaluate team sports brand awareness.

- What are the first brands that come to mind when you think of team sports X?
- Have you heard of team sports brand X?
- Which of the following team sports brands have you heard of?
- Do you recognise this logo?
- Do you recognise this motto?
- Do you recognise this mascot?
- Can you name players/athletes associated with this brand?
- Can you name managers or administrators associated with this brand?

The second dimension of CBBE involves brand associations or *brand image*. Brand image is defined "as perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory" (Keller 1993, p. 3). Brand associations represent the variety of terms, words, ideas and feelings that people have in their mind when thinking about a brand. Keller (1993) categorises brand associations into three types. The first category gathers brand attributes, which are "the descriptive features that characterise a product or service—what a consumer thinks the product or service is and what is involved with its purchase or consumption" (Keller 1993, p. 4). These attributes can be either product-related, such the players, team performance and head coach, or non-product-related, such as the club logo and colours, and the club history. The second category refers to benefits that are the "personal value consumers attach to the product or services attributes—that is, what consumers think the product or service can do for them" (Keller 1993, p. 4). They can be either functional or instrumental, which corresponds to the utility provided by an attribute, experiential and symbolic. Experiential benefits relate to the emotions and feelings generated, and the symbolic benefits relate to the signs and associated meanings carried by the brand and its features. For instance, Bauer et al. (2008) find that nostalgia, escape, socialising/companionship, emotions and entertainment are experiential benefits, whereas pride in place, identification and peer group acceptance are symbolic of team sports brands. Examples of brand association categories used in the context of sports team brands are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Team sports brand associations

Authors	Model	Sports	Brand association types
Gladden and Funk (2002)	Team Association Model	Any team	Star player, product delivery, nostalgia, tradition, logo design, affective reactions, success, knowledge, head coach, importance, pride in place, venue, management, fan identification, escape, peer group acceptance
Ross et al. (2006)	Team Brand Association Scale	Professional sports teams	Non-player personnel, success, history, stadium, team characteristics, logo, concessions, socialisation, rivalry, commitment, organisational attributes
Ross et al. (2008)	Spectator-Based Brand Equity		Brand mark, rivalry, concessions, social interaction, commitment, team history, organisation attributes, team success, team play, non-player personnel, stadium
Bauer et al. (2008)		Football teams	Team, head coach, success, star player, team performance, logo and club colours, club history and traditions, management, stadium, club culture and values, fans, sponsor or owner, regional provenance, identification, pride in place, peer group acceptance, escape, socialising, emotions, nostalgia, entertainment
Biscaia et al. (2013)	Spectator-Based Brand Equity	Professional football (soccer)	Brand mark, concessions, social interaction, commitment, team history, organisational attributes, teams success, head coach, management, stadium

The third category of brand associations is brand attitude. This involves the overall assessment or evaluation that individuals make of a brand, which ultimately drives behaviour. For instance, Gladden and Funk (2002, p. 61) measured brand attitude according to three aspects, its importance, which “represents a person’s perception of the psychological significance and value he or she attaches to a sports team”; its knowledge, which refers “to the amount of attitude-relevant that accompanies an individual’s attitude related to a sports team”; and its affective dimension, which “reflects an individual’s feelings about a team”.

Keller (1993) evaluates brand associations according to three dimensions: favourability, strength and uniqueness. Basically, the quality of the brand associations is high if associations are positive (favourable), stable over time (strong) and different (unique).

Brand personality is a popular concept to assess brand image and associations, which is “based on the brand-as-person perspective” (Aaker 1996, p. 112). In the context of professional sports brands, Braunstein and Ross (2010) validated several dimensions: success (e.g. being successful, accomplished, consistent), sophistication (e.g. being attractive, glamorous), sincerity (e.g. being honest, genuine), rugged (e.g. being bold, daring), community-driven (e.g. being authentic, inspirational) and classic (e.g. being traditional, old-fashioned). More recently, Kang et al. (2016) validated a brand personality model that could be used to characterise brand image or associations via five traits; agreeableness (e.g. being courteous, considerate), extraversion/emotionality (e.g. being enthusiastic, daring), openness (e.g. being creative, original), conscientiousness (e.g. being hard-working, discipline) and honesty (e.g. being sincere, respectful), using the National Football League (NFL) as a case study.

Completing the work of Keller (1993), Aaker (1996) added other dimensions to assess brand equity. The first dimension is *brand perceived quality*. In the context of team sports, perceived quality will often be related to the experience of fans at games. Various researchers have studied perceived quality at sporting events. For instance, Yoshida and James (2011) distinguished between *aesthetic quality* (e.g. game atmosphere and crowd experience), *technical quality* (e.g. opponent characteristics, player performance) and *functional quality* (e.g. frontline employees, facility access and seat space). It is interesting to note that some of these dimensions can appear in the brand associations, in the attributes, benefits or attitude categories. An overall evaluation based on the feelings, emotions and sensory aspects can also be useful, considering the significance of experiences and experiential benefits (Bodet 2016). Perceived quality can also involve merchandised products and peripheral services and experiences (e.g. stadium tours, banking services, travel agencies, official stores), and in this case other quality dimensions specifically related to the products or service at stake will be considered. Finally, it is important to distinguish experienced quality, which is based on one or several experiences of consumptions, from perceived quality which can be established without having experienced the brand games and products. Perceived quality will be strongly influenced by brand reputation, communication and promotion, and word-of-mouth in this situation.

The second added dimension of brand equity is *brand loyalty*. In the context of team sports brands, loyalty is often conceptualised as the degree of attachment that a fan has to a team. Following the seminal work of Dick and Basu (1994), the literature traditionally distinguishes one attitudinal dimension, which is often represented by the psychological commitment of a fan (Funk and James 2001), and one behavioural dimension. The latter can be assessed by the number of games attended and/or viewed (television or other platforms), merchandised items purchased, consumption of club-related media content and wearing the team/club colours (Bauer et al. 2008). True loyalty is usually defined as a combination of both dimensions. Aaker (1996) found that a basic indicator of brand loyalty is price premium, which is the amount of money one consumer or fan would pay for a brand and its products and services in comparison with other brands providing the same products and services. Another indicator of brand loyalty is customer satisfaction. Satisfaction can only indirectly assess the attitudinal dimension of loyalty, however, and does not necessarily transform into loyal behaviours (Bodet 2008). Consequently, brand loyalty can be measured by the number of season-ticket holders, membership of fan groups, number of regular fans, attendance and audience rates, and the number of loyal stakeholders, such as sponsors.

Finally, Aaker's (1991) brand equity model identifies a fifth dimension, other proprietary assets, which involves patents, trademarks and other financially measurable assets. Facilities such as stadiums and arenas, when they are owned by sports brands, and other businesses such as restaurants, stores, medical centres, sports and leisure parks, can be seen as such assets. More recently, team sports and club brands have increasingly invested in other sports brands. For instance, in June 2019, the Olympique Lyonnais Group, the parent company of Olympique Lyonnais, acquired minority shares in LDLC ASVEL and Lyon ASVEL Féminin, respectively, the professional men's and women's basketball clubs based on Villeurbanne in the suburbs of Lyon in France (Olympique Lyonnais 2019), and in December 2019 acquired Reign FC in the USA (Reign 2019). These shares are significant financial assets for the OL brand.

In summary of this section, the strength and value of team sports brands are measured through the concept of brand equity, which characterises the differential value added to the brand. Brand equity is based mainly on four dimensions; brand awareness, brand associations/image, brand perceived quality and brand loyalty. If a team sports brand benefits from a very high level of awareness, if it has favourable, strong and unique mental associations among its targeted audiences and the general population, if it is perceived as offering high quality services and products, and if the brand has a broad and loyal fan base, then it will be considered a strong brand.

4 Managing Team Sports Brands

Having defined a brand and what contributes to a strong brand, we will now review the main steps of brand management. Three main steps will be considered in this section: strategic brand management, operational brand management and the management of the brand system.

4.1 Strategic Brand Management

The first step involves defining the *identity of the brand*. Although Keller (1993, p. 9) indicates the importance of "brand identities, such as the brand name, logo, or symbol", defining brand identity goes beyond choosing or reflecting on the visual aspects of a brand. It integrates the values, history, mission, vision, statutes and the nature of the organisation, or what it stands for. This is particularly important because sports organisations have different natures that will drive various objectives and brand development. For instance, numerous organisations are voluntary-based, with specific identities written into their statutes. Defining this identity with clarity will thus allow the brand management programmes to be shaped. However, it is important to bear in mind that the identity of an organisation, and consequently of a brand, goes beyond the official statutes, and that numerous unofficial or non-explicit factors can affect this identity. For instance, board members, employees and volunteers shape the identity of an organisation and brand without necessarily being conscious of this influence. Interestingly, former organisation members, such as administrators, coaches, and star players, called "organisational ghosts" by Bazin and Leclair (2019), have a direct impact on the life of organisations and are key to understanding an organisation's values and identity. The identities of sports organisations are often old and strong—sports clubs sometimes have rich history, which can be a positive and distinctive asset. This history can sometimes be disconnected to what the team currently is, however, and the downside of strong identities is that they can be impregnated by conservatism, which can constrain innovation and new branding development. For instance, changes made by clubs to their visual identities, such as logos and colours, have created tensions, opposition and protests among supporters and fans. This was the case for Italian football club Juventus FC when a "rebranding" exercise led to a change of logo that upset many of its fans in 2017 (Connelly 2017). The challenge is different in the case of league expansions and the creation of new teams, however, as the whole identity of the brand can be defined mostly from scratch.

Once the identity is defined, the next steps are the classical steps of *strategic marketing*, which are *segmentation, targeting* and *positioning*. Segmentation is a key factor, especially for maximising attendance and/or maximising revenues when attendance rates are full to maximum capacity. Historically, highly attached fans and supporters were targeted as a priority, but several cases (e.g. Bodet 2009) and studies (Bodet and Bernache-Assollant 2012) have shown the need to first recognise and secondly identify the various segments of spectators and fans in order to properly cater for their needs.

Targeting is the prioritisation of segments. This is important because multiple targeting can be challenging, as fan segments may look for different services and/or experiences that can be in contradiction (Bouchet et al. 2011). This can be the case when die-hard fans become dysfunctional fans (Tapp and Clowes 2002) and create an atmosphere that goes beyond supporting teams (e.g. violent behaviours, fights, etc.) which turns away other committed and/or casual fans (e.g. families). In this case, managing team sports brands relies on managing the customer segment mix to ensure the desired image and associations of the brand are in place. It can sometimes mean using demarketing (Bradley and Blythe 2014). This was the case for Paris St Germain (PSG) football club in 2010 when it decided to reduce the number of season-ticket holders, impose random locations for these season-ticket holders and create a family friendly area. These measures aimed to tackle fan violence, and "pacify and restore the image of PSG" (SoFoot.com 2016).

Conversely, the broadening of a brand and a diversification strategy aimed at attracting new consumer segments can also be problematic, as it can affect loyal and regular fans. They may dislike the fact that a great deal has been done to attract spectators who may not care as much as they do, are less knowledgeable about the sports and may not behave according to their definition of being a good fan (e.g. not singing, not actively supporting the team, spending too much time using their mobile phone, etc.). There is a risk, from a branding perspective, of giving the impression that a club is followed only by “fair-weather fans” or opportunists fans (Bouchet et al. 2011) who do not create what is traditionally considered great atmospheres, as illustrated by the Stade Français Paris Rugby Club example (Chanavat and Bodet 2014). In other words, a club can become “too commodified” (Giulianotti 2005) in its quest to appeal to broader audiences, and consequently, lose its soul.

Similarly, another contemporary issue regarding segmentation and branding for team sports brands involves the mix between local fans, who can physically attend games, and distant or satellite fans (Kerr and Gladden 2008), who are often foreign fans. Recent examples of sports team efforts to attract new distant fans (e.g. reshaping names and logos, changing a game’s kick-off time, organising games, tournaments and tours overseas, etc.) are not always neutral and can dissatisfy local fans. These examples illustrate the problems of multiple targeting for sports team brands. While an attractive strategy, it should also be carefully planned and implemented to maintain high levels of satisfaction and loyalty among the various targeted segments.

The final step of the strategic marketing process is positioning. This is closely linked to the branding and brand equity dimensions. Positioning involves the way a brand wants to situate and compete with others in the minds of consumers or fans. It involves and also consists of the different factors the brand will put forward so as to be perceived as different by consumers and stakeholders. As previously indicated, positioning is first related to the brand identity that will shape the branding. For instance, the identity of Athletic Bilbao football club is embedded within the Basque identity (Castillo 2007) and the brand’s positioning thus integrates the “localness”, illustrated for instance through the Basque player-only policy, as a differentiating characteristic. Often, sports team brand positioning will be related to key brand associations and brand perceived quality, which will allow the brand to differentiate itself from its main competitors. The main positioning criterion often deals with geographical attachment and proximity, when the team is the only one representing a specific territory. However, what we could call a basic positioning—representing the local community—often has to be refined because of the presence of other sports teams, whether they are from the same sports or not (e.g. Los Angeles Clippers, Los Angeles Lakers, Los Angeles Rams, Los Angeles Dodgers, Los Angeles Kings, Los Angeles Sparks, Los Angeles Galaxy, Los Angeles FC, Los Angeles Chargers). The competition, and consequently the need for differentiation, is especially important for local casual spectators who do not demonstrate any particular involvement in any sports, and for satellite and international fans, considering the globalisation of sports markets and brands (Giulianotti and Numerato 2018).

This section has explained that the primary steps of brand development and management rely first on the strategic dimensions, which consist of defining and/or explicitly characterising brand identity, followed by the strategic marketing process of segmenting, targeting and positioning the brand. The latter includes the main differentiating aspects that the brand will put forward to compete with other team sports brands.

4.2 Operational Brand Management

Having defined the strategic orientations of the brand, the next step consists of operationalising these orientations through the development of marketing programmes. This involves of marketing mix decisions. The marketing mix is defined by the 4 Ps—product, price, promotion and place—or alternatively the 7 Ps, adding people, process and physical evidence. The 7 Ps may be more adapted to team sports brands considering that they mainly provide service offers. These supporting marketing programmes should focus on developing brand equity in coherence with the strategic plan. As indicated in the brand equity section, this consists of creating promotional and communication programmes to enhance brand awareness among the targeted segments, developing favourable, strong and unique brand associations, increasing perceived brand quality and enhancing brand loyalty (see Fig. 1 for a summary). It is important to note that these programmes should not only be directed towards spectators and fans, but also include other significant stakeholders of the brand, such as partners, sponsors and media.

Keller (1993) explains that managing customer-based brand equity should start by adopting a broad vision of the marketing activities and decisions. This resonates particularly in the context of team sports brands, as sports organisations can sometimes suffer from marketing myopia, underestimate the strength of their brand, and feel that marketing activities are result-dependent (Chadwick and Beech 2007). Although branding is easier when sporting results are positive, it does not mean that nothing can be done when results do not follow. On the contrary, it can be argued that this is when branding management becomes all the more important. Secondly, team sports brand managers should clearly define the type of associations (in relation with identity and positioning) they want fans and followers to hold in mind when they think of the brand. Thirdly, they should consider the broad variety of marketing tactics and techniques they can use, bearing in mind the importance of consistency between the different platforms used. Fourth, they should take a long-term view of their branding, as perceptions are not easy to change, especially

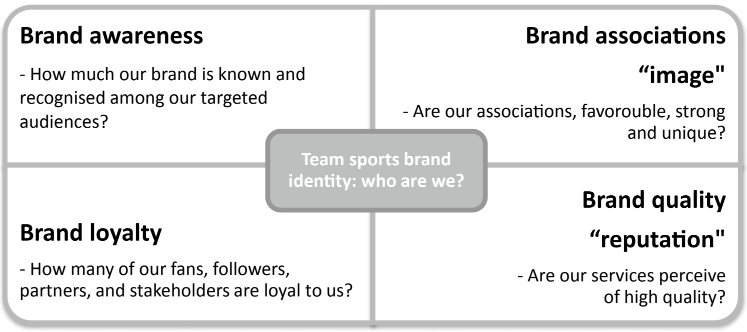

Fig. 1 Brand equity model for sports team brands

when they are strong, and coherence is an accelerating factor. Fifth, Keller (1993) emphasises the importance of research and evaluation as the only way to properly evaluate the efficiency of marketing programmes. This consists of measuring various brand equity dimensions and comparing them with the same indicators (e.g. brand recognition levels, perceived quality levels) measured before the launch of the marketing programmes. It also helps in setting reasonable and achievable performance objectives for the brand. This dimension is key. Basic techniques such as a simple qualitative approach towards brand targets (see Flying Pig case study, Olberding and Jisha 2005) are useful, and produce relevant foundational knowledge. Finally, based on the strength of the brand equity, marketers should consider brand extensions. Brand extensions, which are defined as "the offering of additional products and services beyond the organizations' core product (the actual event/game)" (Apostolopoulou 2002, p. 205), are increasingly used by professional sports organisations. In the context of US professional sports teams, brand extension can take five forms: sports-related extensions (e.g. youth leagues, tournaments, merchandise stores), entertainment-related extensions (i.e. team mascots, cheerleaders, bands), media-related extensions (i.e. TV and radio shows, broadcasting stations, pay-per-view programmes), information-related extensions (i.e. team publications, websites), and low-perceived fit extensions (e.g. art galleries, health and fitness clubs, credit cards and banking accounts) (Apostolopoulou 2002). Brand extensions aim to generate additional revenue by building on the strength of the brand, but also by enhancing the emotional connection that fans may have with the sports team brand (Apostolopoulou 2002). According to Apostolopoulou (2002), the key successful factors of brand extensions for professional team brands are: (i) the strength of the parent brand, which is measured via customer-based brand equity, (ii) the perceived fit between the club and the extension, (iii) the promotional support offered by the sports brand, (iv) the quality of the extension product/service, (vi) the distribution strategy and (vii) the management of the brand extension. Brand extensions should not be seen as without consequences, however, as a failure of the brand extension could negatively affect the sports team brand, altering its associations, its perceived quality levels and sometimes its brand loyalty.

A key element of this operational stage is the management of *customer experiences,* defined as "a customer's journey with a firm over time during the purchase cycle across multiple touch points" (Lemon and Verhoef 2016, p. 16). Because customer experience should be seen as a dynamic process integrating pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase phases (Lemon and Verhoef 2016), it is crucial for team sports brands to identify *brand touchpoints* because they will affect an individual's perceptions of the brands. However, not all touchpoints are controllable by team sports brands. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) described four categories of touchpoints: brand-owned, partner-owned, customer-owned, and social/external. Brand-owned touchpoints are under the control of the sports organisation and include "all brand-owned media (e.g., advertising, websites, loyalty, programs) and any brand-controlled elements of the marketing mix (e.g., attributes of product, packaging, service, price, convenience, sales force)" (Lemon and Verhoef 2016, p. 77). Partner-owned touchpoints are jointly managed and controlled by the organisation and its partners. This is, for instance, the situation with security checks at stadium entrances and food stalls, when they are outsourced by the sports team brand. Although they are, from a management perspective, distinct and also require quality control in order to deliver a consistent brand experience, fans and spectators rarely perceive the difference between the brand and its partners, and thus often consider these touchpoints as brand-owned.

Customer-owned touchpoints are the customer actions that are not controlled by the brand and its partners. They are particularly prevalent in the pre- and post-purchase phases. Finally, the social environment (e.g. peers, fans, third-party information sources, social media) creates social/external touchpoints. Although they are often perceived as uncontrolled by the brand, they should not be totally excluded from the management of the brand as they can have a strong effect on fan and spectator experiences. For instance, the PSG demarketing example discussed earlier in the chapter demonstrates the focus of the brand manager on the interactions between supporters and fans. Correctly managing these brand touchpoints, and in turn these experiences, is of great importance, because they will affect customer satisfaction, which will affect perceived brand associations and perceived quality, which in turn will affect brand loyalty, but also the brand awareness, associations and perceived quality of other individuals through word-of-mouth.

In this section, we discussed the operational management of the brand, which should be coherent with the sports team brand identity and its strategic plan and relies on the development of marketing mix programmes to enhance the sports team brand equity. Particularly, we focused on the concept of brand experiences and touchpoints, which are the influential interactions that the fans, spectators and followers will have with the sports team brand, and that, in turn will affect the brand equity for them and for other brand audiences.

4.3 The Management of the Brand System: Brand Governance

Although brand equity has been recognised as fundamental to brand management, several authors, such as Helm and Jones (2010), have called for a move towards a practice of "brand governance". Brand governance refers to "a system of building a brand that is guided by the vision, mission and values of an organization and that systematically nurtures a brand value to become and remain a long-term strategic asset" (Séguin and Abeza 2019, p. 368). This new approach is justified by numerous factors that are particularly relevant in the context of team sports brands. Particularly, the increasing competitive intensity of markets (e.g. the globalisation of sports has created more competition between team sports brands), more empowered consumers, the proliferation of brand extensions, increasingly more distribution and communication touchpoints (e.g. sporting events can be viewed on various electronic devices), the increased use of strategic partnerships in delivering brands to consumer and social media have been increasingly prevalent (Helm and Jones 2010). Considering the challenges and possible risks these factors have for brand experiences and for perceived brand equity, it becomes key that "sport organisations' strategic brand management be based on visionary brand governance, which is externally focused" (Taks et al. 2019, p. 3). This approach is externally focused because it considers the importance that various stakeholders (e.g. players, members, administrators, sponsors, medias, local authorities, fans and supporters, local residents and community members, other sports team brands) can have for brand equity. For instance, in the context of professional team sports brands, choosing a player is not only a sporting decision, it also takes into consideration the possible impact the player can have on the brand via their own image and/or behaviour. This is particularly true for players who have become celebrity brands (Bouchet et al. 2013). Managing the brand should therefore be extended to the governance of stakeholders and their connection to the brand. This is why brand governance should be the responsibility of the top level of an organisation (Board Directors, CEOs) (Taks et al. 2019). This responsibility does not replace middle-management responsibilities and efforts towards developing brand equity strategically and operationally, but rather to preserve it in the long term and to protect it from potential threats, by making sure the actual and future influence of stakeholders on the team sports brand is consistent with the brand identity and the brand equity construction. The brand system represents the network of stakeholders, and the sports team brand is at the core. Brand governance thus consists of anticipating and managing the co-creative relationships and interactions (Grönroos 2011), but also the co-destructive ones (Chumpitaz Caceres and Vanhamme 2003), to maintain and protect brand value in the long term.

5 Conclusion

The branding phenomena, whether from a consumer or organisation perspective, cannot be avoided, as it is now a key aspect of the marketing management of sports team brands, however, sports organisations, especially those who are lacking marketing skills, tend to underestimate the importance and the power of their brand (Chadwick and Beech 2007). The first challenge faced by sports organisations is therefore to be convinced of the *need for a brand focus* to marketing management and its development, particularly as regards of external stakeholders. Several frameworks and tactics are presented in this chapter which can help sports team brand managers in developing their brands; however, the second challenge is to keep *a focus on making a difference*. In a sports world where sports organisations are increasingly globalised and in competition with each other, where marketing tactics and programmes are highly visible and consequently easily copied, uniformity can become a rule. In this context, branding is all the more important as its first function is to make a team stand out of the crowd. In some cases, it will mean less marketing and less bold branding, as commercialisation in the context of team sports can be dividing (Bodet et al. 2018; Giulianotti 2005). Finally, and possibly the most difficult to accept from an organisational perspective, is the fact that a brand, and consequently the branding, is not only the result of internal planning and activities. As discussed in this chapter, *brands are dynamic social constructs* whose meanings evolve over time and are influenced by their stakeholders. Consequently, the wrong approach would be overly focused on internal capacities and intentions, seeing the perceptions held by brand audiences as wrong, when there is indeed a gap between an organisation's intentions and these perceptions. The right approach is trying to understand how these perceptions are built and what can be done in collaboration with stakeholders to modify them, and make them fit with the brand identity in the long term.

Key Points to Take from the Chapter

- The functions of sports team brands go beyond simple identification and include experiential, social, symbolic and ethical elements.
- The strength of a brand is assessed via the concept of customer-based brand equity.
- Customer-based brand equity includes five dimensions: brand awareness, brand associations/image, brand perceived quality, brand loyalty and brand proprietary assets.
- Brand development starts with strategic brand management which in turn starts by clearly defining the brand identity.
- Brand development then continues by setting operational programmes that focus on the development and reinforcement of the brand equity dimensions. Core to these programmes is the management of brand experiences and touchpoints.
- As brand strategic and operational management mainly focuses on internal capabilities, brands should increasingly be considered as a system wherein various stakeholders can have a positive or negative influence on the brand; this is the brand governance approach.

Comprehension Questions

1. How can we define a strong sports team brand?
2. What are the main dimensions of customer-based brand equity?
3. Using an existing sports team brand, assess each dimension of the brand equity.
4. What are the key stages of sports team brand management?

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