Brand Loyalty and the Los Angeles Dodgers

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Perceptions of corruption, reduced safety, diminished value, and a general lack of trust contribute to poor brand loyalty (Mao, 2010). Under the ownership of Frank McCourt, the Los Angeles Dodgers experienced all of these challenges and in turn saw significant erosion of brand loyalty. With new ownership and management in place, the Los Angeles Dodgers are working to restore its commitment to the fans.

In 2004, Boston parking lot magnate Frank McCourt bought the Los Angeles Dodgers from FOX (Winkel, 2013). McCourt financed the deal by securing loans that amounted to over $450 million (Winkel, 2013). In 2010, when McCourt went through divorce proceedings, the public learned that this team was built on debt; he had used the Dodgers to finance his elaborate lifestyle, and needed more loans to make payroll (Shaikin, 2011). He filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection (Winkel, 2013).

Beyond his corruption, McCourt also made several management decisions that negatively impacted fan loyalty. These included raising parking fees to as much as 200% of the cost of a ticket (Borelli, 2012), understaffing concessions with poorly trained employees, reducing the Dodgers international scouting program, and making purchases of expensive players past their prime (Zakwin, 2013). McCourt also cut costs by reducing the amount of security throughout the stadium (Dilbeck, 2011). The results of this reduction were personified on Opening Day 2011, when two Dodger fans beat up three fans of the San Francisco Giants in the parking lot after the game. Paramedic Bryan Stow remained in a coma for two months and will most likely never fully recover.

The amount of consistent sold-out games can give an indication of brand loyalty (Weymes, 2002; Bristow & Sebastian, 2001). Attendance at Dodger Stadium plummeteD. In

2011, the Dodgers sold, on average, 8,000 fewer tickets per game than in previous years. (Top 10 most despised owners in sports, 2013). Turnstile attendance indicated the stands were only about 53% full per game (Shaikin, 2011).

Guggenheim Baseball Management purchased the Dodgers for more than $2 billion in 2012. A team of highly accomplished veterans were appointed to run the organization, including highly credible local icon Earvin “Magic” Johnson (Borelli, 2012). In an apology to fans, the Guggenheim group lowered the parking from $15 to $10 (Borelli, 2012). Expensive acquisitions of prime players were made, and the Los Angeles Dodgers soon had the biggest payroll in Major League Baseball (Levine, 2013).

The Dodgers had a rough start to the 2013 season. Many of its star players were injured, and won only 30 of its first 72 games (Levine, 2013). Later in the season, the Dodgers went on a 43 and 7 hot streak, which resulted in the Dodgers’ winning the National League West (Levine, 2013). In 2013, the Dodgers led Major League Baseball in ticket sales, and 2014 season tickets had a 98% retention rate (Shaikin, 2014).

On the surface, one might think the Dodgers were back to full strength and could look forward to a prosperous future. The team performed well and the organization was rewarded with improved paid and turnstile count. Increased purchases are an indicator of fan satisfaction (D. Aaker, 2009). However, customer satisfaction is just one segment of building brand loyalty (Oliver, 1999). Oliver quotes a Bain Capital study finding 65% to 85% of satisfied customers were ripe for poaching (1999)**.** Also, winning by itself is not considered an indicator of brand loyalty (Gladden & Funk, 2004).

Satisfaction or “just winning,” it is not a sustainable road to brand loyalty (Mnookin, 2006; Gladden & Funk, 2004; Oliver, 1999). Many consumers may be satisfied, yet still purchase a different brand or choose no brand at all for many reasons (Oliver, 1999). Sports fans are, in general, fickle and will turn on the team for a number of reasons (Sommers, 1992). Uncontrollable elements such as weather, inappropriate conduct on behalf of the fans or the players, or injuries can impact a baseball fan's willingness to attend a game (Mnookin, 2006).

Managerial action could also hinder the loyalty of the fan base (Mao, 2010). After announcing the season ticket retention success, the remaining season tickets were released at a 140% price increase (Shaikin, 2014). On February 14, 2014, it was announced that $15 parking would be reinstated, raising an estimated $2.4 million a year for the team (Hernandez, 2014). Further, a new exclusive deal with Time Warner Cable prohibits the majority of the residents of Los Angeles from watching games regularly on television. It is estimated that only 30% of people living in Los Angeles use Time Warner Cable, the other 70% cannot watch the games on television (Dilbeck, 2014).

All of these elements can impact brand loyalty for the Dodgers. The price increases could hinder perceived value and resurrect trust issues (Mao, 2010). Not being able to watch the games prohibits a cohesive storyline, which is essential to making an emotional connection to the fans; a key element of building and retaining brand loyalty (Fog K. , Budtz, Munch, & Blanchette, 2010). Also, the fans cannot connect with the team through television, the most popular medium to watch games.

A robust fan base is key to running a successful sports franchise (Sommers, 1992). When ticket sales and in-park attendance increase, additional revenue streams such as merchandising, concessions, and parking become more viable (Sommers, 1992). High attendance drives up the price for local television syndication rights and broadcast fees from stations that offer national exposure (Sommers, 1992). As a fan base grows, the fee for merchandising rights rise, for example, the amount paid by a store such as Target to sell team-branded products (Brown, 2011). Also, having a strong customer base strengthens the likelihood of brand expansion out of the immediate geographic area (Gladden & Funk, 2004).

Paid attendance is not always indicative of the amount of people who are actually in the stadium—it only represents the amount of tickets purchased (Brown, 2011). Most tickets are paid for by corporations, season ticket holders, and group sales well in advance of the game being played (Brown, 2011). The amount of tickets scanned on the day of the game can tell a different story. If fans buy their tickets and then decide they don't want to go to the game, potential revenue is lost due to lack of merchandising, parking, and concession sales (Sommers, 1992) . Should attendance slip, the Dodgers need to find other ways of luring fans to the ball park (Mnookin, 2006). To remain profitable, fans should want to go to the ballpark, even when the team isn't winning or in another unfavorable position (Gilson, Pratt, Roberts, & Weymes, 2000).

The purpose of this study is discover whether the Dodgers are experiencing true brand loyalty or just a popularity surge. First, the make-up of brand loyalty will be examined. Secondly, a method will be developed based on the essential elements of brand loyalty. Finally, it will be determined what kind of brand loyalty the Dodgers are currently experiencing.

Literature Review

Brand Equity

Those who run a sports franchise need to understand brand equity to better capitalize on their assets (Ross, James, & Vargas, 2006). David Aaker insists that brand equity is the most valuable asset of any company (2009). Brand equity is partially made up of brand assets such as trademarks, logos and intellectuals properties (Aaker, D. , 2009). These assets create value for the customer but if misused diminish returns. This concept is agreed upon by marketers and scholars alike, (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Mao, 2010; Oliver, 1999; Roy, 2011) Roy states that “Brand equity leads to brand profitability” (2011, p. 113). For example, a soft drink company with high brand equity could introduce a new flavor and it is more likely to be tried by those already familiar to the brand (Aaker, D., 2009). Aaker further outlines the four principles of brand equity as awareness, association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty (2009). Brand loyalty is considered the nucleus of brand equity as it can influence and be influenced by the other three elements (Mao, 2010). Brand loyalty is also considered the most valuable element of brand equity, as the results of it are easily quantifiable (Aaker, D., 2009).

Benefits of Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is defined as the “measure of the attachment that a customer has to a brand” (Aaker, D., 2009, location 712). Strong brand loyalty has numerous benefits that translate into increased revenues throughout company divisions (Severi & Ling, 2013). This includes saving in marketing campaigns and advertising (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). A brand loyal customer only takes 5% of the marketing investment compared to a new customer (Mao, 2010). It is estimated that these types of customers are nine times more profitable than normal customers (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001). Customers are not as price conscious of a brand to which they are loyal, and are less likely to be influenced by the competition (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Having brand loyalty also means that reliance on money-saving promotions is less important (Aaker, D., 2009). Customers with high brand loyalty purchase more frequently and in larger amounts. (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Brand loyal customers continue to purchase a brand with no regard for outside research, (for example seeing a similar, cheaper product) and become desensitized to price increases as well (Roy, 2011). Further, brand loyal consumers act as advocates in their social circles (Mao, 2010). By spreading good word of mouth, additional customers are obtained (Mao, 2010). These additional customers can be local, but more importantly, especially in the arena of sports, it allows the brand to expand across a greater geographic area (Gladden & Funk, 2004). Additional customers, even those who can't physically attend a game, can still buy merchandise and participate through television, radio, and internet (Gladden & Funk, 2004).

Finally, brand loyalty can buy time when a company faces a challenge or an obstacle (Aaker, D., 2009). For example, should a competitor makes an innovative improvement, the brand's loyal following can sustain the brand while an adjustment is made or further research is conducted (Aaker, D., 2009). In the case of the brand disappointing the public or having a stock price plunge, the fans of the brand will continue purchasing while the company attends to the obstacle and corrects course (Aaker, D. , 2009).

Different Stages of Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a several stage process which ranges from low to high attachment (Aaker, D., 2009; Oliver, 1999; Mao, 2010; Roy, 2011). Every author has different synonyms and theories for the various stages of brand loyalty, but it is agreed that each segment presents a different marketing challenge and, therefore requires a different strategy (Aaker, D., 2009; Oliver, 1999; Mao, 2010; Roy, 2011). Where a customer resides on the brand loyalty scale is also ever-changing (Aaker, D. , 2009). Today's satisfied buyer can evolve and move up and down the scale. After a good experience with the brand they may become even more enthusiastic, however, a poor product experience or interaction with an employee could lead them toward a competitor (Mao, 2010).

Oliver defines brand loyalty levels as “cognitive, affective, conative, and action” (1999, p. 35-36). Cognitive loyalty is when a consumer bases their brand choice on data and other information (Oliver, 1999). This stage does not allow the user to process satisfaction at the onset. However, after they use the product, fulfillment or happiness occurs (Oliver, 1999). Upon receiving satisfaction, the user graduates to the second stage, affective loyalty (Oliver, 1999). At this stage, the consumer now likes the brand and may continue to purchase it in the future (Oliver, 1999). Consumers reach the conative stage after several positive exposures to the brand. The purchaser likes the brand, intends to make a repeat purchase, but does not always act on this intention (Oliver, 1999). For example, if a buyer bought a pint of ice cream and enjoyed it several times, their loyalty could still be swayed by a competing brand with a sale or even just the adventure of trying a new flavor. The final stage is action loyalty, an emotional connection not only compels the buyer to act, but the buyer will overcome obstacles in order to make the purchase (Oliver, 1999). If the same pint of ice cream is only available in Texas and the action loyal customer lives in California, the customer would pay extra to have it shipped.

While Oliver’s model is based on repetitive product exposure that eventually yields in brand loyalty, David Aaker takes a similar but less process oriented approach. His brand loyalty model is based on the amount of satisfaction achieved and emotion felt by a customer when purchasing (2009). He describes the lowest tier as a non-loyal group of customers that are price sensitive and switch frequently (2009). The second level contains those who are satisfied with the brand but not impassioned. Aaker also describes this level as people who are “at least, not dissatisfied” (Aaker, D.A. 2009, Location 725). The third level is very satisfied, but can be swayed to switch brands through enticements of discounts or another elements of value (2009). Aaker refers to them as the “switching-cost” loyal. The fourth level contains buyers who really like the brand, not just for it's utilitarian or hedonic properties, but they think of the brand as a friend to which they have an emotional attachment (Aaker, D. , 2009). The top level are highly commited buyers who identify strongly with the brand and have pride in calling themselves users of the brand (Aaker, D. , 2009). Aaker describes this kind of consumer as someone who would get a tattoo of the brand (2009).

In sports, the brand loyal fan can have varying loyalties to different elements of the brand (Gladden & Funk, 2004). A fan may just be faithful and excited about the sport; an example of this would be the person who tunes in to "Monday Night Football," even though their favorite team is not playing (Gladden & Funk, 2004). There are also loyalists who love their team but do not have an allegiance to any particular member of the team (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001). A spectator could be attached to a player, and this person's loyalty will be impeded should that player get injured or traded (Gladden & Funk, 2004).

Obstacles to Brand Loyalty

There are many obstacles with the potential to change the consumer's mind, especially in the early stages of brand loyalty (Mao 2010; Oliver, 1999; Severi & Ling, 2013). In general, 50% of shoppers don't consider themselves open to trying new brands, and two-thirds check prices before making regular purchase (Roy, 2011) In the earlier stages, defection is more likely (Oliver, 1999). During the cognitive stage, as more information is processed, loyalty can be impeded. A real or imagined benefit of a competing product could sway a customer (Oliver, 1999). This could include discovering a more cost-efficient replacement. If a food product is labeled "Half the fat," one might be swayed, even though they do not have quantification between brands. In the affective stage, loyalty to previous brands, or equally liked brands, can impact whether or not the brand is purchased again (Oliver, 1999). For example, should someone enjoy two baseball teams equally, like the geographically close Anaheim Angels and the Los Angeles Dodgers, they would be swayed by performance or perceived value, such as a giveaway night at the stadium.

Several different elements can impact brand loyalty. Causes for defection include a change in perception of a consumer's trust in the brand (Mao, 2010). Interactions between customers and front-facing employees can also impact trust (Mao, 2010). Customers perceive their relationship to a brand similarly to a personal relationship (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). If trust between two people is undermined, the relationship is damaged; the same is true of a relationship with a brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). If there is a negative interaction between brand and customer, even after several positive engagements, it could poison the customer's brand loyalty (Mao, 2010). In addition, if the brand or its employees act in an untrustworthy manner, or makes the consumer feel taken advantage of, this also harms the consumer's perception of the brand (Mao, 2010). The adventure of trying a new experience, the liking of several different brands, (Oliver, 1999) or a shift in perceived value or quality also play a part in dismantling brand loyalty (Severi & Ling, 2013).

There are pitfalls through out the brand loyalty heirarchy, even in the higher stages (Oliver, 1999; Roy, 2011). In the the conative stage, the lure of rivals negatively shift brand loyalty (Oliver, 1999). During the action stage, poor supply chains or the unavailablility of a product, like in the case of the Dodger's where customers are unable to watch the game on television, influence the consumer to go in search of a competitor's product (Oliver, 1999). Oliver notes that in all stages, poor brand experience or disintegrating performance are deadly to brand loyalty (1999).

Aaker insists that satisfaction plays a major role in creating brand enthusiasts (2009). Satisfaction has been considered a strong barometer for many years, though Aaker thinks that dissatisfaction is a more accurate measurement (2009). Oliver disagrees citing a study by Bain Capital showing that 65% to 85% of those satisfied with a brand are still ripe for defection (Oliver, 1999). Since satisfaction is not a guarantee for loyalty, Roy suggests that making an emotional connection to consumers is a more powerful strategy (2011). Roy's belief is that brand loyalty is built on making three connections: cognitive, behavioral, and emotional (2011). Cognitive is when a customer has come to a logical decision through a thought process and comparison (Roy, 2011). Behavioral is displayed through repetitious purchasing actions, (Roy, 2011) similar to Olsen's model. In the case of the Dodgers, this would be personified through the purchase of tickets, merchandise, concessions, or a cable base subscription to watch the game. The emotional portion is similar to Aaker's loyalty model detailed above (2009). Rather than making a rational decision, one makes their decision based on how much one likes the team (Aaker, D. , 2009). Roy's model (Appendix A) shows that these factors are not independent but reliant on each other.

Brand Audit

Roy's brand audit, which appears to blend the concepts of Aaker and Olsen, determines which specific emotional, cognitive, or behavioral connections need to be improved with consumers (2011). The process is performed in three steps:

1) Determine current brand levels in each category.
2) Segment the results in to eight groups and build a strategy for each one.
3) Reassess the implementation of the strategy to see what is effective and what is lacking.

Roy divides customer loyalty in to a “priority segmentation” of eight categories (2011, p. 120). These categories are listed in descending order from high loyalty to low.

Table 1

Eight types of brand loyalty according to Sancharan Roy (2011)

Category	Traits
Stable Loyal	High behavioral, high emotional, high cognitive
Passionate Loyal	High behavioral, high emotional, low cognitive
Hot Potential	Low behavioral, high cognitive, medium emotional
Hopeful	Low or misinformed cognitive, medium emotional, low behavioral due to lack of buying power
Vulnerable	Low cognitive, low emotional, medium behavioral
Functional Loyal	High cognitive, high behavioral, low emotional
Cold Potential	High cognitive, low behavioral, low emotional.
Disloyal	No loyalty

The marketer can use this assessment to design specific campaigns to address where a brand is lacking in commitment from its customers (Roy, 2011). Many brands place an emphasis on keeping the “stable loyal” and may implement a loyalty rewards program (Roy, 2011). The “vulnerable” may have had a negative experience or wrongfully perceive the brand in a negative light and need to be reeducated (Roy, 2011). The “cold potentials” may be swayed by discounts or giveaways (Roy, 2011). It is worth noting that the six lowest types of loyalty have one trait in common, the emotional connection needs to be improved.

Making Emotional Connections

Emotional branding, "the successful attachment of a specific emotion to a brand" has become very popular over the last decade by marketers and scholars (Rossiter & Bellman, 2012, p. 291). Emotional attachment starts with trust and grows deeper with thoughts of bonding, resonance, companionship, and love (Rossiter & Bellman, 2012). Liking the brand is considered key when measuring brand loyalty (Aaker, D. , 2009). Emotions such as respect and friendship felt for the brand can also to be measured (Aaker, D. , 2009).

In the case of the sports fan there is an additional emotional element, community (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001). Sports fans want to belong to a group and when they feel good about a brand it is reflected in their own self-identity (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001). There can also be reflected glory upon witnessing a victory (Kahle, 2004) Experiencing a loss creates sadness—at time to extremes— and loyal fans prefer to commiserate with others filled with the same emotion (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001). Identification is considered an indicator of high brand loyalty in many products but especially in sports. Spectators think of themselves as member of the team.

Rossiter and Bellman found in a study that hedonic products, consumables such as beer and coffee, yield an emotional attachment (2012). They also found that utilitarian products such as gasoline and detergent were impacted by emotional branding (Rossiter & Bellman, 2012). These products seem dispassionate and more utilitarian; when emotional branding occurs, the impact seems to be greater (Rossiter & Bellman, 2012). Further, the study found emotional branding was equally effective on both men and women (Rossiter & Bellman, 2012). Lastly, emotionally attached consumers were identified as most profitable (Rossiter & Bellman, 2012).

Sports fans experience a wide-range of emotion, including risk-taking, patriotism, fear, and pride (Kahle, 2004). To build a loyal fan base, sports teams must make an emotional connection. Successful products with a passionate fan base often use storytelling to elicit emotion (Fog, Budtz, & Yakaboylu, Branding through storytelling, 2005) Many brands, including the Dodgers, fail to identify and communicate their values. While researching this paper, a mission or vision statement for the team could not be found. Peter O'Malley, who owned the Dodgers for 30 years, forbid these kinds of statements within the organization (Shaikin, 2012). O'Malley believed that value was shown through the experience, not stated. In the communication age, if a brand's values are not communicated, there is no common cause to rally behind. (Fog, Budtz, & Yakaboylu, Branding through storytelling, 2005) This is where storytelling can fill in the void left by a lack clear messaging of values.

Storytelling

Storytelling is an effective manner of connecting with the emotional aspect of loyalty (Fog K. , Budtz, Munch, & Blanchette, 2010). Stories create a sense of similarity and an emotional connection with customers (Fog, Budtz, & Yakaboylu, 2005). Storytelling can ease customers and employees into a new brand vision (Silverman, 2004).

Brands often use storytelling to communicate values. For example, Harley-Davidson tells a story of freedom and rebellion. Nike tells a story of victory. LEGO uses a story of "learning through creative play" (Fog K. , Budtz, Munch, & Blanchette, 2010, p. 51). In February 2014, LEGO released a successful animated feature film embracing this narrative. If a brand does not have strong narrative in place, it allows a void in which customers create their own, perhaps negative, story (Herskovitz & Krystal, 2010). If marketers know what story the stories that the customer want to hear, they can create positive brand images around them (Ross, James, & Vargas, 2006).

Storytelling also plays a part in creating the brand persona to which people become emotionally attached (Herskovitz & Krystal, 2010). Having a brand personality humanizes the brand, making it more relatable (Aaker & Fournier, 1995). By creating this personality the brand also becomes easier to describe (Aaker & Fournier, 1995). For example, when Levi's are mentioned, the image of rugged, American, western blue jeans come to mind (Aaker & Fournier, 1995). This humanized brand must be considered part of the long-term corporate strategy (Herskovitz & Krystal, 2010; Fog K., Budtz, Munch, & Blanchette, 2010). A story or persona is more memorable than a mission statement (Silverman, 2004). The persona is created and must be consistent across all channels, even though several different stories may be told (Herskovitz & Krystal, 2010). For example, the story of Coca-Cola had been one of "tradition and belonging" (Herskovitz & Krystal, 2010). In 1985, when New Coke was introduced as a replacement product, this conflicted with the brand persona. This is one reason for New Coke's disastrous launch (Herskovitz & Krystal, 2010).

There are several crucial elements to brand storytelling. They include message, conflict, plot, and characters (Fog K. , Budtz, Munch, & Blanchette, 2010). Each story should only include one message or moral. The main message of Romeo and Juliet's message is "Love conquers all" (Fog K. , Budtz, Munch, & Blanchette, 2010). The moral of the brand could be the vision of the future (Smith & Wintrob, 2013). This makes the messaging easier for the viewer to absorb (Fog K. , Budtz, Munch, & Blanchette, 2010) and to rally behind (Silverman, 2004). Conflict makes the story exciting and memorable (Fog K. , Budtz, Munch, & Blanchette, 2010). The most important character is not the hero or the villain, but the brand (Aaker & Fournier,

1995) A story where a product resolves a conflict is more memorable than an infomercial merely telling the consumer to buy (Fog K. , Budtz, Munch, & Blanchette, 2010). The characters each need to have a specific role to play in resolution, so there should be a hero and villain with opposing agendas (Fog K. , Budtz, Munch, & Blanchette, 2010). Further, the characters should be relatable to the audience (Fog K. , Budtz, Munch, & Blanchette, 2010). To make the character even more likeable or relatable they can be based on a stakeholder (Smith & Wintrob, 2013).Through a study, Jennifer Aaker determined the five most important brand personality traits to be, in order of importance: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness (1997). Finally, the plot needs to tie everything together with a beginning, middle and end (Fog K. , Budtz, Munch, & Blanchette, 2010).

There are also pitfalls in the storytelling process (Herskovitz & Krystal, 2010). The key to a successful story that results in emotional attachment is authenticity (Herskovitz & Krystal, 2010). If a story is perceived as shallow, it becomes susceptible to being dismantled by external factors, such as the competition or media (Herskovitz & Krystal, 2010; Smith & Wintrob, 2013). Stories, like characters, need to be sincere (Aaker J. , 1997). At times, the persona can be forgotten in the excitement of a new idea in an advertising campaign (Herskovitz & Krystal, 2010). Consistency is key, and the story must match the actions of the corporation (Herskovitz & Krystal, 2010). Trust and loyalty are not quickly gained and can be destroyed easily (Herskovitz & Krystal, 2010). To perfect storytelling, practice is essential (Herskovitz & Krystal, 2010).

Emotional Leadership, The Employee Fan Relationship

Storytelling and an emotional attachment are not strictly a brand-to-consumer experience. It is important the story permeates the entire organization and is applied to the administrative leadership and employee relationship (Fog, Budtz, & Yakaboylu, 2005). Having employees that are emotionally invested requires managers with a high level of emotional intellect (Weymes, 2002). These managers are not just supervisors but inspirational leaders throughout the organization, who are self-aware and in tune with the moods of their employees (Weymes, 2002). Weymes promotes a series of matrix-style relationships rather than a top-to-bottom corporate format (2002). This allows for emotional leadership at every level and for the leaders' positive mood to become contagious (Weymes, 2002) . Customers who feel positively toward the employees of a company are more likely to have higher loyalty to the brand (Mao, 2010).

Brand Loyalty in Sports

Since sports fans are notoriously fickle, it must be wondered if brand loyalty in sports is achievable at all. It would be thought that if customers had a choice between a high performing brand and a low performing brand that the fans would choose the higher performing brand (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001). Until recently, this was the case in the NBA, where the Los Angeles Lakers had a much more enthusiastic fan base than their stadium-sharing rivals, the Los Angeles Clippers who were once considered the worst franchise in all of sports. If a sports team is not performing, the customer can also choose other avenues for spending the time and money. There is a direct correlation to a team's poor performance and lowered tickets sales (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001). However, winning or losing cannot be used to predict brand loyalty (Gladden & Funk, 2004). It can be used to correlate that current popularity of the team but not long-term brand loyalty (Gladden & Funk, 2004).

There are teams that exhibit brand loyalty, even during losing seasons. Weymes alludes to the idea that attendance consistent with previous winning years is an indicator or strong brand loyalty (2002). Examples of this the Atlanta Braves and the Chicago Cubs. In years where the teams have come in last, attendance has not wavered (Weymes, 2002; Bristow & Sebastian, 2001).

Weymes credits the emotional leadership of General Manager John Schuerholz with bringing about change (2002). When Schuerholz took office, “Victories were unknown and losing permeated the organisation” with both the employees and the fans (2002, p. 322). He identified this problem and created new stories to combat this perception and emotion.

Schuerholz gave the employees and fans a clear story to believe, “We are committed to provide you, the fans, with a first-class product, and a competitive world-championship contending team” (Gilson, Pratt, Roberts, & Weymes, 2000) and created a larger community within the organization (Gilson, Pratt, Roberts, & Weymes, 2000).

He played on the sense of community that drives fans (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001). Schuerholz decided to build relationships throughout the organization to allow employees to better connect with each other and the fans. (Gilson, Pratt, Roberts, & Weymes, 2000). A matrix organization style was implemented to ensure consistency.

In 2005, the Braves had a 90-72 record with 2,521,534 in yearly attendance (Altanta Braves year-by-year results, n.d.). In 2008, it had a 72-90 record with 2,532,834 in yearly attendance (Altanta Braves year-by-year results, n.d.). The Atlanta Braves had higher attendance in a season where it finished in fourth place—20 games out of first place—than when it won the division.

The Chicago Cubs also play to a sold-out stadium even when the team has a losing record (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001). Bristow and Sebastian conducted a survey near Wrigley Field to determine why Cubs fans were so loyal (2001). By categorizing fans in to three-tiered levels of loyalty. They found that the following hypothesis were supported:

1) Cubs fans with high brand loyalty have long history with the club dating back to childhood
2) Cubs fans with high brand loyalty had a greater knowledge about the history, legacy and general knowledge of the franchise

Also found was the both high and low brand loyalty fans considered the Cubs likeable, rating them in the 80th percentile for likability. Only 10% of those polled described them as unlikeable. David Aakers theorizes that likability is a big part of brand loyalty (Aaker, D. , 2009). Further both those with high and low brand loyalty felt a sense of nostalgia about the Cubs. This emotional connection was part of the reason why attendance is so high.

These two studies show that brand loyalty can be achieved and does exist in Major League Baseball. Trust in the employees, emotional leadership, and a positive fan franchise relationship is a part of the reason of the strong brand loyalty of the Atlanta Braves (Weymes, 2002). In the case of the Cubs likeability and nostalgia acts as baseline for better attendance as it was popular with patrons with both high and low levels of loyalty. Having a long-term relationship with the brand, experiencing the good times and bad, has led to the brand loyal having an in-depth knowledge of the team. These aspects and others will be applied to the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Method

Overview

In order to improve brand loyalty, research is required to assess the current relationship that the organization has with its customers. It has been determined that perceptions such as trustworthiness, value, and safety influence brand loyalty (Oliver, 1999; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Customers who have positive emotional connections with an organization's brand story and employees are more likely to become "Stable Loyal" (Mao, 2010; Roy, 2011; Ross, James, & Vargas, 2006). Roy has theorized a model to determine a possible roadmap to improving brand loyalty. First, levels of loyalty are determined. These levels are then categorized into Roy's eight "priority segmentations" (Roy, 2011). With the types of brand loyalty segregated, a strategy for each segment can then be devised.

Roy's eight categories are defined by various levels of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional loyalties (2011). Cognitive loyalty determines how much someone thinks before making a purchase, behavioral loyalty shows how likely one is willing to re-purchase, and emotional loyalty is determined by how purchase impacts positive feelings (Oliver, 1999; Roy, 2011). It has been suggested that too much emphasis is placed on behavioral as it results in ticket sales (Gladden & Funk, 2004). To get a complete picture additional attributes must be explored (Gladden & Funk, 2004). Roy suggests using a survey to discover the various levels of existing brand loyalty (2011). Ross, James and Vargas, also utilized a survey when determining their Team Brand Association Scale (TBAS), which was based on the brand equity theories of David Aaker and Kevin Keller (2006). The TBAS was intended to measure brand association of sports fans which influences brand loyalty (Gladden & Funk, 2004) This study's purpose is to use Roy's model and the TBAS to determine the current level of brand loyalty of the Los Angeles Dodgers. Lastly, questions inspired by Bristow and Sebastian's study of brand loyalty in regards the Chicago Cubs will be utilized, which include questions about nostalgia, length of fandom and self-identified brand loyalty (2001). It will be discovered if their recent popularity is just a surge or temporary trend, or if the Los Angeles Dodgers are experiencing true brand loyalty.

Surveys

Initial surveys have been administered to two sets of participants. The first group of 50 was selected both in person at Chavez Ravine prior to a Dodgers home game and also solicited through online Dodger Fan Forums. Bristow and Sebastian's study took place at a bar across the street from the Cub's Wrigley Field prior to a game (2001). Fans have also been approached at a similar bar near Dodger Stadium/ The second group of 50 was approached at a neutral location—a non-Dodger affiliated Los Angeles sports bar and the plaza at Staples Center prior to an NBA game. For various reasons, the brand loyal may show their loyalties through various media outlets which include internet, television and radio, and may not prefer not to attend in person (Kaynak, Salman, & Tatoglu, 2008). Further, it will be important to approach those who are at least somewhat knowledgeable about the local sports.

The survey (Appendix B) is made up of five different sections that correspond to the brand loyalty aspects suggested by Roy and the brand associations developed by Ross, James and Vargas. According to Roy, cognitive loyalty, behavioral loyalty, and emotional loyalty make up the nucleus of brand loyalty (2011). For example, a person with medium loyalty may make the following statements:

- Medium cognitive: I am aware of the Dodgers and perhaps will buy a ticket. I need toweigh my options first.
- Medium behavioral: I have been to a Dodgers' game and I may go again.
- Medium Emotional: Going to a Dodger game makes me feel good, I would like to go but other activities also make me feel good.

The questions are devised to fit in to these three categories. This includes trust, a problem for the Dodgers in the past, which falls under emotional loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001):

- Behavioral: Attendance and viewing habits (e.g., “How often do you attend a game?” or “Do you watch the Dodgers on television?”)
- Behavioral: Perceptions of the facilities and employees (e.g., “How safe do you feel?).
- Cognitive: Value (e.g., “On a scale of 1 to 7, how much of a value is the food at Dodger stadium?”)
- Emotional: Trust (e.g., “How trustworthy do you find the management or employees?”)
- Emotional: Knowledge and emotional ties to Dodger story (e.g., “What is a Los Angeles Dodger?” or “Who is your favorite player and why?”)

The survey questions are devised to fit in to these three broad categories while also addressing specifics of brand loyalty. Questions were also determined by using the TBAS guidelines developed by Ross, James, and Vargas (2006). This team developed a model for investigating sports brand loyalty and found that perceptions of the following factors impacted brand association and therefore fan loyalty (Ross, James, & Vargas, 2006):

- Non-player personnel
- Team success
- Team history
- Stadium community
- Team play characteristics
- Brand mark

- Concessions
- Social interaction
- Rivalry
- Commitment
- Organizational attributes

In the interest of brevity, some categories are not addressed in this study. Questions about team success and team play characteristics were omitted, as it has been established that the Dodgers are experiencing a surge in popularity due to these factors. Further, questions about the Los Angeles Dodger's iconic brand mark was deemed unnecessary for the purposes of this study.

The questions asked utilize the 7-point Likert scale (1 is lowest and 7 is the highest), multiple choice, and open-ended questions. Once the number of completed surveys reached the desired amount of 100 participants, the data was calculated and analyzed using both Qualtrics and SPSS statistics software. Each participant was given a rounded off cognitive, behavioral, and emotional score. A score of 1 is considered no loyalty, 2 to 3 is considered low, 4 to 5 considered medium, and 6 or 7 is considered high. This determined various levels of brand loyalty for each participant. For example, if a respondent scored a high cognitive, high behavioral, and low emotional, they would fit in the "Functional Loyalty" segmentation. After all tabulations were recorded, the participant's scores will be distributed in to the various dimensions outlined by Roy (2011), to determine the types of loyalty the Dodgers experience.

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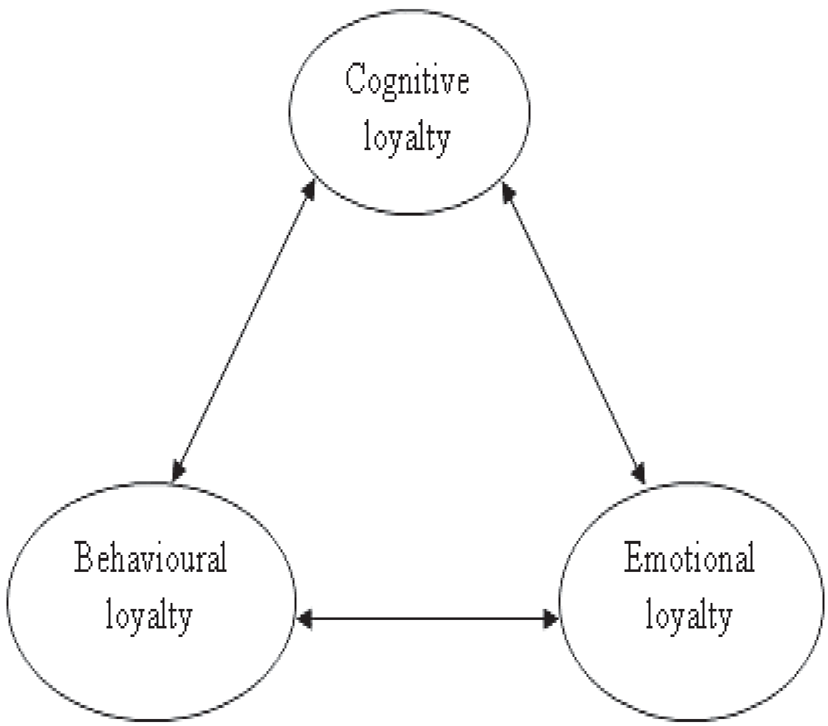
Appendix A



Appendix

B

Q1.1 How many Dodger games do you attend in a season?

- ❍ 0
- ❍ 1 to 3
- ❍ 4 to 7
- ❍ 8 to 10
- ❍ 11 to 15
- ❍ 16 to 20
- ❍ 20 or more

Q1.2 How many Dodger games would you like to attend in a season?

- ❍ 0
- ❍ 1 to 3
- ❍ 4 to 7
- ❍ 8 to 10
- ❍ 11 to 15
- ❍ 16 to 20
- ❍ 20 or more
- ❍ Season Tickets

Q39 How long have you been watching the Dodgers?

- ❍ 0 to 3
- ❍ 3 to 8 years
- ❍ 8 to 13 years
- ❍ 13 to 20 years
- ❍ 20 or more years

Q40 Did you go to Dodger games as a child?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Q41 Do you feel nostalgic about the Dodgers?

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

Q1.3 Why don't you go to the game more often?

Q1.4 Do you plan on seeing more or less Dodgers games this year than in previous seasons

- ❍ More
- ❍ Less

Q1.5 What level do you usually sit?

- ❍ Field Level
- ❍ Middle Decks
- ❍ Top Deck
- ❍ Bleachers

Q38 Which of the following describes why you visit Dodgers Stadium?

- ❍ To be social
- ❍ To be entertained
- ❍ To spend the day outside
- ❍ To watch the game
- ❍ N/A

Q1.6 Who do you normally attend games with?

- ❍ Alone
- ❍ Friends
- ❍ Family
- ❍ Other

Q1.7 How much do you spend personally per game, including parking, admissions and in park expenses?

- 0 to $30
- $30 to $60
- $60 to $90
- $90 to $120
- $120 to $150
- $150 or more

Q1.8 How do you buy your tickets?

- Individually
- Mini- Package
- Season Tickets
- N/A

Q1.9 Do watch Dodger Baseball on television?

- Yes
- Not this year, but I did last season
- No

Q1.10 What service do you use for watching sports on television?

- Antenna
- Time Warner Cable
- Direct TV
- AT&T U-verse
- Dish
- Other

Q37 Are you aware of that Dodger coverage cannot be seen by most people in Los Angeles?

- Yes
- No

Q1.14 Who is to blame for the lack of television coverage?

- The Dodgers
- Time Warner Cable
- Other television providers

Q31 Which Social Media sites do you follow the Dodgers on?

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- None
- Other ____________________

Q2.1 On a scale of 1 to 7 (1 is the lowest, 7 is the highest), how much do you consider going to a Dodger game as a value?

______ Value

Q2.2 On a scale of 1 to 7 (1 is the lowest, 7 is the highest), how much do you agree or disagree with this statement:: Parking at Dodger Stadium is a value?

______ Value

Q2.3 What do you think would be a fair price for parking?

Q2.4 On a scale of 1 to 7 (1 is the lowest, 7 is the highest) how much do you agree with this statement: "The food at Dodger Stadium is a value."

______ Value

Q2.5 On a scale of 1 to 7 (1 is the lowest, 7 is the highest), how much do you agree with this statement "The merchandise at Dodger Stadium is a value"

______ Merchandise

Q3.1 One a scale of 1 to 7 (1 is the lowest, 7 is the highest) please rank the following Dodgers owners as trustworthy.

______ FOX SPORTS

______ Frank McCourt

______ Guggenheim Baseball Management (led by Magic Johnson)

Q3.2 One a scale of 1 to 7, do feel the players and employees are committed to their jobs?

______ Players Trustworthy

______ Employee Trustworthy

Q3.3 On a scale of 1 to 7 how much do you think the current management has the fan's best interest in mind?

______ Fan's Best Interest

Q4.1 What is your favorite part of the Dodger legacy?

- Jackie Robinson
- Kirk Gibson and 1988 World Championship
- Fernandomania
- Rivalry with the Giants
- Vin Scully
- Other ____________________

Q4.2 Do you follow any players on social media sites? If so, who and what site?

Q4.3 Who is your current favorite Dodger player?

Q4.4 Who is your favorite previous Dodger player?<div>
</div>

Q4.5 Name any of the retired numbers of the Los Angeles Dodgers. Have you ever seen any of these players play live (either on television or at the stadium)?

Q4.6 Describe a Los Angeles Dodger. What images come to mind?

Q5.1 On a scale of 1 to 7 (1 being the lowest, 7 being the highest), how safe is Dodger Stadium?

______ Inside the stadium

______ In the parking lot

______ In general

Q5.2 On a scale of 1 to 7 (1 being the lowest, 7 being the highest) how clean is Dodger Stadium?

______ Cleanliness

Q5.3 On a 1 to 7 Scale (1 being the highest and 7 being the lowest) how do you view the employees?

______ Concessions

______ Ushers

______ Security

______ Merchandise

Q36 On a scale of 1 to 7 (1 is the lowest, 7 is the highest), how "Family Friendly" is Dodger Stadium?

_______ Family Friendly