

Exploring Difference: Investigating Influential Factors Between Unpopular and Popular NBA Teams

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Abstract:

Throughout the history of the NBA, a team's popularity has been a critical factor in success. Legendary teams tend to have large, loyal, diverse fan bases and considerable revenue. On the contrary, teams with low visibility often face the dilemma of low exposure to the public, low fan participation, and even continuous loss of fans, resulting in low income, bad in-court performance, and even a decline in the team. This research paper will explore the connection between unpopular and popular teams in the NBA and the reasons behind it. This paper aims to reveal the multifaceted factors that influence the popularity of NBA teams and help future teams become popular and avoid failure. Focus on why the Detroit Pistons are unpopular by analyzing team history, geographic location, marketing strategies, team identification, competition with other sports teams, and team strengths and weaknesses. Also, compare the Detroit Pistons with the New York Knicks. While revealing the differences, this paper will also propose strategic recommendations to help unpopular teams overcome adversity and lead to success.

Keywords: Fan economy, marketing strategies, team identification, community.

1. Introduction

This research paper will delve deep into the intricate factors that influence the popularity of NBA teams. This paper attempts to unravel the complexity of this phenomenon by providing a comprehensive exploration of the connection between unpopular and popular teams in the NBA. The two primary purposes of this paper are to uncover the complicated factors that influence the popularity of NBA teams and to provide strategic ideas to guide future teams toward popularity. The significance of this paper lies in its potential as a foundation for unpopular NBA teams to empower themselves. Also, it could provide NBA teams with knowledge and tools to enhance their social exposure, engage their fan base, and elevate their standing within the league. This paper will use textual analysis, case studies, and comparative analysis. First, this paper will discuss the historical context of the popularity of NBA teams. Then, it will drive an analysis of various factors influencing team popularity by defining unpopular teams. Finally, a comparative analysis proposes strategic recommendations for unpopular teams to overcome challenges.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Differences in Popularity of Teams in

Mainstream Sports

In mainstream sports, popularity played as a crucial role. The popularity of different sport teams is linked to historical legacy, brilliant performance, star players, successful marketing strategy, and location [1]. For example, in soccer, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, they are the most famous current soccer players. They have elevated the popularity of their country, increased media coverage and fans engagement. Also, successful marketing campaigns can elevate popularity as well. The Los Angeles Lakers in basketball maintain their status with widespread appeal, they are the one of most valuable teams in the league.

2.2 Overview of NBA

The National Basketball Association (NBA) is one of the most popular basketball leagues in the world. The NBA regular season usually starts in October each year [2]; every thirty teams will play in a total of 82 games, including home and away games. After that, playoffs will begin to determine the western and eastern champion teams that will fight for the championship in the NBA Finals.

NBA is not just a sports event but also a place for people to get away from stress [3]; the intensity and entertainment of NBA games have attracted numerous fans worldwide. Also, the NBA is a commercial brand. Due to its

widespread influence, NBA games are broadcast worldwide, which is an ample business opportunity.

NBA also deepens the connection between basketball and the community. The Detroit Pistons have embarked on a journey to elevate their brand and deepen their roots within the vibrant community of Detroit. Over the years, they have had various marketing campaigns to celebrate their core values.

3. The Unpopularity Factor of Minority Teams

3.1 The Definition of Unpopular Team

Unpopular teams are the teams that receive little attention and support. These teams may not have an outstanding team history, performance, and players as the popular team; therefore, they have low media exposure, fan support, and commercial value. However, unpopular teams are the most successful teams with the most fans in the city, while they are the most unpopular among outsiders [4].

3.2 Case Analysis

The Detroit Pistons is the perfect example of an unpopular team; even though they had a brilliant history of winning the NBA championships, they have often identified themselves as unpopular. Foremost, the Pistons' in-court performance is one of the critical factors affecting their popularity. After winning the 2004-2005 season NBA championship, the Pistons' performance has been always unstable; they experienced a decline in home game attendance from 2005-2012 [5]. Second, competing for fans' attention with other sports teams, such as the Detroit Lions and Detroit Tigers, may also affect their popularity. The Detroit Lions and Detroit Tigers are one of the strongest teams in football and baseball. However, the Pistons still have a loyal fan base. The team's history, culture, and deep connection to the community of Detroit support the team.

4. The Popularity Factor of Popular Teams

Popular teams are the teams that has massive diverse fan support, numerous commercial endorsements and large media coverage. The popular teams engage in successful social media campaigns that makes audiences to see them everywhere. These teams often have unique histories, having won several NBA championships in the past, or showcased remarkable performance that capture worldwide audiences and fans. Additionally, these team also have star players such as LeBron James and Kobe Bryant, who attract a lot of fans. Throughout their successful team

history, the popular teams are not just good at playing basketball, but also showed their passion, unity and enthusiasm. They care deeply about basketball and resonate with their local community.

5. Comparative Analysis

Despite their unstable on-court performance and expensive ticket prices, the New York Knicks are among the most popular and wealthiest teams in the NBA. On the Forbes "NBA Team Valuations," the New York Knicks is the number two valuable team in the NBA league. Their team value is 6.6 billion dollars; the number three Los Angeles Lakers is 6.4 billion [6]. These teams do not have a massive gap between their team value. However, their number of championships is very different. The Warriors have seven champions, the Lakers have 16, but the Knicks only have two. The Pistons and Knicks have outstanding histories in the NBA, nearly the same number of championships, and inconsistent on-court performance. Still, their popularity, economic situation, and position in the NBA league are very different.

The New York Knicks have reached the NBA Finals in four seasons and won two NBA championships in 1970 and 1973 [7]. These two championships helped the Knicks establish themselves as one of the premier teams back then. The key players, such as Walt Frazier, Willis Reed, and Patrick Ewing, showcased their excellent skills and made impressive moves that left memorable moments in their fans' hearts. The history and key players help to solidify the New York Knicks fan base. Even though the Detroit Pistons won three NBA championships, they did not use it as a chance to maximize their fan groups.

The New York Knicks is one of the world's most influential and significant cities. The Knicks have a natural advantage and excellent media exposure. The diverse population in New York City provides an extensive and passionate fan base. On the other hand, the Detroit Pistons are in Detroit, a city with minor media exposure and a non-diversity fan base; also, the Knicks play at Madison Square Garden, which is considered one of the most famous arenas in the world. Many tourists will go there, creating a chance for the Knicks to get new, passionate, diverse fans. However, the Pistons play at Little Caesar Arenas, a modern arena shared with hockey and the NHL. The ticket prices for NHL and hockey are much lower than those for the Pistons games. It created chances of the Pistons losing fans.

The New York Knicks are not among the best teams in the NBA league; they are valued highly because they have a steady income. During the pandemic, while other teams were suffering from little revenue, the Knicks did not get

affected that much. The Knicks' income mainly depends on media copyright, sponsorships, and ticket income. The New York Knicks are one of the teams that have the best sponsorships in the NBA league. They have sponsors such as Delta Air Lines, JPMorgan Chase, and PepsiCo, which is 20% of their total revenue [8].

On the other hand, the Detroit Pistons have much weaker sponsors, such as Zingerman's, Little Caesars, and Flagstar. Most of the sponsors are food companies and health companies. As a major city in the United States, New York City has numerous tourists. While on tour in New York City, they will most likely watch a basketball game. In this situation, they will experience a ticket boost and have a higher chance of gaining a more diverse fan group.

6. Suggestions on the Operation and Development of Unpopular Teams

The big problems for unpopular teams are low media exposure, fan support, and poor on-court performance. However, to solve these problems, the unpopular teams must adopt new marketing methods. Firstly, it will increase diversity on social media. The Detroit Pistons' online fans are shallow in activity, and the Pistons need to show more of the team's achievements, such as community responsibility, to emphasize the team's core values to satisfy the audience. Secondly, increase interaction with fans. The most important thing for a team is to create a positive connection with the fans. The Pistons could create a discussion group on social media for fans to provide suggestions. Lastly, marketing activities for fans of specific age groups should be increased. The team must maintain old fans and attract new ones to have a more robust and extensive fan base. Therefore, creating various marketing activities for fans of different age groups is essential. Middle-aged fans do not have the most profound attachment to the team; if the Pistons could reduce the ticket price, they may attract more middle-aged fans. However, young fans pay more attention to the game's entertainment experience. In halftime, the Pistons could set up some basketball-related games for them.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research paper explored the connection between team popularity. It examined the factors influenc-

ing the popularity of unpopular and popular teams in the NBA, defining unpopular teams and pointing out the key factors behind them by analyzing on-court performance, location, and marketing strategies. Then, a popular team can be used as an example to compare and analyze the differences, eventually proposing an improvement plan. This paper has limitation of only focusing on NBA, however, there might be different reason of how did unpopular created. This paper encouraged the NBA teams to invest in marketing strategies, increase media exposure, and resonate with fans. This paper also serves as a blueprint for unpopular NBA teams working to elevate their exposure, engagement, and position in the league.

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