

Philipp Sauer

Improving Customer Relationships in the Sports Industry through the Use of E-Business

A Case Study on VfL Bochum

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Bibliographic information published by the German National Library:

The German National Library lists this publication in the National Bibliography; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de> .

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ISBN: 978-3-656-98391-0

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ABSTRACT

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The study examines the influence of online marketing on customer relationships in the sports industry. The primary aim was to investigate how customers perceive the use of online marketing and which factors and tools are most important for them. The enormous macroeconomic importance and the growing commercialization of the sports industry in general, have resulted in the emergence of a highly competitive market in which the building and maintaining of strong customer relationships is a key success factor for sports organizations. The study aims to identify the importance of the most common e-business tools today and to learn how consumers perceive future trends of e-business, like e.g. user interactivity or mobile commerce. All these factors were analyzed according to customer satisfaction and perception, and to their influence on improving customer relationships.

A combined methodological approach of quantitative and qualitative research was used in form of a questionnaire. This questionnaire was clearly divided into a quantitative section, which was built of 21 multiple choice questions, and a qualitative section, which was mainly designed to learn more about personal experiences from the customers. This methodological approach was designed to contrast individual perceptions from the customers to general trends.

The literature review indicated that the most commonly used Internet applications in the sports industry can roughly be divided into information applications, e-commerce applications and interactive applications. The results of the study discovered that the

majority of customers prefer to make use of the club's website for informative purposes. General trends, like user interactivity are acknowledged as less important, even in comparison to e-business tools like ticketing. In fact, customers have accepted the Internet as a helpful and trustful information and communication source, which has improved significantly the integration of customers to the happenings in and around the club itself.

This study is very helpful to sports marketers, as it reveals the factors of online marketing which are most efficient regarding customer satisfaction and customer loyalty and provides them with a number of recommendations how to most effectively make use of online marketing.

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