All Stars Shine Differently: What NBA and CBA Has Done via Social Media?

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Abstract. Comparison of the social media promotion strategies of Chinese and American All-Star events is one of the most significant focus point in society recently, some researchers found that the strategies NBA and CBA are using effect these problems. The whole essay is describing the differences between NBA social media and CBA social media strategies, and the strategies they can learn from each others. Depending on the data collected from the one of the most influential platforms in China, Weibo, and analyzing the data. Also, comparing the social media operation ways that NBA and CBA are using, like entertainments, messages they posted or basic operation strategies. To investigate the usage of the NBA and CBA All-Star Games on social media, this research included content analysis and text analysis, as well as an examination of the leagues' official social media accounts. The facts indicate NBA pays more attention at online activities, CBA pays more attention at offline activities. So that, both of them can add the vantage aspects from each other, in order to get the comprehensive developments.

Keywords: Social media · All Star Games · online social activities · NBA & CBA complementary

1 Introduction

China has been devoted to professional sports reform, fostering the growth of the sports sector, and establishing professional leagues in a variety of competitive sports since the reform and opening up. The influence of news media coverage on the promotion and growth of professional sports events is significant. Social media not only can be used as the most appealing choice for advertisement of global professional sport events, but also the primary channel for professional sports organizations to communicate with audiences and maintain public relations, based on its large-scale audience interaction and civilian access threshold. Social media should pay more attention to the interactions and feedbacks from sport events followers because the follower's responses can reflect the visibility of one specific event in social media. Weibo, as one of the most popular social media network with a active user of over 570 million per month in China because of

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Weibo is a primary virtual community for professional sports organizations and followers to aggregate and interact with each other [1]. According to the database, the amount of newspaper printing in China reduced rapidly in 2020 about 13%. Newsprint consumption in 2020 is expected to be 1.35 million tons, down 12.90% from 1.55 million tons in 2019. This statistic is extremely similar to the drop in newspaper print runs of 12.92% in 2018 and 11.93% in 2019, and the decline in newsprint use continues to show an expanding trend in China.

These all can explain why Chinese new generation prefer to use the Internet to get information, like Weibo. Due to this fact, Weibo has high impact on different fields, such as entertainment, science, education and so on. In these areas, sport is also influenced. The scholars and experts had already choose the relationship among social media, fans and professional sport players as their research field or topic. There are many evidences that can support the social network usage behavior differs among social groups with different cultural backgrounds. The ways that NBA spread in social media are different from CBA methods. NBA, stands for national basketball association. Internationalization of the audience market through a range of tactics, as well as effective use of social media for relationship marketing. As a successful example, the NBA has become a model for numerous sporting events to follow. Because of the late start of China's CBA league, the marketing methods are relatively single and backward, and the marketing plan is not ideal, contributing to the present quandary position.

According to an research made by Zhang & Zhang, the social media that including sports messages is usually spread by sports organizations, sports medias and sports fans. The sports organizations that convey messages can also be divided in to two parts, which are the competition organizers like NBA and the sports clubs like Los Angeles Lakers [2]. There are many researches has already focus on these organizations, and some of them of them focus on the strategies of those organizations in order to operate their social medias. Waters, Burke, Jackson & Buning evaluated how NFL teams use stewardship on their official Facebook and website pages to create fandom, and found that the most useful strategies are relationship nurturing and reciprocity [3]. There are also some research that focus on the Message Types of the sports organizations. Ke & Wang has found that the usage of social media was increased in the recent years, and the live studio is a popular way when sports organizations are trying to interact with their fans [4]. Wallace, Wilson & Kimberly passed through the NCAA teams in the Big 12 Athletic Conference and found that hyperlinks, Text status and images are the three most used propagations of a team's Facebook page, and team wins, rivalry, online social and brand symbols are the four most frequently published types of information [5].

Some researchers also concerned about the fan's preferences of the social media. Li & Wang has researched the messages send by NBA and CBA' s official accounts and found that the message's stardom and Entertaining can raise more attention from the audiences [6]. Zhao has researched the CBA all-star games and analyzed its marketing strategies and found that Knowledge-based articles were most welcomed by the fans [7]. Witkemper, Lim & Waldburger believe that the motivation of people to pay attention to professional players on social media mainly consists of information, entertainment, Recreation and fandom [8].

To sum up, this research is going to ask two questions: What are the differences between the two different games on social-media publicity? What can NBA and CBA do to attract more fans of the all-star games, and how the fans will be influenced?

In order to find an answer of those questions, this research choose to use content analysis and textual analysis and will analyse the official social media accounts of the two leagues. The name of the two accounts are "NBA" and "CBA official". This research tries to classify all the All-star game related messages in 2021, (CBA didn't has a all-star game in 2022 due to the pandemic) and the two dimensions are the types and the topics. Then the research will operationalize the dependent variable into the number of likes, comments and forwards.

2 Data and Method

2.1 Sampling

To examine social-media use of NBA and CBA all-star games and solve the questions mentioned above, this research choose to use content analysis and textual analysis and will analyse the official social media accounts of the two leagues. And the social media we chose is Weibo. Weibo was listed on Nasdaq in the United States on April 17, 2014, becoming a milestone in the development of Chinese social media. As of June 2022, the official NBA Weibo account has more than 42 million fans. The accumulated information has reached 27,8180 articles and the cumulative video playback volume is 12.037 billion. The Weibo account of CBA also has 3.65 million fans and reached 21,884 articles.

This research tries to classify all the All-star game related messages in 2021, (CBA didn't has a all-star game in 2022 due to the pandemic) on Weibo. The research period is 9 days before the all star weekend, and the deadline of the data collection is the day after the all-star weekend. The reason why we chose this period is that the NBA official Weibo accounts begins countdown 9 days before the All-Star Game started. As the all-star game usually played in weekend, I will choose the Monday before the all-star game as the first day of our week.

2.2 Measurement

This paper developed a scheme in order to examine how NBA and CBA use the social media to attract fans during the all-star games (See Table 1). This scheme can also compare the messages of NBA and CBA and find the differences of their social media strategies. The major category of this scheme is the efficacy of messages. And the subcategories are oriented from Li & Wang's research, which involved news, live streaming, entertainments, advertisements and social activities [6]. News includes the messages about game previews, reports and interviews. Live streaming could be built through the texts, videos and pictures throughout the game. Entertainments are defined as the funny moments of players and coaches, as well as the stars that are invited to the game, like the pop music stars. Advertisements means the messages including the sport brands or other kinds of advertisements, and the social activities are about the interactions with fans and the society, including the online and offline activities. Despite of the five categories, this research will also take the game replays into account because both the

Table 1. The efficacy of the messages

Category	Subcategory
News	Game previews and results
	Interviews
Live streaming	Texts
	Videos
	Pictures
Entertainments	Funny moments
	Other stars
Advertisements	
Social activities	Online
	Offline
Game replays	

two leagues are likely to replay some classic all-star games before the game. Then the research will explore the public reactions to the different kinds of messages. On the social medias like Weibo, the results of public reactions can be observed straitly by the number of likes, comments and retweets. There were significant relationships between relation-ship dimensions and followers' interactions. The retweets and favorites could be effective indicators that determined the attractiveness of each message [9].

3   Results

A total 208 messages send by NBA's official Weibo accounts and 68 messages send by CBA's official Weibo accounts throughout the research period.

3.1   Different Social Media Strategies

This study finds that NBA and CBA tend to send live streaming messages during the all-star game. NBA (n = 52, 25%) shared more of those messages than CBA (n = 25, 39.6%), but the rate of such messages pushed by the CBA official account is higher. These two leagues often share the live messages of the all-star game, like the three-point shots, dunks and the highlights of star players. Compared with pictures and texts, Most of these messages are videos. Besides, NBA also tends to send game replays (n = 72, 34.6%) in order to warm up the all-star game. This kind of messages are mostly generated by NBA official accounts during the research period, and the average number is 6 replays per day before the game started. Game replays not only include the classic games of the all-star league, but also show the highlight moments of the all-star players during their careers. Another important fact is that NBA likes to send messages about social activities, and they has a higher proportion of online activities, like interacting with the fans and online sweepstakes.

Compared with NBA, CBA are more likely to send entertaining messages about the all-star game. (n = 16, 25.3%) and the proportion is much higher than NBA's official accounts. These entertaining messages are including the funny moments of players and coaches, as well as the close-up pictures and the stars that being invited to the all-star game. This may suggests that the CBA was catered to the needs of the audience. Because CBA all-star game has a lower game quality than NBA, so the entertaining messages are necessary to attract more fans,

In addition, CBA also send some messages about social activities. But it focus more on the offline activities like the social welfare activities. One possible explanation is that the two leagues concerned more about their local fans. NBA also organized some social activities in USA, but the league didn't publicize them on Chinese social because Chinese fans may not interested with that.

3.2   Fans Preferences of Different Kinds of Messages

According to all the messages posted by NBA and CBA official accounts during the research period, 99.2% of them received retweets and favorites.

For NBA all-star games, This research has found that the Live streaming messages will be retweeted mostly by the fans (A = 159.5), and the number of social activities are slightly smaller (A = 133.25). Besides, the social activities will receive the most likes (A = 2207), followed by the news (A = 1938.31) and live streaming messages (A = 1526.05). On the other hand, the entertaining messages received the fewest retweets (A = 36.6) and the game replays received the fewest likes. (A = 208.3594)This may reflect that the NBA fans on Chinese social media are more eager to learn and share the messages related to the game itself. Another important side that the statics can reflect is that the fans are eager to the social activities organized by NBA. Although these activities are online, the fans are still passionate about them.

The statistics of CBA all-star games are different from NBA. Of all the messages send by CBA throughout this period, the entertaining messages received most of the retweets (A = 212.75) and likes (A = 1591.31). The possible explanation may lead to the affinity with the CBA players and the local fans. However, CBA fans are less willing to retweet and favorite the news and live-streaming messages. In addition, social activities received the fewest retweets by the fans. One possible explanation is that the CBA needs to renovate the form of their social activities before the game.

4   Discussion

This research studied the different kinds of social media messages about the all-star game and trying to find out how these messages will influence the reaction of the audience. Another goal of this study is trying to find the differences of the social media strategies of NBA and CBA's official accounts on Chinese social media.

The research found that:

4.1   News and Live Streaming of the All-Star Game are the Most Effective Forms

According to our findings, both NBA and CBA's Weibo accounts tends to send live streaming messages during the games. When people trying to use social media to learn something about the all-star game, they are most likely to read the news and live streaming messages to know what exactly happened during the games. Compared with other two forms of live steaming messages, the videos are mostly used because they can Use pictures and sounds to resonate with the audience, so that the audience has a visual and auditory resonance [10].

4.2   The Effects of Entertaining Messages Based on the Contents

Although it's important to make the audience feeling the high-level sports skills through exciting performances on the field, Both NBA and CBA use interesting clips of players and coaches, which will Enhance the affinity of both of the organizations. But the effects are significantly different and CBA's entertaining messages are much more attractive to the fans. That's because what CBA sends are focus on the players and coaches funny moments during the game, which will reflect their handsomeness and affinity. And most of the main character of CBA's entertaining messages are their most famous stars, while NBA only paid a few attention on them. What's more, Both NBA and CBA will invite some stars that come from other fields in order to attract more attention. Good interaction with celebrities can not only attract potential audiences to the all-star games, but also can help the league to build up a better image through the audience.

4.3   Online Social Activities Can Effectively Warm up the All-Star Game

In order to warm up the atmosphere before the all-star weekend, NBA tends to replay the classic all-star games, while CBA pay more attention on the social activities. But our research finds that the NBA's social activities seems to be more effective to attract fans. Most of NBA's activities are online activities like predicting the results and MVP players, which usually accompanied with some lottery activities. These will effectively stimulate the audiences willingness to interact. Compared with NBA, CBA usually organized the offline activities like interacting with the local people and give a basketball lesson to the children. These activities will promote the correct value concept and healthy behavior habits to the public, but the forms of the activities are too simple and lack of creation. Another fact is that these activities can't make the fans to have a sense of participation because they are lack of interaction with them.

5   Conclusion

To sum up, this article analysed the different social media strategies of NBA and CBA on in order to attract more fans for the all-star games. It's obvious that both of the two leagues have similar strategies, which seem to be really successful. But there are also some differences between the two leagues' ways of publicize the game, while the fans also react differently and show different preferences of the strategies.

Based on the findings of the research, this article can provide some practical suggestions to professional sports organizations that wants to enhance the effects of interacting and building relationships with the fans.

5.1   Adding More Online Social Activities

In order to interact with the Chinese fans on the social media more effectively, one possible way that a sport organization can do is to add more online activities, like the online lucky draw, competitions with prizes or some activities can interact with audiences and fans. Basically, social media engagement increases whenever someone interacts with your account, and it can be measured in a number of ways. Keeping track of how many comments and shares each post receives on average, or whatever stats are important. Then the league needs to maintain track on a frequent basis so you can spot any spikes or dips in interaction that might indicate what's working, and find the most suitable entertainments for the fans online.

5.2   Using Live-Streaming Messages, Especially Videos

Another point is that the sport leagues should send more live-streaming messages, especially the videos about the events. Because it allows you to convey ideas fast and effectively, visual material is undoubtedly the most potent tool the company can employ to engage your fans on social media. It's a smart way to distinguish events from the sea of textual information that floods the internet every day. Furthermore, visual material, such as designs and images, is 44% more likely to interest the fans and followers on social media, so the sports organizations should devote some time to developing visual content for these postings. Using social media to delight fans as much as to enlighten them. Delightful pieces are frequently the most memorable and shareable, and they'll help the sports organizations to establish a devoted following far more than dull posts, which are occasionally required.

5.3   Using the Entertaining Messages More Effectively

The entertaining messages can also enhance the effects of interaction between the sports organization and the audience, but the contents needs to be considered more carefully. When sending entertaining messages, the sports organization needs to focus on the stars of their leagues. Fandom is a important element that influence the fans motivation. As the core of sports events, star players and coaches are important tools to maintain audience attention and increase community popularity, and their funny moments can show their different images, which can develop a more friendly image of a sport organization and increase the willingness of the audience to interact with the sports organization.

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