

# Using Case Study to Analyze the Bilingual Brand Strategy of Barcelona Football Club

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**Abstract.** Barcelona Football Club is facing the challenge of enhancing its brand influence as globalization deepens. To meet the cultural identity of local fans and the information needs of global fans, Barcelona Football Club has developed a bilingual brand strategy based on Spanish and Catalan. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how Barcelona Football Club uses different brand strategies in a bilingual environment to enhance brand influence and fan loyalty. In the Case Description section, this paper first describes the background, process, and results of Barcelona Football Club's bilingual brand strategy formation. Then, it analyzes how the strategy specifically enhances brand influence and loyalty from three different perspectives. Finally, corresponding suggestions are provided from these three perspectives. Research has found that the dissemination of bilingual content is one of the factors that enhance Barcelona Football Club's brand influence. In response to this, it is recommended to better adapt to digital transformation and activate digital media. The implementation of the bilingual marketing strategy has also established a closer connection between Barcelona Football Club and fans. In response to this, Barcelona Football Club should use data-driven insights and achieve personalization. Bilingual cultural adaptation can enhance fan engagement by enriching fan experiences and strengthening cultural identity. Barcelona should strengthen cooperative relationships to increase fan loyalty. This paper holds significance as it offers suggestions for brands to navigate the complex relationship between globalization and localization, while also proposing innovative ideas to enhance their brand influence through language.

**Keywords:** Barcelona Football Club; Bilingual Content; Bilingual Marketing Strategy; Bilingual Culture Adaptation.

## 1. Introduction

With the progress of society and the continuous development of globalization, the entire sports industry is also constantly exchanging and integrating. Geography and language no longer limit fans' support for the team, and single-language sports brands no longer resonate well with fans from diverse backgrounds. In order to attract more fan groups and strengthen brand influence, the entire sports industry has shown a trend toward bilingualism or even multilingualism. Teams use different languages to target different fan groups and adopt targeted strategies both locally and globally, continuously enhancing brand influence.

In this context, Barcelona Football Club, one of the most successful football clubs in the world and located in the highly unique historical and cultural Catalonia region of Spain, where Catalan is one of the official languages and holds an important position, hopes to strengthen its brand influence in both local and international markets. Therefore, the club has developed a bilingual-based strategy for bilingualism, with Catalan being an essential local language and Spanish being the national official language, in order to better meet the cultural identity of local fans and the information needs of global fans.

Academically, previous researchers have also conducted studies using Barcelona Football Club as the research object. For example, Xavier Ginesta, Jordi de San Eugenio, and others analyzed how clubs in the US market can internationalize and increase their visibility through media coverage [1]. Rakshit Chopra specifically explores the role of Barcelona Football Club in promoting Catalan nationalism and regional identity formation [2]. César García wrote a paper from a political

perspective, focusing on how Barcelona Football Club's brand influence and role have changed over time in shaping Catalan national identity and political beliefs [3]. So far, many scholars have paid attention to Barcelona Football Club's unique geographical characteristics and studied the special commercial, political, and ethnic connections between Barcelona Football Club and Catalonia.

Although many studies have been conducted on Barcelona Football Club, the majority of researchers have focused on business, market, or the relationship between Barcelona Football Club and Catalonia, which differs from the language and culture approach used in this paper. César García's dissertation examined how Barcelona Football Club became a symbol of Catalan nationalism, evaluating a specific example and its relationship with Catalan identity and nationalism [3]. However, he views his research mostly via the lens of the link between Catalan nationalism and Barcelona Football Club, with little emphasis on language [3]. There is a study vacuum in the localization of culture and language in Barcelona Football Club's multilingual setting. So, what brand strategy does Barcelona Football Club do to increase its brand influence in a multilingual environment? This article will address a research vacuum in this area by thoroughly analyzing Barcelona Football Club's brand strategy in a multilingual setting. The goal of this article is to completely comprehend how Barcelona Football Club improves its brand influence and fan loyalty. This will serve as a good reference for businesses with comparable multilingual histories, as well as important implications for how brands may use diverse cultural factors to accomplish localization and customization. This study will also be extremely significant and valuable, expanding studies on brand management and sports management, particularly in the use of multilingual and multicultural backgrounds. It also highlights the relevance of language strategy and cultural adaptability in brand structure.

To fill the research gap and solve the problems mentioned above, this article will first use Barcelona Football Club as a case study to introduce the background, process, results, etc. of its brand strategy formation in a bilingual environment, thus leading to the research question of this paper. Then analyze from three different perspectives how Barcelona Football Club has enhanced its brand influence and loyalty through this strategy. Finally, targeted suggestions were proposed based on the analysis.

## **2. Case Description**

Established in 1899, Barcelona Football Club stands as one of the most prominent football clubs globally, boasting a rich history and an influential presence both on and off the pitch. By 2024, Barcelona Football Club will have won the Champions League five times (1992, 2006, 2009, 2011, and 2015), as well as 26 La Liga titles and 31 Copa del Rey titles. Its elegant, highly entertaining pass-and-control football style (Tiki-Taka) also represents Spanish and Catalan culture to a certain extent, and the La Masia youth training academy affiliated with it has cultivated many top players, such as Messi, Iniesta, and Ronaldinho. It is one of the most successful football teams in the world, has fans from all over the world, and has become a significant symbol of football and sports. Based in Barcelona city, the capital of Barcelona province and the Catalonia autonomous community in Spain, the club is renowned for its philosophy of "Més que un club," a Catalan phrase that stands for "more than a club" and reflects its commitment to social, cultural, and sporting values. Considering its special cultural and geographical attributes, Barcelona Football Club operates in a bilingual environment and context where both Catalan and Spanish are official languages, uniquely attracting more loyal fans and significantly impacting its brand strategy.

Because of Catalonia's unique historical and geographical reasons, both Catalan and Spanish are official languages in Barcelona. Catalan, as a language that serves as a cultural foundation and symbol of historical heritage, is not only a means of communication for the people of Barcelona, but also an important symbol of identity and cultural belonging. When it comes to football, when fans shout their Catalan slogans, unity and pride are even more evident. Barcelona Football Club's brand strategy has effectively captured this point by utilizing bilingual language to better resonate with its fan base. For Barcelonians, the Catalan language is their culture and important heritage; the use and integration of the Catalan language strengthen the connection with the fans. From an international perspective,

showcasing their place's uniqueness and expanding their international influence has always been a topic that sports brands must consider. Through this approach, Barcelona Football Club has continuously consolidated its local roots and developed its uniqueness in the international market.

In the late 1970s, Barcelona Football Club began using Catalan in some of its official newsletters, marking the first instance of bilingualism during Catalonia's cultural Renaissance. By the early 1980s, the club established a multilingual brand environment by formally introducing Catalan on its website, social media accounts, and match-day materials, coinciding with Catalonia's declaration of autonomy. In the 1990s and beyond, to preserve brand coherence and appeal to a wide range of consumers, Barcelona Football Club broadened its bilingual strategy during the globalization process, incorporating bilingual components into its international promotional materials and marketing efforts. Barcelona Football Club began widely promoting its bilingual marketing strategy by the 2010s. Currently, Barcelona Football Club's social media posts on major platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are mostly in Catalan and Spanish. The official website continues to be available in both Catalan and Spanish, ensuring information reaches audiences in different languages. Bilingual content is also present in match-day materials, match reports, and club events, including programs, live broadcasts, and interactive activities. On the international stage, Barcelona actively showcases its Catalan identity, with the club's Catalan slogan recognized around the world.

In the early 2010s, Barcelona Football Club began officially using Catalan and Spanish on their official website and social media, marking the official launch of their bilingual strategy. In 2012, the club implemented a comprehensive marketing strategy based on bilingualism. From the perspective of social media interaction, in the 2010s, Barcelona's social media fan base saw a significant increase, especially from June 2014 to September 2015, when the number of followers on Instagram increased from 2 million to 19 million. On September 22, 2015, Barcelona's official website announced that the club had become the first football club to have 200 million followers on social media. In 2022, Barcelona reached 239 million interactions on social media, ranking first in social media interactions for seven consecutive years. During this period, with the comprehensive implementation of Barcelona's bilingual strategy, the club achieved unprecedented success.

### **3. Analysis**

#### **3.1. Effectiveness on Dissemination of Bilingual Content**

As a worldwide brand, Barcelona Football Club deliberately satisfies the needs of various language groups by publishing bilingual Spanish and Catalan material on the club's official social media and website, therefore successfully increasing the market and improving brand image and fan loyalty.

Currently, the Barcelona Football Club official website's homepage offers options in both Catalan and Spanish. Barcelona Football Club also often shares Catalan and Spanish content on its social media and official website. These tactics unconsciously draw the club and supporters closer together, especially for local Catalan-speaking fans, who use the language that is most comfortable for them while gathering information, cementing their identity with the club. In the case of Spanish and other languages like English, providing content in the fans' native language enhances their understanding of the company, enabling audiences from diverse linguistic backgrounds to fully engage.

Research indicates that multilingual content markedly enhances user engagement and brand impression. Bhagat analyzes the influence of language and cultural elements on consumer behavior and brand allegiance [4]. According to Bhagat's study, localizing information to align with linguistic and cultural preferences might enhance consumer happiness and loyalty [4]. Moreover, Verlegh and Steenkamp indicate that employing local language in advertising may enhance purchase intentions and foster favorable brand perceptions [5]. The multilingual content strategy of Barcelona Football Club appears to enhance its rapport with both local and foreign followers, since research suggests that consumers exhibit a more positive response to companies that engage in their home language.

### **3.2. Successful Implementation of Bilingual Marketing Strategies**

Barcelona Football Club has a multilingual marketing approach, especially in Catalonia. The use of bilingual marketing in Catalan commercials and events has helped to localize the club's image and enhance brand affinity.

Barcelona Football Club has enhanced several facets of its multilingual marketing approach, including advertisement design. The local Barcelona Football Club regularly disseminates advertising slogans, graphics, and material, primarily in Catalan, to ensure a deeper level of engagement among local Catalan inhabitants. Barcelona Football Club's advertisement style aggressively integrates well-known Catalan cultural emblems and features, thoroughly exhibiting local qualities and adding a touch of local culture. Barcelona Football Club and Fundació CAT inked a collaboration agreement in 2023 to promote Catalan language digitalization, demonstrating the successful execution of a multilingual marketing strategy [6]. This collaboration will significantly advance the digitization of the Catalan language, aiding the club in emphasizing local culture and increasing the brand's local influence.

Research has well documented the effectiveness of localizing language and cultural strategies for brand adaptation. For example, Kotler and Keller emphasize that localization strategies can enhance a brand's market adaptability and competitive edge in multilingual markets [7]. Additionally, De Mooij and Hofstede highlight that adapting branding strategies to local cultural contexts can significantly enhance market effectiveness [8]. They argue that incorporating local cultural symbols and languages into marketing strategies can strengthen brand resonance with local audiences [8].

Therefore, Barcelona Football Club's bilingual marketing strategies successfully enhance its brand image. Barcelona Football Club has not only successfully attracted local audiences, but it has also strengthened its connection to the Catalan community.

### **3.3. Bilingual Cultural Adaptation Enhances Fan Engagement**

Barcelona Football Club has significantly improved fan engagement through bilingual adaptation. The club communicates with fans in the language they use on their official social media accounts, responding deeply to their needs and feedback and incorporating elements of Catalan culture and language into the team's marketing campaigns. These approaches not only satisfy the needs of local Catalan speakers but also enrich the fan experience by making the club's presence more culturally relevant and relatable.

During local traditional festivals, the club also celebrates with local citizens, organizing special events to incorporate Catalan cultural elements and using the festive atmosphere to post advertisements on social media. For example, on April 24th, 2023, during the Sant Jordi Festival, the official website of Barcelona Football Club published a report on how the club's professional indoor football team celebrated the festival [9]. The club organized special activities, incorporated traditional festival elements such as roses and books, and held a meeting with fans [9]. This way, the club better integrated into the local culture and established closer relationships with fans.

Kwortnik and Thompson highlight that integrating local cultural elements into the service experience can significantly enhance customer loyalty [10]. Their study emphasizes that when brands incorporate cultural nuances and traditions, they create a more meaningful and personalized experience for consumers [10]. This, in turn, drives higher levels of engagement and loyalty. Similarly, Harris and Chernatony argued that embedding local cultural elements into branding strategies not only strengthens consumer engagement but also reinforces brand loyalty by creating a deeper emotional connection with the target audience [11]. Barcelona Football Club's strategic celebration of Catalan culture, including traditions, symbols, and local festivities, exemplifies this approach. By embracing and promoting local culture, Barcelona Football Club effectively deepens its connection with fans, thereby enhancing their overall engagement and loyalty to the club.

## **4. Suggestion**

### **4.1. Suggestion for Dissemination of Bilingual Content**

While focusing on increasing engagement, Barcelona Football Club should continue to provide multilingual material on digital platforms. In today's digital world, brands are under pressure to transform. Digital platforms are the primary interaction mediums. Brands must actively connect and remain competitive on digital channels. Meanwhile, Epsilon found that 80% of customers are more likely to buy items that offer individualized experiences [12]. Barcelona Football Club has made effective use of digital channels, ranking among the world's top football clubs in terms of social media fan base, including Facebook and Instagram. However, the sports sector is extremely competitive, with big teams and sponsors competing for fan attention. These market environment contexts suggest that Barcelona Football Club must produce localized and engaging material, such as real-time Q&A, scheduling player fan gatherings, and other measures, to strengthen its market position.

Sashi's research indicates that interactive material can markedly improve user engagement and brand loyalty [13]. He indicated that enhancing customer involvement and interactive content may significantly fortify the link between businesses and customers. This discovery indicates that integrating multilingual interactive material on digital platforms would enhance consumers' brand loyalty and engagement.

Consequently, in light of the prevailing market conditions and pertinent research, Barcelona Football Club can enhance its social media content, increase interactivity, fortify engagement with fans through bilingual communication, and more effectively adapt to digital transformation and consumer demand for personalized content, thereby securing a competitive advantage in a challenging market landscape.

### **4.2. Suggestion for Enhancing Barcelona Football Club's Bilingual Marketing Strategy**

Barcelona Football Club is implementing its current bilingual marketing strategy in an orderly and successful manner, utilizing bilingualism to strengthen the brand's relationship with the Catalan community and increase fan engagement. In the context of digital transformation, Barcelona Club can continue to optimize its bilingual marketing strategy through data-driven insights.

Currently, digital transformation is accelerating, and according to Gartner's 2024 data, over 60% of companies consider data-driven insights decisions as their primary strategic goal [14]. Barcelona Football Club is on the right track, and decisions such as partnering with Fundació CAT to promote the digitization of the Catalan language are in line with the evolution of the times [6]. However, Barcelona still needs to continuously utilize data analysis and innovative digital platforms to maintain its competitive advantage. Additionally, providing a personalized experience is crucial. According to Salesforce's article, 73% of consumers hope for a personalized experience, and personalization, timeliness, and connectivity are the three foundations of exceptional customer engagement [15].

Starbucks can serve as a successful example, using data-driven personalization as one of its marketing strategies [16]. By using the AI program Deep Brew, which drives the brand's personalization engine, Starbucks personalized the customer experience for every customer based on their unique preferences [16]. This will help Starbucks enhance every aspect of the business and customer experience [16].

In summary, in order to further enhance its successful bilingual marketing strategy, Barcelona Football Club should utilize data-driven insights for personalized content creation.

### **4.3. Suggestion for Enhancing Fan Engagement through Bilingual and Cultural Adaptation**

If multilingual cultural adaptation improves supporters' sense of identification and engagement in the club, forming strategic alliances may become an effective tactic. In the current football market, globalization is developing, and supporters come from a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Barcelona Football Club, one of the world's most successful clubs, has experimented

with brand collaboration and found initial success. However, because Catalan culture greatly influences Barcelona Football Club as a worldwide brand, it is crucial to carefully seek partners who can also represent Catalan culture. Furthermore, extensive connections and collaborations with firms capable of unlocking untapped resources on a global scale, such as Asia and Africa, are critical for increasing brand value.

Barcelona Football Club should partner with firms that have comparable brand values. They may, for example, promote Catalan and Spanish culture and language in Asia by cooperating with cultural promotion companies, or they could collaborate with local Catalan fashion firms to sell items like jerseys and sneakers. These tactics will, to some extent, increase fan involvement and devotion.

According to Ansoff, through partnerships, brands can more effectively penetrate target markets and increase market share [17]. If Barcelona Football Club can establish more and higher-quality brand partnerships, it will definitely penetrate the target market and increase brand influence.

## **5. Conclusion**

In the context of the continuous development of globalization and the digital economy, this paper conducts a study on the use and significance of bilingualism in Barcelona Football Club and deeply explores how Barcelona Football Club's brand strategy can enhance its brand influence in a bilingual environment. By analyzing the dissemination of Barcelona Football Club's bilingual content, the use of bilingual marketing strategies, and the cultural adaptation of bilingualism, the three factors for the success of the brand strategy in a bilingual environment are effective content dissemination, the implementation of successful marketing strategies, and fans' bilingual cultural adaptation.

This study thoroughly analyzed Barcelona Football Club's bilingual use of Spanish and Catalan, reconstructing its brand strategy in a bilingual environment. This paper demonstrates the importance of multilingual content in increasing brand awareness and fan loyalty, as well as how to use brand adaptability to strengthen connections with local communities. The research process and results are significant because they provide a reference for brands with multicultural backgrounds, such as Barcelona Football Club. This paper explores how to achieve localization independence in multilingual backgrounds in order to attract fans from different language backgrounds and form deeper emotional connections between brands and consumers. This paper will serve as a significant source of inspiration and influence for brand managers across various fields, including marketing and sports management, by offering strategic insights into how to navigate the complex relationship between globalization and localization.

This paper also has certain limitations. Due to the language itself and the high degree of integration between Barcelona Football Club and Catalan identity, it is difficult to concretize the marketing strategy of bilingual Catalan and Spanish, and the concepts are relatively vague, resulting in research mainly based on qualitative analysis and lacking extensive quantitative data support. Second, given that the brand under study is a football club, factors like the team's performance and the individual attractiveness of players can significantly influence fan engagement. Therefore, when studying bilingual brand strategies, these are all factors that may work together.

Future research can broaden its scope by examining the following aspects: Firstly, research can specifically measure the impact of bilingual strategies on fan engagement using quantitative research methods like questionnaire surveys or data analysis, turning abstract concepts into tangible numbers. Secondly, digital technology can be partially expanded to explore deeply the impact that digitalization can have on brands. Finally, research can be conducted by providing examples of brands with similar backgrounds to Barcelona Football Club or by exploring the effectiveness of bilingual strategies in different cultures in other countries.

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