



Bridge: A MindSport For All

Connects People, Challenges Minds

Developing a Marketing Strategy for Bridge

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Summary

Bridge is often associated with an older generation of players. There has been a gradual decline in the popularity of bridge – the problem is how to attract the next generation of players. Bridge used to be more of an intergenerational leisure activity which older and younger people played together, including families. However, parents tend not to teach their children cards any more.

This paper identifies types of bridge players, each with their own motivations for playing. It investigates the stigmas that might deter younger players from taking up bridge. Finally, it suggests a new marketing approach for bridge.

The study, Bridging Insights, was in two parts. Part 1 focused on developing a marketing strategy for various types of bridge player. This informed part 2, which tested the marketing strategy for non-bridge players, aged between 18 and 35.

Findings

Four types of bridge player were identified - self-improver, competitor, socialiser and mind-gamer. Each has a different motivation for playing the game.

- The self-improver type plays bridge for the challenge, measuring progress and aiming for the next level.
- The competitor wants to win.
- The socialiser participates for the fun of the game and the social element.
- The mind-gamer is fascinated by people and loves to figure out what makes them tick. For them, bridge is another way of understanding human beings.

Players can move from one type to another, e.g. from competitor to socialiser, or from socialiser to self-improver. Non-bridge players might be persuaded to play bridge if playing the game was consistent with their own sporting type.

The paper describes how each type of player regards bridge, and what they aim to get from participating. It discusses what might matter to different types of players, as well as possible ways to engage new younger players who fit the different types. Marketing in different ways will be important given that the types have different motivations for playing.

The socializer, competitor and self-improver types resonated with many players. The bridge players in the current study did not as strongly associate with the mind-gamer type. “Gamer” can have some negative connotations associated with a darker and more sinister side that exploits the weaknesses of more inexperienced players. Further research is needed to understand how the mind-gamer type might be pushing new players away.

The types also resonated with non-bridge players, with all four types resonating roughly equally – there were not the same negative connotations for the mind-gamer that existed amongst current bridge players.

Marketing messages should reflect shifting types, with messaging that taps into moods or contexts. Furthermore, a mix of activities suitable for other types could be used, e.g. to avoid a player dropping out as a result of the emotional strain of competitive bridge tournaments. For the self-improver or competitor, an emphasis on incorporating some social fun games could help to counteract the pressure of achieving progress or performing well. Bridge clubs could encourage players to embrace occasional less serious and more casual games in line with the socialiser.

Bridge could learn from both chess and poker by developing content that dramatizes strategic moments in high-level games or explores the personal journeys of diverse bridge players. Short-form video content designed for platforms like TikTok, Instagram or YouTube could highlight the excitement, strategy and social dynamics of the game.

The study has shown that the terminology used could depend on the type of bridge player being targeted. For example, mind-game might be more conducive to the socialiser and mind-gamer types, whereas mindspport might be more conducive to the competitor and self-improver types.

Conclusions

The paper suggests strategies for marketing bridge to the next generation of players:

- **Education and Intergenerational Learning** (for self-improvers): Promote bridge’s intellectual and social benefits through education and intergenerational programmes.
- **Hybrid and Flexible Formats** (for competitors): Combine online play with in-person meetups to reflect modern leisure habits.
- **Inclusive Club Cultures** (for socialisers): Balance the social and competitive sides of bridge by ensuring new or casual players feel welcomed alongside more serious competitors.
- **Media and Digital Engagement** (for mind-gamers): Create media content that highlights the intellectual challenge and social enjoyment of bridge.

These marketing strategies have the potential to rebrand the image of bridge as a vibrant, intellectually engaging activity that fits within contemporary, hybrid leisure cultures without pushing older players away. The ultimate goal is to expand the reach of bridge to a new generation of players.

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