



HICKORY

Hickory FC: A Brand Analysis

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Background Information on Hickory FC

- Officially joined the National Premier Soccer League (NPSL) on October 10th, 2023
- Semi-professional team based out of Hickory, NC
- Finished inaugural season as Southeast Conference Champions
- Closest market competitors:
 - Boone, NC (Appalachian FC)
 - Charlotte, NC (Charlottetowne Hops FC, Charlotte Independence, Charlotte FC)

Market Analysis – Soccer Market At-Large

- Approx. 54% of soccer fans are under the age of 45
- Approx. 40% ethnically/culturally diverse
- More than 810,000 players at the high school level played soccer during the 2021-22 school year (*Sports Business Journal*)

Market Analysis – Geographic Segmentation

- Hickory population: 44,084
- Median age: 37.9
- Median income:
 - Household: \$58,251
 - Individual: \$32,432
- Monthly average rent: \$1,204
- Average home sale price: \$319,891



“Hickory has always been a well-kept secret in the world of soccer. There are excellent youth leagues and high school teams in the area and the city of Hickory has been waiting for something like Hickory FC to arrive.”

Market Analysis – Behavioral Segmentation

- 72% of US-based soccer fans will purchase a ticket and attend a match at least once per season
- 71% spend on soccer-related merchandise yearly. Jerseys are the most popular item (*Sports Innovation Lab*)
- Soccer supporters' groups have correlated with franchise expansion and contributed to sizeable increases in game attendance (Cocco, Katz, and Hambrick)

Competitive Analysis

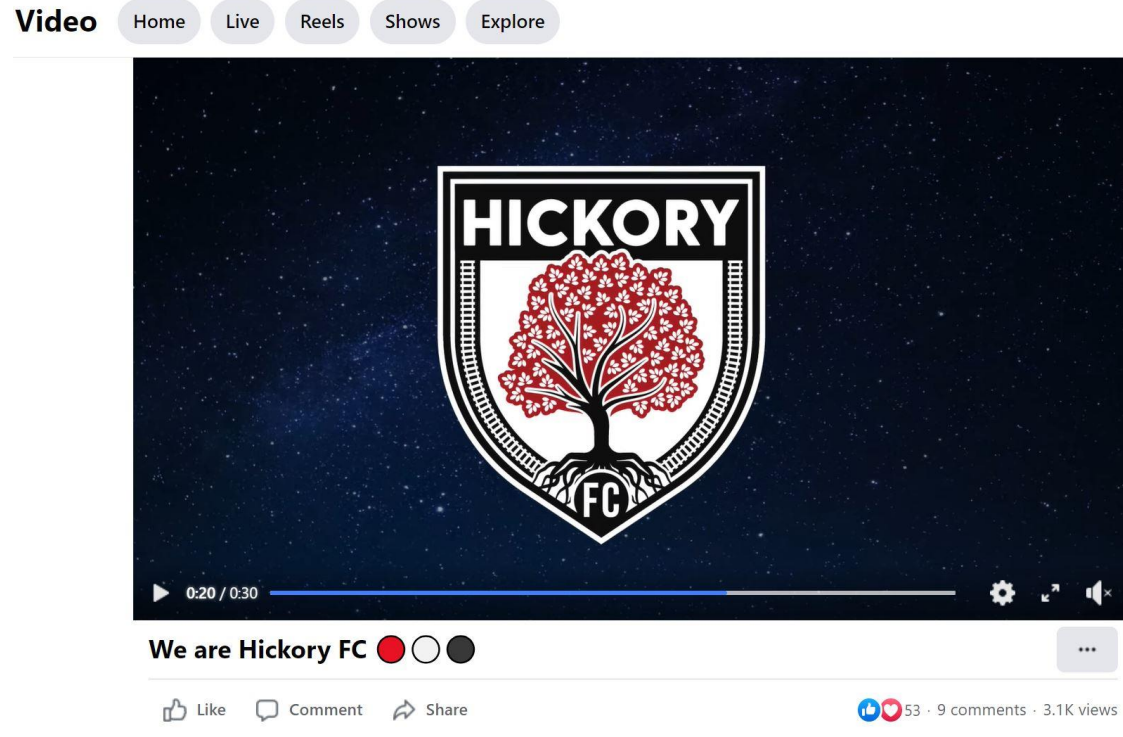
- Soccer
 - No other semi-pro or professional soccer teams in Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton DMA
 - Closest competition:
 - Boone, NC (44.4 miles) with Appalachian FC
 - Charlotte, NC (58.7 miles) with MLS pro club Charlotte FC & USL pro club Charlotte Independence
- Other sports
 - Minor league baseball with Hickory Crawdads
 - College athletics with Catawba Valley Community College

Competitive Analysis – Conclusion

- Limited competitive landscape
- Opportunities for crossover appeal
 - Similar to Charlotte Checkers Hockey Club and Charlotte FC crossover night



Marketing Strategies – Brand Launch Party



Marketing Strategies – Brand Launch Party



Marketing Strategies – Partnerships

- Olde Hickory Brewery
- Peoples Bank
- Dean Financial
- The Print Path
- The Hum
- Graystone Eye
- Paramount Volkswagen
- Resource Partners, LLC
- Emerge Ortho
- Hanes Industries
- Winstead Architecture
- Pepsi
- Deluxe Printing Group
- Mas Amor Cantina
- First Horizon
- Puma
- Hickory NC Tourism Board

Marketing Strategies – Partnerships



“Hickory FC wanted to make sure the sponsors for the inaugural season were ones with deep ties to the Hickory community. It was imperative in this first season to have sponsor support from well known and established businesses in the community.”

Marketing Strategies – Merchandise



“At the center of the Hickory FC logo is the Hickory tree but on the surrounding edges are train tracks that pay tribute to the story of how Hickory was found.”

Marketing Strategies – Social Media Engagement

- Facebook
 - 2.7K followers
- Instagram
 - 4.2K followers
- Twitter
 - 582 followers



Marketing Strategies – Jersey Debut



Customer Insights

- Ticket prices
 - Adult: \$12
 - Youth: \$10
- Average attendance: 2,550
 - Attendance record: 3,550

Rating · 5.0 (5 Reviews) ⓘ



Tom Nail 🗨️ recommends Hickory FC.
July 17 at 6:14 PM · 🌐

Best thing to happen in Hickory since the Crawdads.



Maddison Anderson 🗨️ recommends Hickory FC.
3 days ago · 🌐

On it's way to becoming the premiere attraction for the Hickory sports scene! What an epic first season! ⚽



Kristen Danielle Lail 🗨️ recommends Hickory FC.
4 days ago · 🌐

Could not ask for a better team to represent Hickory! Vamos Hickory!!! ⚽❤️❤️



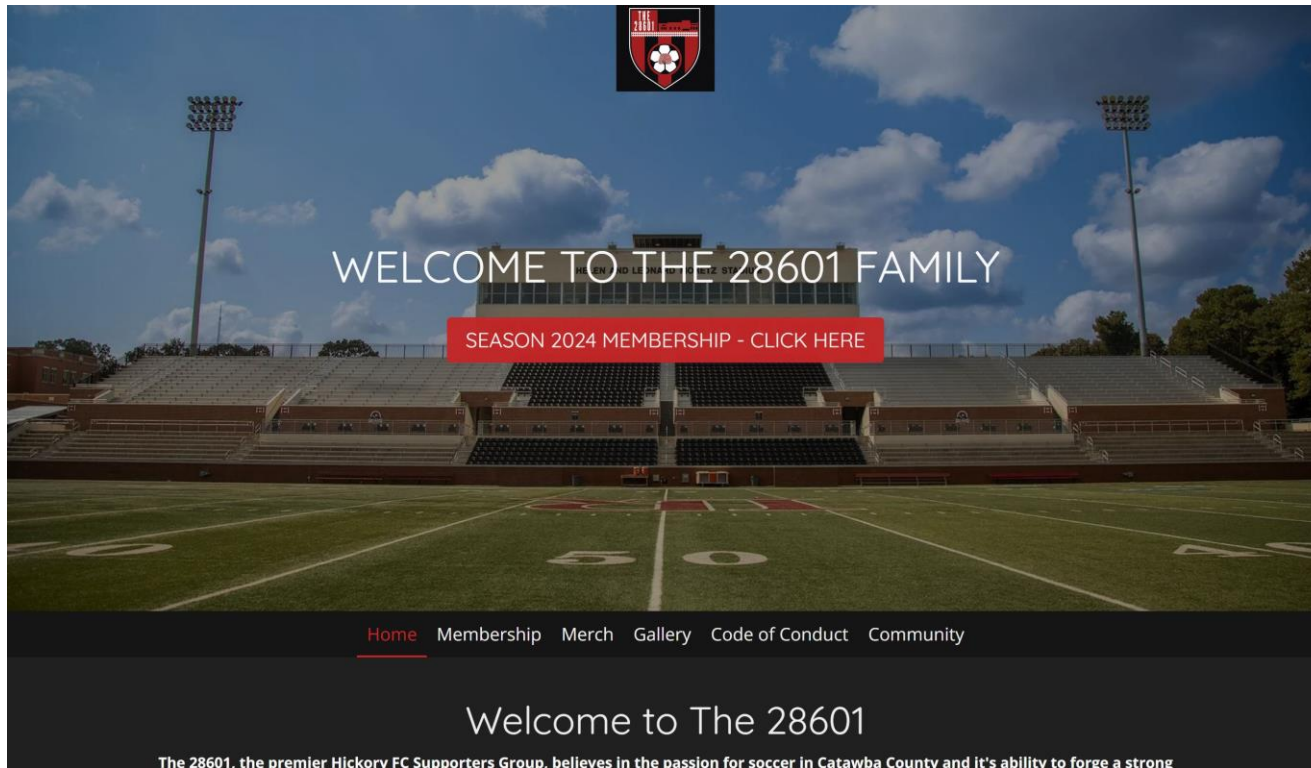
Customer Insights

- High away match attendance



Customer Insights

- Supporters Group: The 28601



Recommendations

Further establish community events

“Having a positive impact on our city is not only the right thing to do, but it also pays back in spades. People and fans support organizations that support them.” – Mary Grams, Vice President of Corporate Sponsorships: Charlotte Checkers

Recommendations

Partner with yearly festivals and attend local matches



“Hickory FC will be involved in Oktoberfest, the Christmas parade, LR soccer games, Chamber of Commerce events, and so on. Being actively involved and present in the community will always be a goal of Hickory FC. We want to give back to the community as much as possible.”

Resources

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- “Demographics.” *Hickory, NC*, www.hickorync.gov/demographics. Accessed 27 July 2024.
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Additional Reading Material

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- Khodaparast, Siavash, et al. "Designing a Brand Identity Model in the Football Industry." *Revista Brasileira de Futsal e Futebol*, vol. 13, no. 54, Sept. 2021, pp. 456–68. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=s3h&AN=156880801&site=eds-live&scope=site.
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