

Consumer Behaviors of Women's Basketball at the Collegiate Level

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate why majority of collegiate women's basketball games have low attendance. Also, this study plans to help marketers examine consumer behavior based on marketing strategies and determine which tactics bring larger attendance to collegiate women's basketball games. Most important things in this study is to identify the key motives contribute to spectator attendance at non-revenue intercollegiate sports. In addition, this research examined the relationship between attendance motivational factors and attendance level as season ticket purchasing. Lastly, this research investigated the differential effects of sociodemographic variables on the attendance motives. Subjects for this study came from 100 convenient sampling. The results exhibited that spectators' attendance was mostly influenced by social related motives (i.e., friends and family) rated higher than the motives pertaining to environment factors (i.e., opponents, win records, and giveaways). Females rated each of the motives higher than males but the means show that there was not a significant difference between scores.

Keywords: motivational factors, non-revenue sports, intercollegiate sports, sport consumption

Introduction

Collegiate athletics are a great way to bring alumni, supporters, fans and students to a campus to generate revenue and entertain spectators. Fans are a very important factor of sports. Not only are fans great for producing more revenue, but they also create a competitive atmosphere at games. The nature of some sports, such as men's basketball and football does not require much of a need for a lot of marketing in order to get fan support. However, that is not the case for collegiate women's basketball. The purpose of this study is to survey why some collegiate women's basketball games have low attendance. Also, this study plans to help marketers examine consumer behavior based on marketing strategies and determine which tactics bring larger attendance to collegiate women's basketball games.

Some research questions that have been asked throughout this study include, what promotions brought the most attendance? What are the marketing techniques that are more effective and how can they be enhanced? What gender is attending the most and why? Who is the majority of spectators and how can marketers continue to market to them? College Students pay for the games in their tuition, why aren't they attending games?

The study examined the gender, demographics (statistical data relating to the population) and behaviors of the spectators of collegiate women's basketball games. This research also observed which factors generate the most spectators at women's basketball games and should help marketers figure out a plan that will help increase spectators at their specific location.

There were 100 participants used to partake in completing the survey. Majority of the participants were African American female students (n=57) that ranged between the ages of 18-24. The eight question questionnaire included demographic information, season ticket status, attendance habits, motivational factors and a scale to determine which features had a larger impact on spectators.

Sports Spectator Behavior: Collegiate Women's Basketball

Spectator behavior has shown to be a major concern of sports marketers. An understanding of sports spectator behavior allows sports managers to promote programs effectively. There has been numerous attempts by researchers to assess sports spectator behavior in specific sports settings such as the Women's National Basketball Association and the National Basketball Association (Williamson, Zhang, Pease, & Gaa, 2003; Zhang, Connaughton, & Vaughn, 2004; Zhang & Pease, 2001; Zhang, Pease, Hui, & Michaud, 1995; Zhang et al., 2003; Zhang, Piatt, Ostroff, & Wright 2005; Zhang & Smith, 1997; Zhang, Wall, & Smith, 2000). Collegiate women's basketball, meanwhile, has always been disregarded when there is a necessity for investigation of sports spectator behavior for collegiate women's basketball to actively increase the attendance rates.

Researchers have displayed that differences exist between men's basketball team fans and women's basketball team fans (Fink et al., 2002; Kahle, Duncan, Dalaka, & Aiken, 2001). Fink et al. (2002) found that: (a) spectators in women's games exhibited greater influence by promotions, family, friends, and ticket pricing than spectators in male's games; (b) spectators in male's games reported stronger sentiment regarding team media and team merchandise; and (c) spectators in women's games were more loyal than spectators in male's games. Fink et al. (2002) also admitted that "little marketing research is done within intercollegiate athletic programs; as a result, those programs are unable to effectively segment current and potential markets. Often, women's teams are "marketed" in the same manner as men's teams- if at all" (p.9) More research of consumer/spectator behavior of collegiate women's basketball needs to be conducted to increase the likelihood of marketers to uncover the "emerging fan" to close the gap between attendance of collegiate men's basketball games vs. attendance of collegiate women's basketball games.

Consumers of Color

In the quest to find the "emerging fan", there has been research done on : Consumers of Color: The Emerging Market for Sport. Consumers of Color, which in the context of this article refers to ethnic Americans of Africa, Hispanic, Native/Indian, and Asian-Pacific ancestry, comprise a cultural collective that is increasing in population seven times as fast as Caucasians (Schrieber, 2001). Schrieber (2001) declared, "Companies who capture the attention and radical loyalty of this market today will position themselves for security and success in the years to come" (p.ix). He also pointed out the Consumers of Color have developed preferences and behaviors in response to and as a cause of their historical and sociodemographic stats of being minorities in America.

Despite these findings, questions remain regarding the uniqueness of Individuals of Color as sport consumers (Armstrong, 2008). We do know, however, that sport consumers are cultured beings; and as Spreitzer and Snyder (1990) insisted, sport may be an "expressive sphere of life" where individuals demonstrate salient cultural nuances. Therefore, while Consumers of Color (as the emerging market) and Caucasian consumers (as the mainstream "traditional" market) may respond similarly to sport event attributes, it is also likely that noteworthy differences exist between the sport consumption preferences and behaviors of these two cultural groups (Armstrong, 2008).

Division I vs. Division II Institutions Attendance

During our research, we found that Division II schools have a harder time than Division I schools when it comes to revenue and spectator attendance. Because athletic departments heavily rely on institutional support and student fees as funding sources, there is need for athletic administrators in Division II to maximize revenue from ticket sales (Choi, Martin, Park, Yoh 2009). Choi et al. also reported that the average budget for an entire Division II athletic department is \$1,900,000, and nine percent of entire revenues are generated by ticket sales at home sales. This finding makes it clear that Division II have a tough time generating spectators to home games seeing that out of \$1,900,000 ticket sales only bring in about \$171,000. Therefore, those Division II programs must figure out why people aren't buying tickets and supporting the athletics home sporting events.

Once a program truly figures out what their specific spectators look forward to at a women's basketball collegiate game it will make it easier to target those fans. In order to get a better look at this information, we decided to meet with our facility and sports marketing directors at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University to get a deeper look at the revenue and demographics of the spectators at the home games of the women's basketball team.

Methodology

Participants

Participants (N=100) for the current study included males (n=36) and females (n=62). Two participants did not report their gender. The participants were randomly gathered from an online survey placed on two social networks (Instagram & Facebook).

Statistical Analyses/ Results

An analysis of percentage was used to describe the demographic information of the participants gender (Female: 62%; Male: 36.73%), age (18 to 24: 43%; 25 to 24: 40%; 35 to 44: 7%; 45 to 54:9%; 65 to 74: 1%), ethnicity (Black: 90%; American Indian:2%; Asian:2%; White:8%; Other: 1%), occupation (Management: 12.35%; Blue Collar: 4%; Housewife/husband: 1%; Architect/Engineer: 3%; Clerk: 2%; Education:14%; Military: 4%; Student: 35%; Sales: 8%). The table 1,2, 3, 4 give a visual of the demographic data collected from the survey.

Season ticket status, attendance habits, motivational factors and a scale to determine which features had a larger impact on spectators. The table 5 will display the findings of the questionnaire.

The factors of influence to attend games were determined in two questions. Question one asked the survey participants what impacts their decision to attend a collegiate women's basketball game with seven choices (Give-a-ways/promotions; Time of the game; Weather; If friends attend; Team's current winning percentage; Day of the week of game; the opposing team) to scale on a 1-7 scale (1 having the most influence and 7 having the least). Ninety-seven recipients responded and three skipped. The factor of "If my friends attend"(n=25 ranking 1 on the scale of 1-7) raked high in consumer influence, while surprisingly "Give-a-ways/promotions" (n=23 raking 7 on the scale of 1-7) raked low in consumer influence.

Based on the table above, it is clear that the participants that completed this survey attend women's collegiate games based on having a friend accompany them to the game. This differs from the study conducted by Maxwell (2005) who found that majority (70.8%) of her participants between the ages of 18-35 were more influenced by promotions and giveaways. This factor was the least influence on our participants.

When we viewed the difference between factors of attendance of the male and female survey participants, we found that there was not a difference in reference to the choice of game attendance factor "to support a friend or family member"; although there was a difference between genders of game attendance factor "promotions or give-a-ways". Where the men showed a higher mean score (n= 3.2) for being "neutral" than the women (n= 2.2). This shows that men are more interested in attending women collegiate basketball game for promotional give-a-ways than women are. The table below shows the average of participant's choices on the two factors chosen between the two genders using the mean scores.

Conclusion and Discussion

As a sport marker for a women's basketball team, it is important to known what factors influences the most spectators to support the team. Based on the results found from our survey it would be smart to offer more group or buddy promotion tickets since majority of our participants prefer coming to a game with friends or family members. Since many of our participants aren't influenced by giveaways it is no reason to continue to waste money in that area. Instead, those funds can be used elsewhere, such as bringing better acts or performers during halftime.

Once a program truly figures out what their specific spectators look forward to at a women's basketball collegiate game it will make it easier to target those fans. In order to get a better look at this information, we decided to meet with our facility and sports marketing directors at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University to get a deeper look at the revenue and demographics of the spectators at the home games of the women's basketball team. The following market plan is a demonstration of how we would market women's basketball games to attract more spectators.

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Tables

Table 1. Percentage of the gender of survey participants

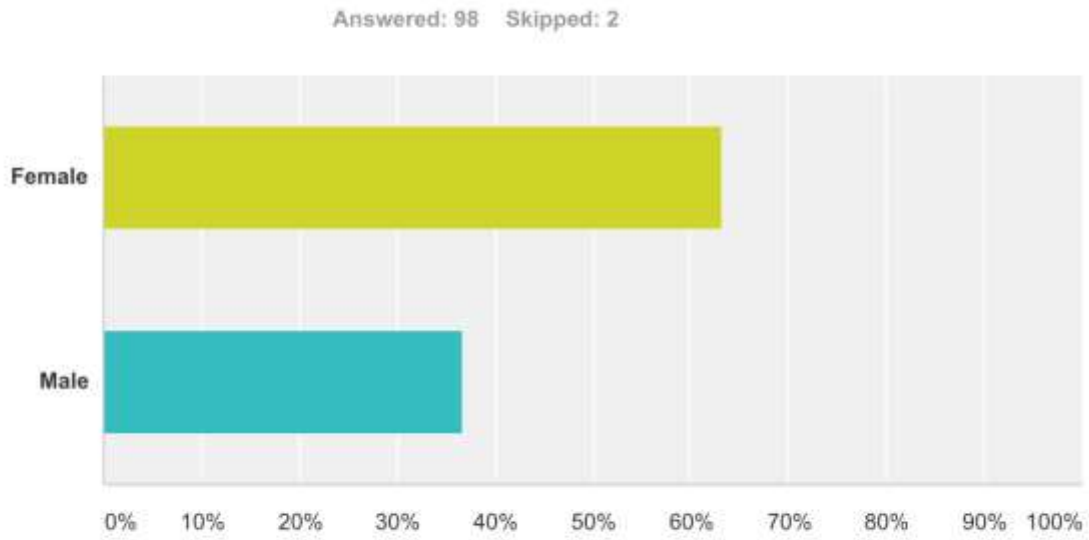


Table 2. Percentage of the age of survey participants

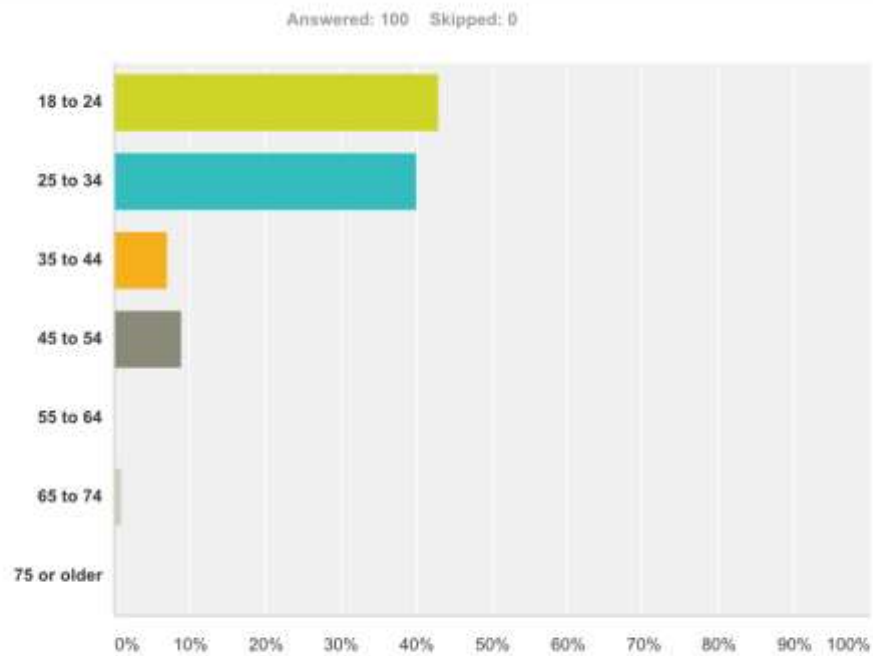


Table 3. This graph shows the percentage of the ethnicity of survey participants with “Black or African American” being the highest at 90%.

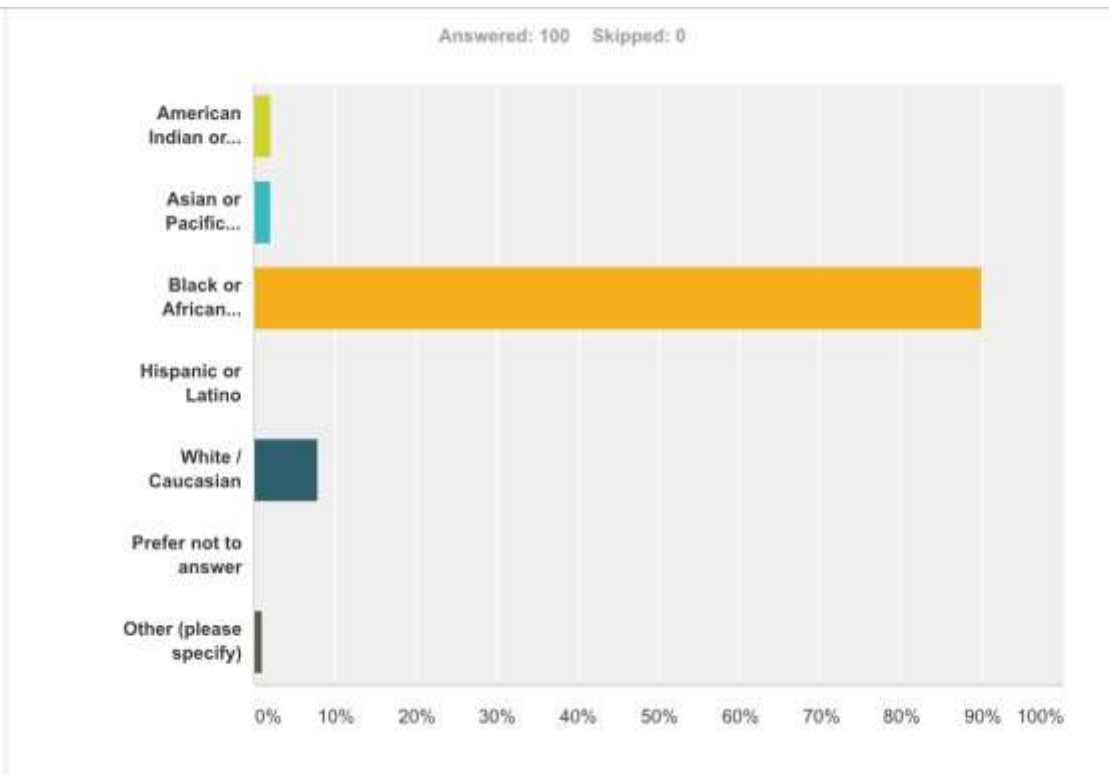


Table 4. This graph shows the percentage of the current occupation of survey participants with “student” being the highest at 43.21%.

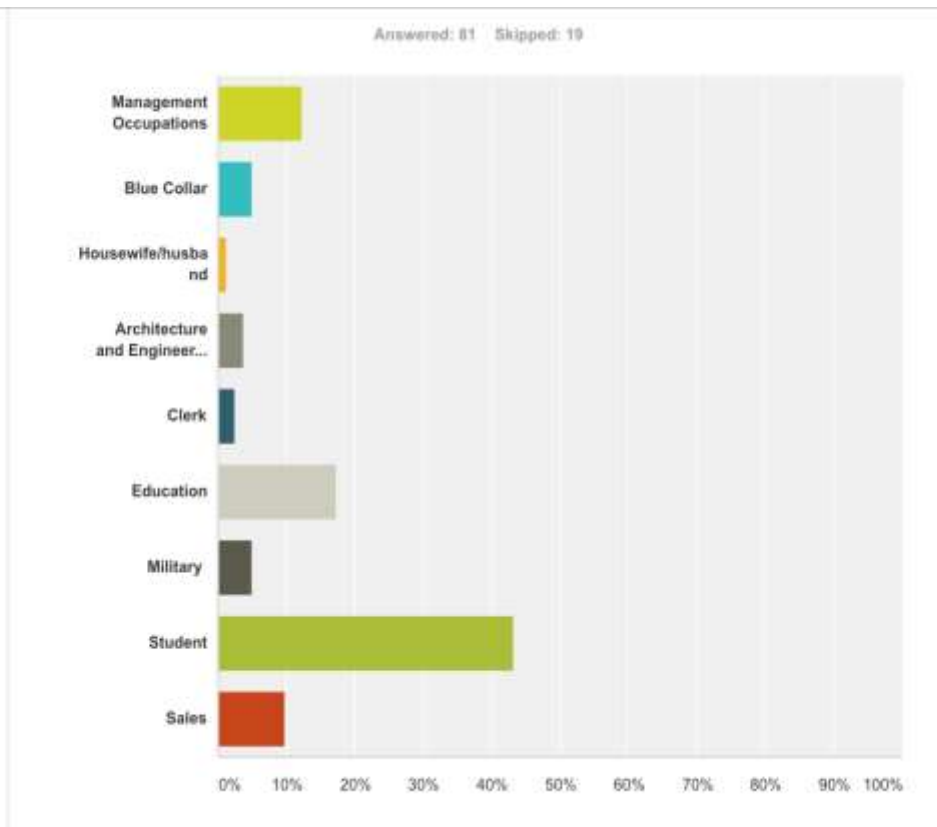
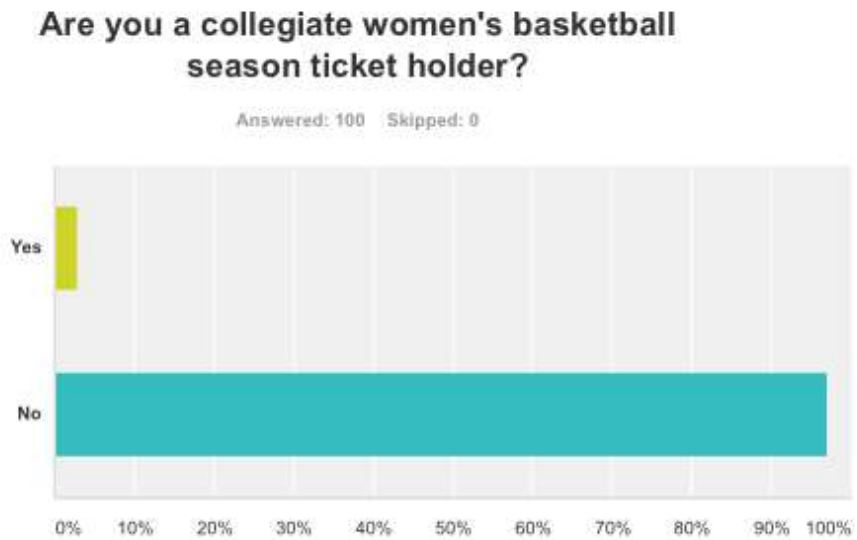


Table 5. This graph shows that majority of our participants are not season ticket holders to collegiate women’s basketball teams.



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	3.00% 3
No	97.00% 97
Total	100

Table 6- Shows what factors impacts the participants the most to attend a collegiate women’s basketball game. (1- most influence, 7- least influence)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The Weather	16.67% 16	8.33% 8	11.46% 11	21.88% 21	9.38% 9	13.54% 13	18.75% 18
The opposing team	16.49% 16	26.80% 26	18.56% 18	15.46% 15	11.34% 11	5.15% 5	6.19% 6
The team's current winning percentage	13.40% 13	20.62% 20	15.46% 15	12.37% 12	11.34% 11	21.65% 21	5.15% 5
Give-a-ways/promotions	8.25% 8	3.09% 3	11.34% 11	11.34% 11	24.74% 24	17.53% 17	23.71% 23
The day of the week the game is on	10.31% 10	20.62% 20	17.53% 17	14.43% 14	20.62% 20	11.34% 11	5.15% 5
If my friends attend	25.77% 25	8.25% 8	11.34% 11	11.34% 11	9.28% 9	16.49% 16	17.53% 17
The time of the game	9.28% 9	12.37% 12	14.43% 14	13.40% 13	13.40% 13	14.43% 14	22.68% 22

Table 7. There were 60 women to complete this question and 37 men, the mean scores for each choice of the question “Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: I attend collegiate women’s basketball games *for give-a-ways and promotions*”. The means show a significant difference, men are more influenced by give-a-ways and promotions than women to attend games. Where it’s seen that women strongly disagree and men are more neutral.

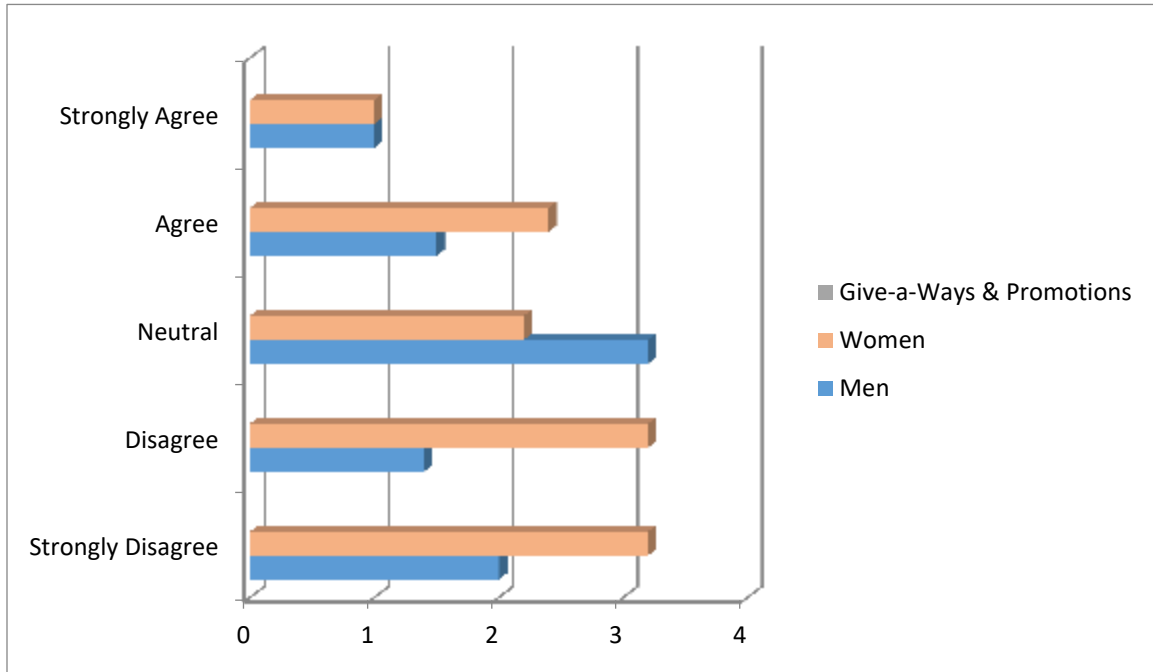


Table 8. There were 60 women to complete this question and 38 men, the mean scores for each choice of the question “Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: I attend collegiate women’s basketball games *to support a friend or family member*”. The means show that there was not a significant difference between scores.

