Professional Football Spectator Perceptions: A Comparison of (Non)Tailgaters

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FANS WHO ARE TAILGATERS VS NON-TAILGATERS

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INTRODUCTION

Sports entertainment is a multi-billion dollar industry in America and the NFL is the leading brand. Almost 17 million people flock to NFL games annually and the league’s marketers seek to grow. To further develop brand-loyal fans, team marketers are creating ancillary opportunities to reach prospective fans. However, very little is known about the marketing efforts’ efficacy with different spectator segments. Using rarely available primary data collected from actual NFL game-day spectators, and working closely with team marketing offices, our research examines specific marketing efforts designed to connect with (non) tailgating spectators of a NFL team and their effect on key marketing outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

A structured, self-completion questionnaire was utilized to collect primary data from spectators attending two different National Football League home games. The survey instrument was constructed to solicit information in three areas: the spectator’s perception of game day factors, attendance information, and demographics. Game day factors were all five-point, Likert-type questions with anchors of Very Dissatisfied (1) and Very Satisfied (5), or Strongly Disagree (1) and Strongly Agree (5), as appropriate. Potential subjects were approached at four different stadium locations in order to obtain a more representative sample. Respondents were asked if they had previously attended a home game for the team, and if they would be interested in completing a short questionnaire. If the team guest gave a “yes” answer, the survey investigators provided the respondent with the questionnaire and a writing instrument. The investigators stayed available nearby to provide any asked for clarifications while respondents completed the questionnaire. Participation in this study was voluntary and participants’ names and contact information were not requested to protect the respondents’ privacy. A total of 900 spectators agreed to participate in the study. Of the collected questionnaires, 93 were found to be incomplete or had obvious acquiescence bias and were discarded. The non-probability intercept sampling approach yielded 806 completed questionnaires.

RESULTS

TAILGATERS VS NON-TAILGATERS

The focus of this study was to identify similarities and potentially significant differences between tailgating and non-tailgating spectators of professional football games. Demographically, neither age, education, nor income statistically differed between tailgaters and on-tailgaters (p > .05). Females did make up a larger percentage of tailgaters (44.3%) relative to non-tailgaters (31.9%) (χ² = 11.256, p = .001). T-test findings indicate a statistically significant difference in the number of years attending the home teams (t = 2.39, p = .02). Specifically, tailgaters reported attending games approximately two years longer (mean = 11.91, SD = 11.31), than did non-tailgaters (mean = 10.04, SD = 11.00). With whom respondents attended home games with did vary as tailgating spectators were significantly more likely to attend games with friends (χ² = 17.370, p = .000) and/or their children (25.9%), respectively. Only 9.2% stated that they attended games only with themselves.

Table 1: Tailgater No Yes Item t p mean SD mean SD Live Entertainment (Bands, Radio Broadcast, Wood Sculptors) 1.629 0.146 3.91 1.05 3.93 1.05 Season Ticket Holders Not a Season Ticket Holder The one-hour until kickoff signal flare made me aware that it is time to start heading into the stadium. 0.452 0.652 3.36 1.06 3.28 1.01 I prefer a DJ in HeadHouse Plaza pre-game as opposed to a live band. 0.272 0.786 3.7 2.42 3.74 1.24

Respondents reported no statistically significant differences in level of satisfaction between tailgaters and non-tailgaters for any of the measured Headhouse Plaza activities (see Table 1). However, the time spent at the HeadHouse Plaza did vary significantly (t = 4.68, p = .000). Specifically, non-tailgaters spent an average, more than twice the amount of time in Headhouse Plaza (mean = 41.56, SD = 44.21) relative to tailgators (mean = 18.42; SD = 35.86). When it came to preferences for game-day experiences there were not statistically significant differences between tailgating and non-tailgating spectators (see Table 2).

FUTURE RESEARCH

In terms of additional research for this topic, we believe there is many avenues to further the knowledge of Sportscape perceptions and attitudes.

To further our findings we would want to revisit the metrics, however with a more in-depth view of what specific actions tailgaters like to indulge in. Specifically to see if the actions are in turn different between the season ticket holders and non season ticket holders.