Lucky PR

Formative Research

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Abstract

This study examined the declining attendance rates at Texas State University athletic games. This study took a look into why Texas State students are not attending the games and what could be done in order to get a higher turnout and attendance in the stands once the games start.

Analysis revealed that students and fans at Texas State University are not attending the game either based on the team record, the opponents we play, the interactiveness of the team and crowd on and off the fields/courts and other reasons including alcohol and technology at the games.

*Keywords*: Attendance, college athletic games, college football, Texas State University
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Low Attendance at Texas State Athletic Games

Lucky PR has noticed a decline in attendance of the Texas State University athletic games. Taking note of this we have decided to tackle this issue and come to a conclusion about how this can change in the future. Having a former Texas State university athlete on our team has helped shed light and get more of an understanding on why Texas state students specifically are not attending any games during the school year.

Background

In the past few years, attendance at the Texas State home football games has dropped drastically, as well as the home basketball and volleyball games. Lucky PR has decided to look into the issue and move further with our research to come to a conclusion on why this is happening. Could it be because students are becoming less interested in sports, the lack of school spirit, or could it be that the athletes are not doing something right?

Accredited newspapers like The Daily Texan and The University Star say that the low attendance in the stands could be because of the team’s bad performance. Sources also say that students would rather attend tailgate than attend the first half of the football game. The lack of students in the stands could also have costs us an invitation or our Texas State’s eligibility to bowl games in the past seasons.

Purpose

Lucky PR believes this is pivotal to mass communication because we would aim to help the players of the team reach out to students and possible attendees by using social media or other traditional means as well. This would help them with the new Web 2.0 generation and the incoming Texas State students as well.
Literature Review

Over the past several years, college athletic administrators and football coaches have noticed the decline of student attendance at college games. Riche (2015) researched the decline in NCAA football nationwide. Riche (2015) and other researchers found that the fan attendance has declined for five consecutive years. He found that regular season home game attendance has fallen at least 2 percent each of the last two years. Riche (2015) also found that bowl games attendance has far surpassed the reductions in regular season attendance. Richie's (2015) research shows that the decline might be from the Home & Garden Television network. Many sport fans love the comfortability of watching the game at home where there are no obnoxious fans, poor Wi-Fi, or outrageous concession prices. Riche (2015) recommended greater Wi-Fi capability and more audio and visual stadium amenities. He believes if the college got more involved with the games and created more entertainment appendage more students would want to go. However, he fears that there might be nothing schools can do to induce fans in attending games.

Everything from a lack of internet access in the stadiums to ticket prices and quality of opponents have been potential reasons as to why even the biggest schools have seen a drop in attendance. According to Axon (2015), it shows that our generation is primarily focused on snapchatting, or live tweeting the game instead of just watching the football game. Results also show that there is more going on outside of the game to entertain students, which also complies with students leaving the game early. “There are avenues of entertainment nowadays that were not available 30 years ago and people no longer need sports to survive socially.” (Scott, 2014, pg. 72-82). It was also mentioned that some viewers get better views in the comfort of their own home, compared to a particular seat where it might be difficult to see. Although students ticket
prices aren’t an issue for students, it is noted that parking and concession prices are some problems. Therefore, instead of dealing with the hassle of getting to the game and paying an enormous amount for food, it is just easier to watch at the comfortability of home.

The pervasiveness of sport mass media (electronic and print) and its consumption in North American society has been widely recognized. Many believe that a connection exists between media use and spectator attendance at sporting events, yet work that delineates the relationship is sparse. There are two notions that dominate discussions of links between these two modes of sport consumption. One is that media use in sports both escalates with and provokes event attendance, Funk and Pritchard (2006). The other holds that media use can act as a recreational substitute for attendance. A mailing list of MLB spectators in the United States who have registered for a team’s fan club over a six month period was used to address questions on the nature of spectator consumption. An eight-page survey was developed to assess consumption. From a management perspective, the most compelling aspect of this study was the uncovering of the media-dominant patron. Understanding this mode of consumption offers strategic insight for sport organizations intent on promoting sponsorship opportunities to affiliated sponsors. Admittedly these patrons do not go to as many games, but they are more likely to purchase team-related merchandise, view media advertising and promotions, and are as involved with the sport as the “heavy” consumer.

A report by Scott & Masterson (2014) found that since 2009 student attendance at college football games decreased 7.1 % before the start of the 2014 season. The report was compiled from survey data from 18,876 students at schools in 32 conferences. It was sent out to all students at those schools. It investigated what influences attendance, such as competing
activities, viewing preferences, social media and behavioral monitors, among other things. Key findings: interest in the sport, game time, ticket price, opponent and team record were the most influential in students' determination whether to attend a sporting event. Students indicated their favorite parts of the gameday experience were watching live game action (23%), in-stadium atmosphere (17%) and tailgating (15%). Of overall respondents, 28 percent chose stadium and concession food as the most enjoyable part of attending home games. Potential incentives for them to stay for the entire game included free T-shirts, a sponsored post-game party, loyalty points and concession discounts, in that order, but loyalty points and meet and greets with players yielded the strongest results.

Another study showed a huge part pertaining to the lack of students filling the seats for any of the games has to deal with the performance of the players. A lack of executed recruiting from high schools and other universities result in bad performances from players which makes fans, Texas State students, not want to attend the games. Increases in team performance should be associated with increased support from the team’s fan base, as indicated by fan attendance at games (LoPilato, Hoffman, & Overstreet, 2014). If our Texas State athletes started to perform better in the games that would create buzz around the teams and would get more fans into the seats of their games.

In the past Texas State has tried to help increase the attendance at Texas State football games by introducing The Gold Rush Initiative. The Gold Rush Initiative was a way to bring students to athletic events through themed games (Bradshaw, 2016). By having themed games, like dressing in all gold or maroon, can improve togetherness in the student body and could potentially increase attendance at the games.
The new rule allowing the sale of alcohol at collegiate games have been the result of increased attendance at games (New, 2016). The associate athletics director for communications at Tulsa, Don Tomkalski said, “we studied the idea for a year and we determined that is could be done responsibility and be a positive change. It gives us an additional revenue source and adds another element to our game-day fan experience” (New, 2016). The article mentions that allowing alcohol sales at games can also aid in the safety of students. This can aid in binge drinking done at tailgate. Students no longer have to chug a beer before entering the game, knowing they will be able to purchase alcohol in the stadium. It also makes for better fan experience, spectators can now relax and enjoy themselves instead of having to go home or go to bar in order to enjoy a beverage, which has been the result of low attendance in the past. Ohio State University has noted though there haven’t been results of less intoxicated fans, but since they began the sales of alcohol at their stadium, they have seen fewer fan ejections. While West Virginia officials have seen a decline in security incidents since the sale of alcohol.

Overall, in a random sample done by Nathaniel Curi at Northern Arizona University in 2014, 75.3 % of respondents indicated that they had attended an college sporting event at least once; the average respondent had attended 7.3 events, or two for each semester they had been enrolled at a university(Curi, 2014). Those who had never attended a sporting event were asked why they had not. The most commonly selected answer was “I would rather spend my free time doing something else” (15.1%), followed by “I don’t have time” (14.5%). Twenty-nine percent of respondents said they were “a fan” of college football, while 13.6% were fans of men’s basketball, and 5.5% were fans of women’s basketball. Correspondingly, 71% reported having attended an NAU football game, 36.8% attended a men’s basketball game, and 13.2% attended a
women’s basketball game (Curi, Dart, & Giesemann, 2014). This research makes it apparent that there are a number of reasons why students choose to attend or not attend athletic events during college. It also poses and examines larger questions about contemporary university culture and how it may differ from the traditional university ambience of school spirit centered around athletics.

What we have noticed while examining these articles is that enjoying the competition and natural stress of the game is related to gender and it affects attendance. With that in mind studying the angle of whether or not gender plays a part in attendance could be an open opportunity for us, and could further add to the body of knowledge on this topic. Another approach we could take would be lack of involvement and attachment to the team, seeing as how the relationship between these constructs has never been tested empirically (Laverie, 2000).

Research Questions

The following is a list of research questions we came up that is suitable for this study:

RQ1 - Why is the attendance so low at Texas State University Football games?

RQ2 - Is there a correlation between athletes and non-athletes attendance at games?

RQ3 - What can TXST do to encourage attendance at games?
Dear Students,

Will you please devote 10-15 minutes to respond to the What Affects Your Attendance at Texas State Football Games Survey that has been composed by Lucky PR to gather input on what affects the attendance rate at Texas State University Football games.

In order to take your input into account in gathering recommendations for our PR Research Method class project, we ask you to please respond by the end of the day on Thursday, October 20. The survey may be found at the following link.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LRJGKJY

Thank you for taking time to respond to the What Affects Your Attendance at Texas State Football Games Survey and thank you very much for all you do to further excellence at Texas State University.

For further details, please contact Lucky PR at klp110@txstate.edu.

Looking forward to your response,

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Methodology

Lucky PR decided to use the survey method to do the research. We believed using a survey will be most dependable and provide precise results to help answer why is attendance so low at home football games, and how can we improve it?

We were confident that we would receive answers from our participants for many reasons. Not only is our survey free, but very time efficient. With our survey being only 10 questions total, the students will less likely face boredom which would affect their true answer. Not only can the survey be done in a timely matter, but we could reach a larger population. The more participants that do the survey, the better for our conclusion. Lucky PR can also have the survey on many platforms, such as the web, email, print, phone. This will allow for participants to complete the survey on their own time.

A survey will give us the most accurate answers, because the contributor can be honest and open. We promise them that all information will be confidential. This way our results are less likely to be skewed by false answers. Our survey was made to be unbiased, and appropriate so participant would feel the need to complete it. We believe that if the answers are truthful and sincere, we will be most accurate in finding results for our research.

Another benefit for us is that our questions are simple and to the point, so it will be easy to collect and analyze answers. Our answers will be both reliable and valid, which is very important for our research. However, we do have a few disadvantages by using a survey. Even though we believe our questions are going to help with accurate answers the participant may think otherwise. If we asked unclear questions, our results could be misrepresented because of certain answers. Also, many students may become bored due to the high number of surveys sent
via email daily. If they decide to speed through the survey and not answer honestly, this can affect our results.

Lucky PR’s potential participants is the whole student body at Texas State University. We will strategically hit the right places on campus at the right time to reach the most students possible. The survey link will be sent out through various sources like email and through social media platforms. Our main focus are the students because we want to improve attendance at home football games specifically. We trust that the feedback from students will help the attendance at the games, and consequently help the football team to be successful.
Analysis and Results

To retrieve results for our study Lucky PR sent out a 10-question Attendance Rate survey through SurveyMonkey and we received over 90 respondents just within the four days of being sent out. The survey was sent out only to Texas State University students through various mediums; including social media (Twitter and Facebook), email and word of mouth. Our survey results showed that out of the total of 93 respondents 31.18% of them were student athletes at Texas State University (appendix A). Almost half of the respondents were seniors (appendix I) and 81.72% of the Texas State University students that took the survey were female (appendix J).

31.18% of survey respondents are TXST student athletes

For RQ1, data revealed that 18.3% of students said that the opponent that the Bobcats play affects their attendance at the games, while 22.7% says that the team record affects their attendance (appendix D). As shown in the graph the remaining respondents said it's a combination of the two that causes them not to show up to the game. Respondents who chose
other as their answer specified as to saying that neither the opponent or the team record affects their attendance.

24.4% of students say that the team record affects their attendance, 18.09% of students say the opponent we play affects their attendance and 34.04% of students say it's a combination of both.

For RQ2, the data collected showed that 31.18% of the surveys completed were completed by student athletes at Texas State University. The data also showed that 61.29% of the students only attend 0-1 games and 9.68% of the students attend 4-5 games, which means that there is no correlation between athletes and non-athletes attending the games. Only around 2-3% of the athletes are attending Texas State football games.

For RQ3, we asked students a couple of questions about their suggestions on keeping the attendance higher at the games. Results showed that only 46.24% of students would stay during the whole game if Bobcat Stadium had stronger wifi (appendix E) and only 55.91% of students said their attendance at the games would change now that they are serving alcohol at the games.
LOW ATTENDANCE AT TEXAS STATE GAMES

(appendix F). A lot of the open ended questions received responses about how the attendance at the Texas State University games could increase: better parking, winning games, alcohol, having food vendors start to use credit cards at the concession stands, better football player recruitment, more prizes, becoming more interactive with the audience and better halftime shows (appendix H).

Out of all the choices, gift cards received the most picks with 54 respondents.
Conclusion and Future Studies

Texas State University has a significantly low attendance rate for football games. As stated previously, Texas State needs to increase incentives for students and also improve the player recruitment program to increase the team's wins in order to raise the attendance at football games. For further research students who do attend the football games should be asked why they attend the games. Finding out why students do attend the games can help the marketing department at Texas State figure out what promotions are and are not working at the games. Figuring out why the students do attend the games and why the students do not attend the games will provide all of the data necessary to increase attendance drastically at football games.
Bibliography


Bradshaw, K. (2016). It is time we cared about something other than attendance at sporting events. *The University Star.* Retrieved from https://star.txstate.edu/2016/02/17/it-is-time-we-cared-about-something-other-than-attendance-at-sporting-events/


Appendix

Attendance Rate Survey

1. Are you a student athlete at Texas State University?
   a. Yes
   b. No

2. Which event do you prefer to attend?
   a. The Tailgate
   b. The Football Game
   c. Both

3. In a typical season, how many Texas State University football games do you attend?
   a. 0-1
   b. 2-3
   c. 4-5
   d. 6+

4. Does the opponent or team record affect your attendance?
   a. Opponent
   b. Team Record
   c. Both
   d. Other (please specify):

5. If Bobcat Stadium had stronger Wi-Fi during the games, would you stay the whole game?
   a. Yes
   b. No
6. Texas State University is now serving alcohol at the games, will this affect your attendance at the games?
   a. Yes
   b. No
7. Would incentives such as t-shirts, gift cards, or prizes make you consider staying the entire game?
   □ T-shirts
   □ Gifts
   □ Prizes
   □ No
   □ Other (please specify):
8. What can Texas State University do to persuade you to stay the entire game?
9. What is your classification?
   a. Freshman
   b. Sophomore
   c. Junior
   d. Senior
   e. Graduate Student
10. What is your sex?
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Other
A. Are you a student athlete at Texas State University?

31.18% of survey respondents are TXST student athletes

B. Which event do you prefer to attend?

52 respondents said that they prefer to attend the tailgate, 16 said the football game and 23 respondents said they prefer to attend both.
C. In a typical season, how many Texas State University football games do you attend?

61.7% of students only attend 0-1 TXST football games in a typical season.

D. Does the opponent or team record affect your attendance? (other category included neither and none responses)

24.4% of students say that the team record affects their attendance, 18.09% of students say the opponent we play affects their attendance and 34.04% of students say it's a combination of both.
E. If Bobcat Stadium had stronger Wi-Fi during the games, would you stay the whole game?

46.81% of students would stay the whole game if the stadium had stronger Wi-Fi.

F. Texas State University is now serving alcohol at the games, will this affect your attendance at the games?

56.38% of students say that serving alcohol at the games will affect their attendance.
G. Would incentives such as t-shirts, gift cards, or prizes make you consider staying the entire game?

![Bar chart showing incentives and responses]

Out of all the choices, gift cards received the most picks with 54 respondents.

H. What can Texas State University do to persuade you to stay the entire game?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>• Get a tabc byob license</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• booze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team record</td>
<td>• Win</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have better team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Play better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment/Participation</td>
<td>• Recruit better players</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have more school spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have halftime show be more interactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More fan/student interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>• More prizes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cheaper/better food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have better parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Play more well known teams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. What is your classification?

Mostly seniors took the online survey.

J. What is your sex?

76 out of the 93 respondents of the survey are female.