

FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENT AND EMPLOYEE ATTENDANCE AT  
COLLEGE FOOTBALL GAMES

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## **ABSTRACT**

**SCOTT PALANJIAN: Factors Influencing Student and Employee Attendance at College Football Games**  
(Under the direction of Dr. Coyte Cooper)

In response to financial challenges, there is a strong likelihood that intercollegiate athletic departments will further emphasize attendance growth at football games. It is necessary to ensure future football game attendance in order to sustain non-revenue, Olympic sport programs which have traditionally struggled to be profitable. The purpose of the current study is to identify the most influential factors affecting attendance at football games. The study investigates the relationship between facility, concessions, merchandise sales, pre-game activities, in-game entertainment and other aspects. The students, faculty and staff at a large, public university in the South were selected as participants in this study. The results of the survey (N = 998) were analyzed to determine statistical significance among attendance factors when focusing on the background of respondents. Based on the results, the discussion of each attendance factor focuses on the practical implications for collegiate marketers.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Intercollegiate athletics have brought increased exposure and recognition to colleges and universities since they were first established in the early nineteenth century (Smith, 1998). Even though the model has evolved over the years, athletics programs are still a very important tool for marketing and publicizing the schools as a whole (Suggs, 2003). Athletic programs provide a constant source of school pride for students, faculty and staff, alumni and fans (Schmidly, 2000).

These programs are collectively referred to as the university's 'front porch' given the level of visibility associated with the games (Sorenson, 2003). College administrators commonly see success on the university's playing fields as a more convenient avenue to influence public perception than attempting to further the school's academic reputation (Suggs, 2003). Likewise, a thriving athletics program has been shown to impact student applications and alumni contributions (Grimes & Ghressanthis, 1994). In addition, the athletic teams themselves can benefit from larger, more enthusiastic crowds which can provide a 'home field advantage' and influence the outcome of games in some contexts (Wann, Dolan, McGoerge, & Allison, 1994).

In order to keep revenue sources intact and stadiums filled, schools must have an established fan base both on a local and national level. Revenue generating sports such as football and men's basketball are heavily relied upon to execute this campaign. The increase in income from revenue-generating sports is reflected in the overall growth in profits within

major Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) institutions. For example, the profits for the 68 teams that play in the six major conferences were up 11% in 2010 from the previous year, with each football team earning \$15.8 million (or well over \$1 million per game) annually (Isidore, 2010). The University of Texas football program was the leader in both revenue (\$94 million) and profit (\$68 million) during this time frame. (Isidore). “Football has accordingly evolved into perhaps the key point of reference to, and involvement with, the university for many of the people whom institutions rely for support. Administrators involved in external relations—admissions, advancement, alumni relations, community affairs, development, governmental relations—use football teams and games to orchestrate involvement . . . that they expect will translate into direct support” (Toma, 2003, p. 142). This doesn’t even account for the numerous other potential revenue areas that are at the disposal of NCAA schools. For example, schools can generate more than \$10 million a year just from merchandising royalties alone (Rishe, 2011).

In addition to bringing increased exposure to the entire university, football and men’s basketball in particular can provide profits that support the whole athletics program through ticket sales and lucrative media packages (Fulks, 2002). All NCAA member institutions reap the benefits of massive television deals such as the Bowl Championship Series (BCS) with ESPN and the newly signed \$10.8 billion deal with CBS and Turner Broadcasting to air the NCAA college basketball tournament (Denhart & Ridpath, 2011). Additionally, the new TV rights deals such as the Pac-12’s landmark \$2.7 billion broadcast agreement with ESPN represent millions of dollars annually in newfound revenue for conferences and schools (Horrow & Swatek, 2011). Meanwhile, college football broadcasters have been experiencing significant growth in advertising revenue. Nielsen data revealed that regular-season ad

spending on college football was \$508 million in 2010 (up 6% from \$477 million in 2009) and could be even higher this year (Lafayette, 2011).

College football has enjoyed unprecedented attendance growth in recent years despite the economic concerns of many public and private universities. In four of the past five years, attendance records have been set across the nation. The number of fans attending football games at the 639 NCAA schools in 2010 reached an all-time high of 49,670,895 (National Football Foundation, 2011). The total figure represents an increase of 1,386,222 (or nearly 3%) from the 2009 season and an increase of more than 12.8 million fans (26%) since 1997 (National Football Foundation). The television ratings reflected this increase in popularity as more than 200 million fans tuned into regular season college football contests in 2010 along with the 134 million viewers who watched the 35 bowl games (National Football Foundation).

While the newly signed television deals are a benefit, they do not come without a cost to athletic departments. Nearly every college football game involving FBS institutions is now televised or available live on the internet. Many fans are choosing to stay at home and watching games on their high-definition televisions and surround sound systems. The at-home experience has become much better and it's frequently much less expensive than going to the stadium. Meanwhile, ticket prices have continued to increase across the nation. The richest tickets during the 2010 season could be found at the rivalry game between Oklahoma and Oklahoma State with a \$125 face value (Bachman, 2010). This figure doesn't even account for all of the ancillary costs associated with attending a game such as gas, parking, concessions and merchandise. Furthermore, fans of college football are regularly subject to required donations to the athletic development department in order to be granted the right to



purchase tickets in the first place. Athletic departments must find a way to respond to these challenges if they want to be financially sustainable in future years.

In spite of the increased popularity of football and the influx of new revenue, athletics programs are still failing to be financially viable because of the continual increased spending that exists in the Division I model. Schools are using these revenue sources to increase spending across the entire athletic department budget. The NCAA, in an annual report on Division I finances released in June 2011, noted that the median net surplus for the 22 self-sufficient programs was about \$7.4 million, and the median net deficit for the other 98 major programs was about \$11.3 million. This gap of nearly \$19 million is up from \$15.6 million in 2009 (NCAA, 2011). According to a *USA Today* analysis, just seven athletics programs generated enough revenue to finish in the black in each of the past five years (“Restoring the Balance”, 2010). As a result, schools have been forced to help support their athletic budgets with higher direct and indirect institutional subsidies and student fees (“Restoring the Balance”). On average, FBS (Football Bowl Subdivision) programs in the NCAA had subsidies and student fees which accounted for 21% of the 6.3 billion in total athletic revenue (“Restoring the Balance”).

There is no bigger, more prominent venue for schools to confront the current issues than at college football games. Therefore, it is logical to assume that all of the constituents with a vested interest in these contests can benefit from better understanding the factors that influence college students’ attendance at football games. This examination should serve to help athletic departments maximize current and future revenue opportunities.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Intercollegiate athletic departments will continue to face financial challenges in the future. In response to these challenges, there is a strong likelihood that athletic departments will further emphasize the growth in attendance at football games. It is necessary to ensure future football game attendance in order to help sustain non-revenue, Olympic sport programs which have traditionally struggled to be profitable. Consequently, by identifying the most influential factors affecting first year student's attendance at football games, schools could continue to attract this group of fans to games after graduation. Athletic departments could likewise benefit from increased season ticket sales, donations and merchandise sales. Fans should be demonstrated the value of a football ticket while in attendance and everything that comes along with the price of admission.

## **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to identify the potential factors that influence student and employees to attend football games at a southern FBS institution. The results of this study could be used by the school's athletic department and others around the country to attract a higher percentage of the campus community to football games. Additionally, more effective marketing plans and enhancements to the game day atmosphere may be implemented for all spectators.

## **Research Questions**

Following an exhaustive review of literature on the subject at hand, these research questions were developed to help direct the research:

[RQ 1] What are the primary factors that influence college students and employees decision to attend football games?

[RQ 2] Are there significant differences in the factors influencing attendance at football games when focusing on the background information [2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E] of the respondents?

[2A] Gender

[2B] Ethnic background

[2C] University affiliation

[2D] Game attendance prior to university enrollment/employment

[2E] Games attended last season

### **Definition of Terms**

- *Factors*: Refer to variables that the researcher manipulates which represent specific attributes.
- *Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS)*: The highest division of the NCAA, formerly known as Division 1-A.
- *National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)*: A voluntary organization that administers U.S. intercollegiate athletics. It functions as a general legislative and administrative authority, formulating and enforcing rules of play for various sports and eligibility criteria for athletes.
- *Season ticket*: A purchase of a single seat for all of the games in a given season.
- *Spectator*: A person viewing a sporting event.

### **Assumptions**

- Subjects responded to each of the survey questions with honesty and objectivity.
- All of the information obtained from the survey will remain confidential and anonymous.
- The selected subjects voluntarily participated in this study and completed the survey.

- Since this study took place during only one football season, it was assumed that the classification and factors that influence attendance can be reasonably applied to spectators that have attended within the last three to five years and will attend in the near future.
- It was implied that the information gathered from the selected sample of students and employees was reflective of the overall campus community population.

### **Limitations**

- Participants did not have the option to respond to all survey questions in an open-ended format.
- This analysis involved a single, state-supported university which may limit the number of other institutions that these results could be generalized.
- The results of this survey may not be directly applicable to other levels of the NCAA or to other members of NCAA conferences.

### **Delimitations**

- Access was limited to students and employees with access to the campus email system.
- The findings were not generalized to other sporting events at the university because of the different game facilities.

### **Significance of the Study**

Results from this study provide useful information for the university under examination to improve football game attendance. New and improved marketing strategies may be developed and implemented based on the analysis of factors that influence attendance for students and employees. The findings of this study may prove to save the athletic department money by allowing for greater efficiency as well as increase future football-related revenue including ticket sales, donations, concessions, merchandise and sponsorship.

Other spectator sports at the university could likewise benefit by employing analogous strategies to attract the campus community. Furthermore, similar institutions could apply the conclusions to market football to the student and employee populations.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter provides a review of literature on the subject of spectator attendance behavior. A conceptual framework for the research is offered within the context of consumer choice theory. Additionally, an analysis of spectator motivation is included with emphasis on attendance at intercollegiate sporting events. Studies concerning college football are then discussed in greater detail.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

The study of consumer behavior is deeply rooted in early economic theories. Taussig (1912) stated the following in *The Principles of Economics*: “An object can have no value unless it has utility. No one will give anything for an article unless it yields him satisfaction” (p. 120). Recently, researchers have begun to take into account the large amount of information available on the different options that consumers have in the marketplace. Consumer choice has recently been defined as the study of “selection, consumption, and disposal of products and services” by consumers (Bettman, Francis-Luces, & Payne, 1998).

This shift in thinking started with Howard and Sheth’s theory (1969) on buyer behavior which centered on the internal conceptual world of the mind, rather than the external physical world. The theory proposed that brand choice of the consumer relies on a systematic approach of repetitive buying behavior with routine purchase cycles (Howard and Sheth). The choice process was later depicted as moving from an initial state towards some desired state which usually involves a purchase (Bettman, 1979). Modern economic choice

theories are guided by a similar premise that individuals continually exhibit behavior based on the maximization of their preferences (McFadden, 1986). Consumers basically are thought to exhibit preferences that may contain "random components due to fluctuations in perceptions, attitudes, or other unmeasured factors" (McFadden, p. 278). Furthermore, this theory identifies economic, demographic, and social variables which were found to have a profound effect on consumers' preferences (McFadden). Using this framework, researchers have begun to explore the motivational preferences of consumers based on both purchase habits and previous behavioral experiences.

### **Spectator Motivation**

Despite the high profile nature of sporting events, very little is known about the motives of individuals who invest their time, money and emotional well-being in watching games. In today's internet age, fans are even more committed than ever before. They often devote at least part of every day to consuming information related to their favorite teams (Robinson & Trail, 2005). For this study, it is crucial to understand the motives of college students as they decide whether to attend football games. Armed with this knowledge, sport marketers would be able to develop targeted programs and advertising campaigns around those consumption preferences and better associate with fans (Robinson & Trail).

Ultimately, this marketing strategy would be important in efforts to maximize attendance and profits.

Much of the prior research on sport attendance factors has been conducted within the context of sport demand (McDonald, Milne, & Hong, 2002). The prominent examinations in this field studied the effects of economic variables (ticket prices, television and other entertainment options), promotions (special events, star players and team standings), residual

preferences (game schedules, accessibility and weather), and/or the association between socio-demographic factors (geography and population) on watching sporting events (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Zhang, Pease, Hui, & Michaud, 1995; Zhang, Smith, Pease & Jambor, 1997).

“This work has been important in helping sport marketers profile consumer segments and develop promotional strategies, but has provided little insight on the reasons why people watch and follow sports” (James & Ridinger, 2002, p. 261).

The literature in the field of sports marketing that has studied motivational preferences of consumers has mainly focused on professional sports (Sloan, 1989). The motives for attendance at intercollegiate sporting events especially for the sport of football are far less understood. Motives for spectator and fan behavior have been hypothesized to exist because of social and psychological needs of the individual (Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2000). By fully comprehending these unique inclinations, researchers can isolate the elements of the actual sport product that consumer are attracted to the most (Chelladurai, Harada, & Matsuoka, 2003).

Sloan (1989) conducted an extensive review of sport motivation literature. He suggested that motivational factors traditionally used to explain sport participation could also be applied to sport spectatorship. Also, he argued that motivations differ from situation to situation and from sport to sport. The motivational theories which he studied were broken into five different categories including (1) salubrious effects theory, (2) stress and stimulation seeking theory, (3) catharsis and aggression theory, (4) entertainment theory, and (5) achievement-seeking theory (Sloan). Salubrious effects theory states that people are attracted to the games because they are trying to derive enjoyment from physical and mental well-



being. Stress and stimulation seeking theory explains that if risk, stress, and arousal levels drop below desired levels, people will seek out the chance to increase arousal intensity (McDonald, Milne, & Hong, 2002). Catharsis and aggression theory deals with attraction based on the aggression and violent content of the games. Entertainment theory is concerned with the meaning of the sports events based on the different aesthetic and moral representations. Achievement-seeking theory states that people are drawn to sport spectating on account of their identification with the achievement of the sports team. It is further elaborated that individuals can fulfill their need for achievement through athletic competition (Sloan).

There have been many sport-specific scales specifically designed to measure different sport consumer motives over the years. The first widely-accepted scale was the Sport Fan Motivational Scale (SFMS) which served to “document empirically the motives [of sport fans] and establishes the relative importance of each” (Wann, 1995, p. 378). This scale was a result of a review of the existing conceptual literature within sport sociology at the time (Sloan, 1989; Zillman, Bryant, & Sapolsky, 1989; Zillman & Paulus, 1993). This instrument was created to measure eight different motives of sports fans (eustress, self-esteem, escape, entertainment, economic, aesthetic, group affiliation and family) (Wann). From these eight underlying factors, Wann developed a survey using a Likert-scale that contained twenty-three items and intended to represent the motives of fan behavior.

In 1999, Milne and McDonald developed an instrument called the Motivation of Sport Consumer (MSC) scale to measure spectator and participant motives. The MSC contains twelve motivational constructs including: (1) risk-taking, (2) stress reduction, (3) aggression, (4) affiliation, (5) social facilitation, (6) self-esteem, (7) competition, (8)

achievement, (9) skill mastery, (10) aesthetics, (11) value development, and (12) self-actualization. Later in 2002, Milne and McDonald added (13) physical fitness into their MSC scale. The scale was largely based on the work of Sloan (1989) and Maslow (1943). Abraham Maslow's human needs hierarchy provided a framework which proposed five categories of human needs that account for much of human behavior: A) psychological, B) safety, C) social, D) esteem, and E) self-actualization. Maslow theorized that these particular needs can be arranged hierarchically with individuals proceeding through the hierarchy as the needs are satisfied. Each of these five general needs except for safety needs, have been proposed in the sport literature as motivating factors for sport participation and spectatorship (Maslow). Milne and McDonald determined that Maslow's hierarchy to be an appropriate base upon which to build a theory of sport activity.

Milne and McDonald's (1999) model focuses on the exchange between consumers and the sport marketer. Consumers are thought to prefer obtaining certain benefits from consuming a sports product, no matter if it is participant or spectator based. These desired benefits are determined by consumers' motivations and what they expect from the sport marketer. In return, sport marketers develop a delivery system to help satisfy consumers' needs. Depending upon the sport market, the systems of delivery vary greatly anywhere from large, 100,000-seat stadiums and television or radio broadcast programs to retail and direct mail, among other systems (Milne & McDonald). Marketers are challenged to serve a product to emotional fans with many motivations. This model shows that the exchange process includes opportunities to build fan identification, understand the various consumer segments, and control service quality. The definition of identification in this context would be "an orientation of the self in regard to other objects including a person or group that

results in feelings or sentiments of close attachment” (Sloan, 1989, p. 165-166). External stakeholders such as corporate sponsors and media often attempt to use sport in their marketing and business ventures with a significant effect on the sport marketer-consumer exchange process.

The Motivational Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC) was developed by Trail and James (2001) from a review of relevant literature. It improved upon the content of Wann’s (1995) SFMS and Milne & McDonald’s (1999) MSC scales by incorporating the most effective aspects of both scales while maintaining content validity which was similar to earlier scales. The MSSC addressed a need for a scale which accounted for various psychometric limitations (Trail & James). It consisted of nine subscales (vicarious achievement, acquisition of knowledge, aesthetics, social interaction, drama/eustress, escape, family, physical attractiveness, and physical skill) that were hypothesized to predict spectator consumption behavior (Sloan, 1989). Additionally, it included two new factors (acquisition of knowledge and physical attractiveness of the participants) that represented different constructs previously unmeasured. The development of the MSSC advanced the study of sport spectating because it was a tool for measuring the psychological motivation inherent in sport consumption. It allows academicians and practitioners to better understand the impact of psychological motives on sport attendance, purchase behavior, and other types of consumption (Trail & James). It was shown through the results of their study that the MSSC can indeed reliably measure the motivations of sport spectators’ consumption behavior.

Pease and Zhang (2001) took more of a social approach to spectator research with the creation of the Spectator Motivation Scale (SMS). This scale was developed to measure social motivations of spectators. Through both a review of literature and interviews with

team administrators, these authors developed a scale with a total of 45 items. Five theoretical categories of social motivations for sports attendance (salubrious effect, stress and stimulation seeking, catharsis and aggression, entertainment, and achievement seeking) were used as the framework for the instrument. The relationship of five sociomotivational factors was studied in regard to game attendance of minor league hockey spectators. Three SAM factors (salubrious effects, achievement seeking, and stress and entertainment) were found to be significantly predictive of spectator game attendance level. It was suggested that the factors of promotional theories and game presentation should be highlighted by a minor league hockey team when formulating marketing strategies. To a varying extent, five sociodemographic variables (age, gender, household size, marital status, and education) were also related to the SAM factors (Pease & Zhang).

Similarly, Zhang et al. (2001) developed an instrument to examine sociomotivational factors which affected attendance at minor league hockey games. They used five theoretical categories similar to Pease and Zhang's (2001) study. They found that salubrious effects (e.g., diversion and recreation effects), achievement seeking (e.g., team identification), and stress and entertainment (e.g., pleasure, sensation, happiness, crowd interaction) were all most predictive of fan attendance (Zhang et al.).

### **College Sport Attendance**

Collegiate sports depend on many different demographic segments of the population for attendance at various games. Marketers should consider not only students, faculty and staff, but alumni and community as their potential targets for sporting events in order to develop effective marketing strategies. One area of research that remains fairly unexplored is an examination of the variations of perceived value and the effectiveness of different

marketing motivators among various demographic groups, especially across collegiate sports (Ferreira & Armstrong, 2004). Therefore, demographic variables would seem to play an important role in determining which motivators have the greatest impact on attendance.

Prior research has addressed many other topics within the area of fan motivation. Snipes and Ingram (2007) sought to identify the motivators for collegiate sport fans across three different sports and to understand demographic variables that may impact the various motivators. The results of this study suggest that demographics do affect the importance of different marketing motivators. However, certain fan attendance motivation factors may be more important to one target group than another. Respondents in the Snipes and Ingram study consistently rated the schedule and the facility as the top motivators for sport event attendance across all three sports. Another important factor was the admission price which suggests that it is important if the marketer is trying to attract new fans to a sport. The least important factors across all three sports were corporate sponsorships, special prizes and giveaways, and the school band. Although special prizes and giveaways appear to be more important to the younger, college-age population when compared to older consumers, they are not as important as the quality of the facility or the admission price (Snipes & Ingram).

Some interesting results pertaining to gender motives were found. It may be beneficial for marketers looking to target males to focus more on the food quality, special prizes and giveaways in addition to admission price. On the other hand, when targeting female fans marketers may want to consider more entertainment options. Additionally, marketers aiming for a crowd with lower education levels may want to focus more on the admission price as well as participation games, corporate sponsorships, school spirit activities, and cheering (Snipes & Ingram).

## **College Football Attendance**

Over the past century, colleges and universities have made considerable investments in their football programs because the sport is associated with having an impact on a sense of community (SOC) and thought to ultimately lead to student recruitment and retention (Toma & Cross, 1998). SOC is defined as a community characteristic that leads to community members feeling a sense of belonging and a sense that support is available at the group level (Chavis, Hogge, McMillan, & Wandermans, 1986). For fans, sport can provide an outlet for people to connect with one another by attending the games together, and serve as a point of central identity for the campus (Toma, 2003). Many American universities continue to invest in intercollegiate football programs, and specifically cite the sport's ability to foster a SOC as justification for the cost. In only the past six years, over 38 institutions have made the decision to add football to their athletic programs (Kelly, 2010). Many times athletic department will also tout how football strengthens student identity with the institution (Toma). Although, the direct evidence which links football to students' SOC is limited.

Studies involving college football attendance factors in particular are somewhat lacking. A recent investigation by Warner and Shapiro (2011) attempted to evaluate the importance of football in regards to fostering a SOC. According to Warner and Shapiro's research, SOC had a moderate to strong positive influence on four outcome variables: Satisfaction, Retention, Current Support of Athletics, and Future Support for Athletics. This study suggests that while SOC is very important to students in the short term, the introduction of a football program does not foster a greater SOC for all students. Other common benefits such as revenue generation and image enhancement have been attributed to

football, but fostering SOC is the most consistent claim throughout the history of college sport (Zimbalist, 2001).

Models measuring motivation for college football attendance are even rarer. Kahle, Kambara and Rose (1996) relied on a psychological theory called Kelman's Functional Theory of Attitudinal Influence to define a conceptual model which employs seven constructs: compliance, obligation, camaraderie, identification with winning, self-defining experience, unique self-expressive experience, and internalization. They chose undergraduate and graduate to participate in a survey about their motivations on attending college football games. The researchers identified three different types of spectators: internalized highly involved sport consumers, referent power consumers, and unique self-expressive consumers. Each specific spectator type produced certain recommendations that could be utilized by sports marketers. The "internalized highly involved sport consumer" appreciates the game itself including the quality of the competition and the importance of each play. "Referent power consumers" are affected by a sense of camaraderie as opposed to loyalty and will be attracted by marketing strategies geared towards group benefits (ticket prices, group seating and parking). The "unique self-expressive consumers" are very susceptible to switching brands and tend to root for the team which is winning or the one with the top player.

Previous research in college athletics in relation to football at the highest level of the NCAA is not very prevalent at all. There are three prominent studies that have examined spectator attendance at NCAA Division II football games. DeSchrive (1999) studied the importance of 12 factors in four categories on game attendance from 82 Division II institutions covering 412 games played during the 1996 football season. The categories

analyzed were Economic, Demographic, Game Attractiveness, and Residual Preferences. Each unique category contained three factors. The findings confirmed that a statistically significant relationship existed between spectator attendance and several key factors such as home team winning percentage, promotional activity, ticket price and weather. The author suggested that some factors such as the weather cannot be controlled by collegiate athletic administrators; practitioners should consider promotional activities and ticket prices when developing future marketing strategies (DeSchrive).

Wells, Southall and Peng (2000) used the factors developed by DeSchrive (1999) to conduct a similar analysis of Division II football attendance. The data in this study was collected from the 1997 and 1998 football seasons. Results indicated that the on-field performance of a team was found to be a significant factor when attempting to predict attendance. This finding was consistent with earlier research on spectator attendance and concurred that incorporating traditions was critical to creating a sense of social reinforcement. Perhaps the most interesting finding was that schools that had a booster club had a negative relationship on attendance (Wells, Southall & Peng). The purpose of this study was to develop a model to predict the determinants related to attendance at NCAA Division II football games. Nine factors were taken from DeSchrive's (1996) study along with 14 new determinants were selected after a review of literature. The authors generated a predictive equation from this model so that home game attendance could be compared with the overall population of other Division II games. This study suggests that Division II athletic departments would most likely see benefits from focusing more on planning promotions designed to increase attendance. Also, it could be beneficial to have a marketing position within the athletic department because it was found to have a significant relation to



attendance. The lack of a marketing director was evident in the percentage of departments that did not market directly to students (60.2%) or the community (56.5%) (Wells, Southall & Peng).

DeSchrive and Jensen (2002) further investigated the factors affecting spectator attendance in Division II college football. They used the Wells, Southall & Peng (2000) model where the two main factors studied were winning percentage and promotional activity. But they added gameday weather conditions and travel between institutions as factors in Division II football attendance. The team's record from the current season was weighted more heavily than the previous season's record in this model as it related to attendance. The purpose of this study differed greatly because it analyzed the relationship between spectator attendance at NCAA Division II football contests and selected determinants by estimating multiple economic demand models (DeSchrive & Jensen). The researchers found that a positive relationship exists between spectator attendance and the two factors that are emphasized in this study, promotional activity and on-field success.

The use of economic demand models has long been a popular method for the analysis of aggregate spectator attendance in professional sports (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Zhang et al., 1996). Few articles can be found related to the determinants of spectator attendance at American collegiate sporting events. DeSchrive (1999) analyzed the individual relationships between attendance and selected determinants without constructing a full economic demand model. Therefore, there was a lack of analysis on the effects of the selected determinants as a whole on attendance. Wells, Southall, and Peng (2000) did use a full demand model, but did not include important determinants, such as weather and the distance between the two competing institutions. Likewise, the researchers did not attempt

to study the effect of winning over the course of a season on spectators' attendance.

DeSchraver and Jensen (2002) showed that the variables in collegiate sport spectatorship can be studied through the use of a tool which was primarily used for professional sport.

### **Conclusion of the Literature Review**

Several factors have been found to influence spectator attendance at sporting events. Nearly all of the past research has focused on the individuals who are actually attending the games. While there is little know about the non-attendees who arguably could provide much greater insight into solving the problems facing sports marketers. This void in the literature provides the rationale for the methodology which goes beyond traditional spectator attendance studies.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to identify the potential factors that influence students and employees to attend college football games at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). This chapter will outline the methods employed to perform this study and will be structured as follows: explanation of study participants, details describing the instrumentation employed, summary of the procedures used in data collection, and description of the statistical analysis used to interpret the data.

#### **Participants**

The population of interest for this study included all university students and employees with access to the campus email system. The total number of students enrolled at UNC was 29,390 with 2,518 faculty members and 8,534 staff in the fall of 2011. The students and employees were asked to fill out the online survey over a two week period.

#### **Instrumentation**

The survey was created to accumulate specific information concerning demographics and attendance factors of students and employees at university football games. The initial portion of the survey established categorical information by asking questions in a multiple choice format. These questions addressed the following variables: gender, ethnic background, university affiliation, college football attendance prior to enrollment or employment, and football game attendance this past season. The attendance factors section consisted of a 5 point Likert-scale [1 = Not at all influential to 5 = Very influential] where

respondents were asked to rate statements within six different categories. The attendance factor categories that were measured included stadium, concessions, merchandise sales, pre-game activities, in-game experience, and other aspects.

### **Procedures**

The initial version of the survey was created based on a review of the relevant literature and discussions with industry experts. In addition, once the initial version of the instrument was finalized, it was reviewed by a panel of experts (athletic department employees, professors, and graduate students in content area) to ensure that the instrument was valid based on the goals of the research. Feedback was taken from this panel and a final version was created incorporating the suggested alterations. The sample for this study was collected through an online survey of university students and employees who were identified as the primary sample for the research. The participants were chosen because they not only had a vested interest in athletic department events, but represented a key segment for building loyal consumers in the future. The university directory was employed to send out the emails to all of the potential respondents. Individuals were asked in an introductory letter to participate in this survey which would be used to enhance the gameday experience at future college football games. An inducement was offered as an incentive for respondents to fully complete the survey.

### **Data Analysis**

To assess the relative influence of each attendance factor on the entire population, descriptive statistics were utilized to establish overall mean scores. A one-way repeated subjects ANOVA was employed to evaluate the significance of the attendance factors. Also, each attendance factor was analyzed based on the demographic variable of gender, university

affiliation, ethnicity, prior attendance, and attendance last season. Mixed-model ANOVAs were performed identifying the attendance factors influencing level on college students and employees. Therefore, these various statistical analyses used in conjunction with this study provided a chance to better recognize the factors that influence attendance at college football games.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **MANUSCRIPT**

#### **Introduction**

Intercollegiate athletics have brought increased exposure and recognition to colleges and universities since they were first established in the early nineteenth century. Even though the model has evolved over the years, athletics programs are still a very important tool for marketing and publicizing the schools as a whole (Suggs, 2003). Schools must have an established fan base both on a local and national level in order to keep revenue sources intact and stadiums filled. Revenue generating sports such as football are relied upon most to execute this campaign. Administrators involved in all aspects of external relations from admissions to community affairs often use football programs and their games to orchestrate involvement which they expect will translate into direct support (Toma, 2003, p. 142).

College football has enjoyed unprecedented growth in recent years despite a plethora of other concerns at many public and private universities. In five of the past six years, attendance records have been set at contests across the nation. The number of fans attending football games at the 638 NCAA schools in 2011 reached an all-time high of 49,699,419 (National Football Foundation, 2012). The total figure represents an increase of 28,524 from the 2010 season and an increase of more than 12.2 million fans (32%) since 1998 (National Football Foundation). This swell in attendance has come despite rising ticket prices across the country. The richest tickets during the 2011 season for the top games were valued at greater than \$500 a piece according to secondary markets (Rovell, 2011). Furthermore, fans

of college football are regularly subject to required donations to the athletic development department in order to be granted the right to purchase tickets in the first place.

Each football team on average turns a profit in excess of \$1 million each game at the FBS level of competition. The University of Texas football program was the overall leader in both revenue (\$96 million) and profit (\$71 million) in the 2011 season (Smith, 2012). In addition, football teams sustain the entire athletic program through lucrative media packages in place with the BCS, at the conference level and with individual school deals. Deals such as the Pac-12's landmark \$2.7 billion broadcast agreement with ESPN represent millions of dollars annually in newfound revenue for conferences and schools (Horrow & Swatek, 2011). The high television ratings in large part have justified these newfound deals. More than 213 million people watched a regular season college football game last season along with another 127 million who viewed the 35 post-season bowl match-ups (National Football Foundation, 2012).

While the newly signed television deals are a benefit, they do not come without a cost to athletic departments. Nearly every college football game involving FBS institutions is now televised or available live on the Internet. Many fans are choosing to stay at home and watching games on their high-definition televisions with surround sound systems. The at-home experience has become much better and it's frequently much less expensive than going to the stadium. Athletic departments must find a way to respond to these challenges if they want to be financially sustainable in future years. There is no bigger, more prominent venue for schools to confront the current issues than at college football games. Therefore, it is logical to assume that all of the constituents with a vested interest in these contests can

benefit from better understanding the factors that influence attendance at collegiate football games.

### **Literature Review**

A conceptual framework for the research is offered within the context of several consumer choice theories. Additionally, an analysis of spectator motivation is included with emphasis on attendance at intercollegiate sporting events along with studies concerning college sports in general and college football in particular. Each of these areas of literature was used to guide the research in the analysis of factors for attendance at college football games.

**Economic Choice Theory.** The study of the consumer behavior is deeply rooted in early economic theories. Taussig (1912) stated the following in *The Principles of Economics*: “An object can have no value unless it has utility. No one will give anything for an article unless it yields him satisfaction” (p. 120). A shift in thinking began with Howard and Sheth’s theory (1969) on buyer behavior which centered on the internal conceptual world of the mind, rather than the external physical world. The theory proposed that brand choice of the consumer relies on a systematic approach of repetitive buying behavior with routine purchase cycles (Howard & Sheth). The choice process was later depicted as moving from an initial state towards some desired state which usually involves a purchase (Bettman, 1979). McFadden (1986) further elaborated that consumers basically are thought to exhibit preferences that may contain "random components due to fluctuations in perceptions, attitudes, or other unmeasured factors" (p. 278). Moreover, this theory identifies economic, demographic, and social variables which were found to have a profound effect on consumers' preferences (McFadden). Using this framework, researchers have begun to explore the



motivational preferences of consumers based on both purchase habits and previous behavioral experiences.

**Spectator Motivation.** Despite the high profile nature of sporting events, very little is known about the motives of individuals who invest their time, money and emotional well-being in watching games. Much of the prior research on sport attendance factors has been conducted within the context of sport demand (McDonald, Milne, & Hong, 2002). The prominent examinations in this field studied the effects of economic variables (ticket prices, television and other entertainment options), promotions (special events, star players and team standings), residual preferences (game schedules, accessibility and weather), and/or the association between socio-demographic factors (geography and population) on watching sporting events (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Zhang, Smith, Pease & Jambor, 1997). “This work has been important in helping sport marketers profile consumer segments and develop promotional strategies, but has provided little insight on the reasons why people watch and follow sports” (James & Ridinger, 2002, p. 261).

There have been many sport-specific scales designed to measure different sport consumer motives over the years. The Motivational Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC) was developed by Trail and James (2001) from a review of relevant literature. It consisted of nine subscales (vicarious achievement, acquisition of knowledge, aesthetics, social interaction, drama/eustress, escape, family, physical attractiveness, and physical skill) that were hypothesized to predict spectator consumption behavior (Sloan, 1989). It allows academicians and practitioners to better understand the impact of psychological motives on sport attendance, purchase behavior, and other types of consumption (Trail & James).

Pease and Zhang (2001) took more of a social approach to spectator research with the creation of the Spectator Motivation Scale (SMS). Five theoretical categories of social motivations for sports attendance (salubrious effect, stress and stimulation seeking, catharsis and aggression, entertainment, and achievement seeking) were used as the framework for the instrument. The relationship of five sociomotivational factors was studied in regard to game attendance of minor league hockey spectators. It was suggested that the factors of promotional theories and game presentation should be highlighted by a minor league hockey team when formulating marketing strategies.

**College Sport Attendance.** Marketers should not only consider students, faculty and staff, but alumni and community as their potential targets for collegiate sporting events in order to develop effective marketing strategies. Snipes and Ingram (2007) sought to identify the motivators for collegiate sport fans across three different sports and to understand demographic variables that may impact the various motivators. The results of this study suggest that demographics do affect the importance of different marketing motivators. However, certain fan attendance motivation factors may be more important to one target group than another.

Some interesting results pertaining to gender motives were found. It may be beneficial for marketers looking to target males to focus more on the food quality, special prizes and giveaways in addition to admission price. On the other hand, when targeting female fans marketers may want to consider more entertainment options. Additionally, marketers aiming for a crowd with lower education levels might want to focus more on the admission price as well as participation games, corporate sponsorships, school spirit activities, and cheering (Snipes & Ingram, 2007).

**College Football Attendance.** Over the past century, colleges and universities have made considerable investments in their football programs because the sport is associated with having an impact on a sense of community (SOC) and thought to lead to student recruitment and retention (Toma & Cross, 1998). SOC is defined as a community characteristic that brings community members a sense of belonging and support (Chavis, Hogge, McMillan, & Wandermans, 1986).

A recent investigation by Warner and Shapiro (2011) attempted to evaluate the importance of football in regards to fostering a SOC. This study suggests that while SOC is very important to students in the short term, the introduction of a football program does not foster a greater SOC for all students. Other common benefits such as revenue generation and image enhancement have been attributed to football, but fostering SOC is the most consistent claim throughout the history of college sport (Zimbalist, 2001).

DeSchrive (1999) studied the importance of 12 factors in four categories on game attendance from 82 Division II institutions covering 412 games played during the 1996 football season. The findings confirmed that a statistically significant relationship existed between spectator attendance and several key factors such as home team winning percentage, promotional activity, ticket price and weather. Wells, Southall and Peng (2000) used the factors developed by DeSchrive (1999) to conduct a similar analysis of Division II football attendance. Results indicated that the on-field performance of a team was found to be a significant factor when attempting to predict attendance. This finding was consistent with earlier research on spectator attendance and concurred that incorporating traditions was critical to creating a sense of social reinforcement. Perhaps the most interesting finding was

that schools that had a booster club had a negative relationship on attendance (Wells, Southall & Peng).

DeSchrive and Jensen (2002) further investigated the factors affecting spectator attendance in Division II college football. The team's record from the current season was weighted more heavily than the previous season's record in this model as it related to attendance. The researchers found that a positive relationship exists between spectator attendance and the two factors that are emphasized in this study, promotional activity, and on-field success.

### **Future of Spectator Motivation Research**

Several factors have been found to influence spectator attendance at sporting events. However, nearly all of the past research has focused on the individuals who are actually attending the games, and as a result there is little known about the non-attendees who arguably could provide much greater insight into solving the problems facing sports marketers. This void in the literature provides the rationale for the current research which goes beyond traditional spectator attendance studies. Based on a review of spectator motivation literature, the following research questions were developed to formulate this study.

[RQ 1] What are the primary factors that influence college students and employees decision to attend football games?

[RQ 2] Are there significant differences in the factors influencing attendance at football games when focusing on the background information [2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E] of the respondents?

[2A] Gender

[2B] Ethnic background

[2C] University affiliation

[2D] Game attendance prior to university enrollment/employment

[2E] Games attended last season

## **Method**

The initial version of the survey was created based on a review of the relevant literature and discussions with industry experts. In addition, once the initial version of the instrument was finalized, it was reviewed by a panel of experts (athletic department employees, professors, and graduate students in content area) to ensure that the instrument was valid based on the goals of the research. Feedback was taken from this panel and a final version was created incorporating the suggested alterations. The sample for this study was collected through an online survey of university students and employees who were identified as the primary sample for the research. The participants were chosen because they not only had a vested interest in athletic department events, but represented a key segment for building loyal consumers in the future. The university directory was employed to send out the emails to all of the potential respondents. Individuals were asked in an introductory letter to participate in this survey which would be used to enhance the gameday experience at future college football games. An inducement was offered as an incentive for respondents to fully complete the survey.

**Instrumentation.** The survey was created to accumulate specific information concerning demographics and attendance factors of students and university employees at football games. The initial portion of the survey established categorical information by asking questions in a multiple choice format. These questions addressed the following

variables: gender, ethnic background, university affiliation, college football attendance prior to enrollment or employment, and football game attendance this past season. The attendance factors section consisted of a 5 point Likert-scale [1 = Not at all influential to 5 = Very influential] where respondents were asked to rate statements within six different categories. The attendance factor categories that were measured included stadium (cleanliness, amenities, seats, staff), concessions (variety, price, quality, wait-time), merchandise sales (variety, price, quality, wait-time), pre-game activities (tailgating, music, band, videos, national anthem), in-game experience (videoboard, sponsorship, promotions, band, P.A. announcer, mascot, cheerleaders dance team), and other aspects (socializing, cheer participation, excitement, escape, head coach, star players, win/loss record, opponent).

**Data Analysis.** To assess the relative influence of each attendance factor on the entire population, descriptive statistics were utilized to establish overall mean scores. A one-way repeated subjects ANOVA was employed to evaluate the significance of the attendance factors. Also, each attendance factor was analyzed based on the demographic variable of gender, university affiliation, ethnicity, prior attendance, and attendance last season. Mixed-model ANOVAs were performed identifying the attendance factors influencing level on college students and employees. Therefore, these various statistical analyses used in conjunction with this study provided a chance to better recognize the factors that influence attendance at college football games.

## **Results**

The focus of this study was to examine the primary factors that influence attendance at college football games and assess the difference in the factors when focusing on

background information. Several analyses of variances were utilized to determine the relationships between the different factors.

There were a total of 998 subjects who completed the online survey. Of these individuals, 52% of the respondents were male while 48% were female. The large majority of the respondents were Caucasian (81%) with African-Americans (7%) and a combination of all other ethnicities (11%) making up the remaining respondents. The respondents' affiliation with the university rendered 59% employees, 26% undergraduate students, and 15% post-graduate students. In addition, the data showed that 61% of those surveyed had never attended a college football game prior to their time at the university. For home game attendance during the past football season, 34% of the participants did not attend any games, 30% attended 1-2 games, and 37% went to more than 3 games. The influence of these attendance factors on the respondents is further explored in the subsequent sections.

**Overall Attendance Factor Influence.** Descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean and standard deviations for each of the attendance factors as they relate to each other and the population of the study. The most influential attendance factors are sorted by the highest means in table 1. A one-way repeated subjects ANOVA was employed to address Research Question 1 which concerns the primary factors influencing attendance at college football games. We observed a significant interaction effect [ $F(6, 2265) = 184.47, p < 0.001$ ] such that only “in-game entertainment” ( $M = 2.40$ ) and “pre-game entertainment” ( $M = 2.37$ ) were not significantly different from each other.

Table 1  
*Summary of Overall Attendance Factor Mean Scores*

Attendance Factors (N = 949)	M	SD
Other Aspects	3.11	1.02

Stadium	2.80	1.03
Concessions	2.63	1.21
In-Game Entertainment	2.40	1.03
Pre-Game Activities	2.37	1.07
Merchandise Sales	1.88	1.19

*Note.* The scale ranged from “Not At All Influential” (1) to “Very Influential” (5)  
 $F = 184.468, p < 0.001$ , Tukey post hoc critical value = .15

**Demographic Influence.** In order to answer Research Question 2, the attendance factors were investigated in relation to the background of the respondents. A series of mixed-model ANOVAs were conducted using the demographic categories of gender, university affiliation, ethnicity, prior game attendance, and attendance last season. Each independent variable within the particular categories was compared to the same dependent variables which were the six attendance factors.

In table 2, we observed a significant interaction effect [ $F(12, 2250) = 183.86, p < 0.001$ ] such that males felt “pre-game activities” ( $M = 2.73$ ) were more important than female’s perception of “pre-game activities” ( $M = 2.38$ ). The “other aspects” factor was greater than all of the attendance factors regardless of gender.

Table 2  
*Relationship between Attendance Factors Based on Gender*

Attendance Factor	Gender	
	Females (N = 491) M (SD)	Males (N = 458) M (SD)
Other Aspects	3.07 (1.01)	3.17 (1.04)
Stadium	2.83 (1.00)	2.77 (1.07)
Concessions	1.77 (1.11)	2.00 (1.27)
In-Game Entertainment	2.36 (1.01)	2.44 (1.04)
Pre-Game Activities	2.38 (1.07)	2.73 (1.08)
Merchandise Sales	2.61 (1.07)	2.66 (1.23)

*Note.* The scale ranged from “Not At All Influential” (1) to “Very Influential” (5)  
 $F = 183.86, p < 0.001$ ; Tukey post hoc critical value = 0.24



In table 3, we observed a significant interaction effect [ $F(18, 2267) = 132.33, p < 0.001$ ] such that undergraduates (UG) felt “in-game entertainment” ( $M = 2.61$ ) and “pre-game activities” ( $M = 2.69$ ) were more important than faculty and staff (F&S) for the same attendance factors ( $M = 2.30$  and  $M = 2.24$ ) respectively. The “merchandise sales” factor was valued the least of all the attendance factors for all groups affiliated with the university.

Table 3

*Relationship between Attendance Factors Based on University Affiliation*

Attendance Factor	University Affiliation		
	UG <sup>a</sup> (N = 247) M (SD)	PG <sup>b</sup> (N = 141) M (SD)	F&S <sup>c</sup> (N = 550) M (SD)
Other Aspects	3.27 (1.06)	3.23 (1.01)	3.04 (1.01)
Stadium	2.68 (1.02)	2.84 (1.01)	2.83 (1.04)
Concessions	2.57 (1.25)	2.71 (1.18)	2.63 (1.20)
In-Game Entertainment	2.61 (1.05)	2.50 (1.05)	2.30 (1.00)
Pre-Game Activities	2.69 (1.10)	2.41 (1.10)	2.24 (1.03)
Merchandise Sales	1.93 (1.25)	1.95 (1.28)	1.83 (1.14)

*Note.* The scale ranged from “Not At All Influential” (1) to “Very Influential” (5).

$F = 132.33, p < 0.005$ ; Tukey post hoc critical value = 0.31

<sup>a</sup>Refers to undergraduate students in freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years.

<sup>b</sup>Refers to post-graduate students in graduate and professional schools.

<sup>c</sup>Refers to faculty, staff, and other employees of the university.

In table 4, Caucasian and African-American respondents were the only ethnicities included in the statistical analysis because of the relatively small sample sizes of the other ethnic groups. We observed a significant interaction effect [ $F(5, 1983) = 40.608, p < 0.001$ ] such that Caucasians ( $M = 3.12$ ) and African-Americans ( $M = 3.57$ ) felt the “other aspects” factor was more important than any of the attendance factors. Furthermore, African-Americans valued all of the attendance factors more than Caucasians.

Table 4

*Relationship between Attendance Factors and Ethnicity*

Ethnicity

Attendance Factor	Caucasian (N = 769)	African American (N = 71)	<u>Asian</u> (N = 42)	Other (N = 27)	Hispanic (N = 22)	Native American (N = 16)
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Other Aspects	3.12 (0.98)	3.57 (1.10)	3.31 (1.26)	2.38 (0.99)	3.17 (1.08)	2.23 (1.31)
Stadium	2.77 (1.00)	3.24 (1.19)	3.11 (1.20)	2.78 (0.94)	2.73 (1.05)	2.19 (1.31)
Concessions	2.57 (1.18)	3.29 (1.28)	3.22 (1.26)	2.45 (1.16)	2.89 (1.22)	2.21 (1.31)
In-game Entertainment	2.36 (0.99)	2.78 (1.21)	2.87 (1.22)	2.23 (0.93)	2.68 (0.83)	1.98 (1.22)
Pre-game Activities	2.34 (1.03)	2.71 (1.37)	2.66 (1.46)	2.13 (0.91)	2.67 (0.93)	2.15 (1.24)
Merchandise Sales	1.79 (1.13)	2.66 (1.45)	2.54 (1.53)	1.96 (0.96)	1.99 (1.28)	1.98 (1.51)

*Note.* The scale ranged from “Not At All Influential” (1) to “Very Influential” (5)  
 $F = 40.61$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Tukey post hoc critical value = 0.26

In table 5, we observed a significant interaction effect [ $F(5, 2258) = 181.25$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ] such that respondents who attended games previously felt “in-game entertainment” ( $M = 2.54$ ) was more important than those respondents who had never been to a game before ( $M = 2.29$ ).

Table 5

*Relationship between Attendance Factors Based on Prior Attendance*

Attendance Factor	Prior Attendance	
	Yes (N = 369) M (SD)	No (N = 574) M (SD)
Other Aspects	3.23 (0.97)	3.03 (1.04)
Stadium	2.83 (1.00)	2.76 (1.05)
Concessions	2.63 (1.20)	2.61 (1.21)
In-game Entertainment	2.54 (1.08)	2.29 (1.01)
Pre-game Activities	2.44 (1.06)	2.30 (1.07)
Merchandise Sales	1.89 (1.21)	1.86 (1.18)

*Note.* The scale ranged from “Not At All Influential” (1) to “Very Influential” (5)  
 $F = 181.25$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Tukey post hoc critical value = 0.24

In table 6, we observed a significant interaction effect [ $F(18, 2167) = 181.86$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ] such that those respondents who attended 1-2 games ( $M = 2.45$ ) and 3+ games ( $M = 2.74$ ) last season felt “in-game entertainment” was more important than those who hadn’t

attended any games (M = 2.06). Respondents valued “pre-game activities” more if they went to 3+ games (M = 2.71) as opposed to having attended 1-2 games (M = 2.34).

Table 6

*Relationship between Attendance Factors Based on Last Year’s Attendance*

Attendance Factor	Last Year’s Attendance		
	0 Games (N = 320) M (SD)	1-2 Games (N = 280) M (SD)	3+ Games (N = 346) M (SD)
Other Aspects	2.76 (1.12)	3.19 (0.86)	3.47 (0.89)
Stadium	2.65 (1.10)	2.95 (0.92)	2.83 (0.98)
Concessions	2.61 (1.27)	2.76 (1.16)	2.60 (1.19)
In-game Entertainment	2.06 (0.98)	2.45 (0.97)	2.74 (0.99)
Pre-game Activities	2.05 (1.02)	2.34 (1.02)	2.71 (1.02)
Merchandise Sales	1.92 (1.22)	1.93 (1.21)	1.80 (1.19)

Note. The scale ranged from “Not At All Influential” (1) to “Very Influential” (5)  
F = 181.86, p < 0.001; Tukey post hoc critical value = 0.31

## Discussion

Researchers have been studying the habits of consumers for many years now. This conceptual framework is rooted in early economic choice theory. Taussig (1912) stated the following in *The Principles of Economics*: “An object can have no value unless it has utility. No one will give anything for an article unless it yields him satisfaction” (p. 120). Recently, researchers have begun to take into account the large amount of information available on the different options that consumers have in the marketplace. Modern consumer choice theory has been defined as the study of “selection, consumption, and disposal of products and services” by consumers (Bettman, Francis-Luces, & Payne, 1998). Individuals are thought to continually exhibit behavior based on the maximization of their preferences (McFadden, 1986).

The consumer choice theory can be applied to the findings in this study by analyzing which attendance factors were rated highest by respondents. Marketers can utilize this

information to develop strategies targeted to better satisfy the wants and needs of the students and university employees. Since the 'Other Aspects' attendance factor was consistently rated highly, it could be examined even further to uncover the most influential items within that important factor. Likewise, these strategies should take into account previous spectator motivation research. Sloan (1989) found that fan motivation differs from situation to situation and sport to sport. While James and Ridinger (2002) explained that it was important for sport marketers to profile consumer segments and develop specific promotional strategies to better connect with fans.

Demographic variables have been proven to affect fan motivation by researchers such as Snipes and Ingram (2007) who suggested that females value entertainment more than males. However, the current findings indicate that entertainment is actually more important to males. Regarding marketing to certain groups of fans based on university affiliation, research has shown that fans with lower education levels are responsive to participation based cheering and school spirit activities (Snipes & Ingram). This research is consistent with the current study such that undergraduates rated 'In-Game Entertainment' and 'Pre-Game Activities' higher than post-graduates as well as faculty and university staff. Zhang et. All (2001) determined that salubrious effects, achievement seeking activities, and entertainment are most predictive of fan attendance. In the current study, similar items can be found under the 'Other Aspects' factor which both Caucasians and African-Americans rated the highest.

Lastly, college football attendance research has stressed the importance of incorporating traditions in order to create a sense of reinforcement (Wells, Southall & Peng, 2000). The present results show that fans are influenced more by entertainment as they

attend an increased number of games. Although, marketers still need to account for the inherent relationship between spectator attendance and on-field success (DeSchriver & Jensen, 2002). Despite being out of the marketer's direct control, the success of football teams were rated as very influential to respondents of the current study.

### **Practical Recommendations**

The research shows that fans value what happens before kickoff just as much as what happens during the games since they rated both 'In-Game Entertainment' and 'Pre-Game Activities' similarly. The tailgating atmosphere might be reviewed to see how it could be improved in the future. Safer parking lots, more portable restrooms or even Wi-Fi could be explored as possible upgrades. Certain changes according to survey results might be implemented such as deemphasizing sponsor messages during the game in favor of more out-of-town scores and game statistics. In regards to gender, only the "pre-game activities" attendance factor was significantly different for men and women. Otherwise, each gender rated the level of influence for each of the remaining categories in a consistent manner. Sports marketers may use this to create plans that don't segment based on gender at all. A more gender-neutral approach might end up saving time and money in the long run.

Instead, resources could be applied to strategies centered on segmenting based on other demographic factors like age and race. The ideal target market according to this research might be undergraduate and post-graduate students. This group should be highly coveted since they may potentially be season-ticket holders and big-time donors. This group favors "in-game entertainment" to faculty and staff members which may be exploited by having national anthem singers or groups for marquee games to get those fans more energized. Since there were significant differences between African-Americans and

Caucasians in all of the attendance factors, it appears necessary to fragment those ethnicities when devising marketing strategies. If after more investigation African-Americans are found to better respond with the athletic ability of the players and the excitement of the games, promotional videos with those specific features may be created.

The categories of “attendance prior to enrollment” and “last year’s attendance” had comparable trends. If respondents had attended games, they tended to rate the attendance factors higher overall. This data could be explained by more experienced fans having a heightened attention to detail when at games. This group is no longer just there to see the action on the field. These fans are more vigilant to everything that is happening on game days. Therefore, marketers need to constantly be looking to improve the fan experience each and every football season.

### **Limitations & Future Research**

The current study is restricted only to one, large public institution in the southern part of the United States. It may be useful to expand prospective studies to include private and public universities in other areas of the country. Also, the targeted respondents in this research all had ties to a particular university as a student or employee. General fans may have completely contrary opinions on the game day experience if they were surveyed. Furthermore, scholars should attempt to study a more ethnically diverse population than the current study. A large sample of the ethnic minorities would allow for much more conclusive results that could in turn be developed into marketing plans targeting those exact ethnicities. Finally, each individual item within the different attendance factors could be examined further.

### **Conclusions**

Even though college football attendance has continued to grow in recent years, the sport is at an important crossroads with many financial challenges that must be overcome. Fans now have more entertainment options than ever and access to the games from anywhere. Sports marketers should view this time of prosperity in the football landscape as an opportunity to capitalize on this popularity. While fans are on campus and basically captive audiences, they should be constantly reminded of how truly unique the game day experience can be. Whether it's making the seats just as comfortable as their couches at home or allowing fans to conveniently order food from their smart phones, the entire experience should be continually scrutinized and improved all year round. The results of this study show that the non-attendees are just as important as the loyal fan base. Increased focus on this group could result in greater fan loyalty, revenue, and marketing efficiency. Ultimately, this might even lead to financial sustainability for the entire athletic department.

## APPENDIX A

### SURVEY INTRODUCTORY LETTER

December 5, 2011

Dear UNC student, faculty or staff member,

My name is Scott Palanjian and I am a graduate student in Sport Administration at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). I am interested in gaining an understanding of the influential factors that affect attendance at UNC football games. In order to achieve this objective, I am conducting an online survey that relates to specific attendance factors.

The survey will only take approximately 10-15 minutes of your time and your responses will remain confidential at all times. If you have any questions or concerns during the study, please feel free to contact me any time by email. Further, you may also contact the UNC Institutional Review Board (IRB) by phone (919-966-3113) or email ([IRB\\_subjects@unc.edu](mailto:IRB_subjects@unc.edu)) if you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject.

In order to make this worth your time, I will be offering a UNC prize package to the winner of a raffle. Please supply your email address at the end of the survey to be entered into the drawing. Your email address will not be used any other purpose. I appreciate you using your valuable time to assist me in my efforts! .

Your participation is voluntary, and you may skip any question for any reason. By clicking the link to the survey below, you agree to be a participant in this research study.

Sincerely,

Scott Palanjian  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
M.A. Candidate, Sport Administration 2012



**APPENDIX B**

**UNC FOOTBALL GAME DAY EXPERIENCE SURVEY**

*Please complete this brief survey which could help the UNC athletic department in future decisions regarding football game day improvements. The information you provide will be confidential and will only be reported in aggregate. After taking this survey, you may provide your contact information if you would like to be entered into a raffle for UNC autographed items. Thank you for your participation.*

**Background Information (For classification purposes only)**

- 1. What is your gender?
  - Male
  - Female
  
- 2. What is your ethnic background?
  - Caucasian
  - Hispanic
  - African American
  - Asian/Pacific Islander
  - Native American
  - Other
  
- 3. Are you a member of a fraternity or sorority?
  - Yes
  - No
  
- 4. Did you attend any UNC football games prior to enrollment at UNC?
  - Yes
  - No
  
- 5. How many home UNC football games did you attend this past season?
  - 0
  - 1-2
  - 3-4
  - 5-6
  - 7

*Using the following scale, please rate the level of influence that the following aspects would have on your decision to attend future UNC football games.*

<b>6. Stadium</b>	<b>1</b> <b>Not at all</b> <b>influential</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Slightly</b> <b>influential</b>	<b>3</b> <b>Neutral</b>	<b>4</b> <b>Somewhat</b> <b>influential</b>	<b>5</b> <b>Very</b> <b>influential</b>
Overall cleanliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(seating areas, concourse, restrooms)					
Seat comfort & space	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staff assistance (ticket takers, security, ushers)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Convenience of amenities (gate, concession stands, restrooms, merchandise tent locations)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of video boards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seat location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Standing vs. sitting options (in the student section)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. What, if anything, did you specifically like or dislike about the stadium?

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<b>8. Concessions</b>	<b>1 Not at all influential</b>	<b>2 Slightly influential</b>	<b>3 Neutral</b>	<b>4 Somewhat influential</b>	<b>5 Very influential</b>
Variety of food & beverage options	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Price of items	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of items	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Length of wait time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. What, if anything, did you specifically like/dislike about the concessions?

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<b>10. Merchandise Sales</b>	<b>1 Not at all influential</b>	<b>2 Slightly influential</b>	<b>3 Neutral</b>	<b>4 Somewhat influential</b>	<b>5 Very influential</b>
Selection of available items	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Price of products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Quality of products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Length of wait time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. What, if anything, did you specifically like/dislike about the merchandise sales?

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<b>12. Pre-Game Activities</b>	<b>1 Not at all influential</b>	<b>2 Slightly influential</b>	<b>3 Neutral</b>	<b>4 Somewhat influential</b>	<b>5 Very influential</b>
Tar Heel Town	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tailgating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stadium music during warm-ups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Band performance on the field	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Team entrance video	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Players running out of the tunnel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
National anthem	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. What, if anything, did you specifically like/dislike about the pre-game activities?

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<b>14. In-Game Entertainment</b>	<b>1 Not at all influential</b>	<b>2 Slightly influential</b>	<b>3 Neutral</b>	<b>4 Somewhat influential</b>	<b>5 Very influential</b>
Videoboard highlights & replays	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fan interaction videoboard elements (photo/text submissions, helmet game)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Detailed statistical information on videoboards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Display of other football game scores	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sponsor messages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other videoboard elements (I'm a Tar Heel, Student-athlete spotlight)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
On-field promotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Halftime band performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public address announcer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Music selection during breaks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sound effects (bells)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rameses mascot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Live ram mascot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cheerleaders team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dance team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. What, if anything, did you specifically like/dislike about the in-game entertainment?

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<b>16. Other Aspects</b>	<b>1 Not at all influential</b>	<b>2 Slightly influential</b>	<b>3 Neutral</b>	<b>4 Somewhat influential</b>	<b>5 Very influential</b>
Socialization and interaction with other students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participation in student section cheers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Athletic ability of the players	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Excitement of the games	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Escape from stress & tension	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to see star players	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of opponent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Head coach's reputation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Team's win-loss record	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of other entertainment options	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. What could UNC do to increase the likelihood of you attending future football games?

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### **Supplementary Information**

How did you typically learn about the football game schedule?

- Tarheelblue.com
- The Daily Tar Heel newspaper
- Radio
- TV
- Football schedule card or poster
- Friends or family
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- N/A

When did you usually arrive at UNC football games last season?

- 1 to 1.5 hours before kickoff
- 30 minutes to 1 hour before kickoff
- 15 minutes to 30 minutes before kickoff
- Less than 15 minutes before kickoff
- After kickoff
- N/A

**To be eligible for the prize raffle, please fill out your contact information below.**

- Name:* \_\_\_\_\_
- Email address:* \_\_\_\_\_

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