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Session 27: Marketing Presentation (25-minute)
Saturday, June 2, 2007 11:30 AM - 11:55 AM

What motivates individuals to attend sports events is critically important to the sports event owners and stakeholders. In a country with ever-increasingly diverse consumer markets, the sport marketing professional must understand these markets so that strategies can be specific in order to affect success. There is some research that shows that sport consumption may have some cultural basis for different markets. For one ethnic minority, the African American, research shows a viable market potential for sport consumption (Armstrong, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2002; Zhang, Wall, and Smith, 2000). Moreover, one study found that cultural factors significantly influence African Americans' motives for attending black college football games (Armstrong, 2002). However, all research findings agree that there is not yet enough research involving the African American sport consumer. Therefore, the aim of this study was to explore the African American sport consumer. This research will build upon and further the current understanding and knowledge of African Americans and sports. The research can benefit the event organizers and stakeholders as well as offer increased understanding of the African American and sports for the field of sport marketing and management.

The event selected was the annual football game called the Atlanta Football Classic, an event that began in 1989. This event was selected for several reasons, including the following: the Atlanta Football Classic is an annual football game between two Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) - Florida A & M University (FAMU) and Tennessee State University (TSU); the event is well attended and is now called the "Super Bowl of Black College Football," according to the Department of Trade & Tourism, the city of Atlanta is the number one travel destination for African Americans; the event is preceded by a week of cultural events, such as workshops, seminars, fairs, and socials; attendance during same week is estimated at 250,000; and, claims are made that the event is the third largest in the state and accounts for $15 million in economic impact each day over a two-day period (www.atlantafootballclassic.com; www.gadome.com/events/2006afc.html). It was determined that this event offered a special opportunity for the purposes of this research.

The purpose of this study was to examine factors that affect spectators' attendance at the Atlanta Classic Football Game from 2003 to 2005 at the Georgia Dome. Four categories of variables that affect decision-making in attending identified in prior research were examined: (a) game attractiveness; (b) economic factors; (c) sociodemographic factors; and (d) audience references (Green, 1995; Lu, 2001; Pitts, Lu, Lucas, & Ayers, 2006). Survey methodology was used and a questionnaire was developed based on prior research.

Among the findings were the following. An analysis of comparing the demographics from 2003 to 2005 based on descriptive statistics revealed several trends: (1) more females attended the AFC tournament -- there was a significant increasing from the 50% in 2003 to 58% in 2004, and 61% in 2005; (2) more married/partner attendance -- there was a 7% increase from 2003 to the 40% in 2005; (3) fewer people aged 30 and under attended; (4) annual household income has increased; (5) More African American fans went to the game, it was a 4% increase from 93% in 2003 to 97% in 2005.

From 2003 to 2005, there were many similar factors that influenced attendance and game day experience, such as ticket price and the opponent. The team's win-loss record was of least influence. On the other hand, a chance to see historically black college football, the halftime entertainment, and the overall atmosphere were strong influences to attend. Repeated measures were also utilized to examine the factors (complete detailed findings will be presented.)

The Atlanta Football Classic is a traditional Historically Black College and University football game event, offered specifically for the African American market. It has a long and rich history and serves as the focal point around which people come together to
socialize for many reasons and celebrate their culture. This supports earlier research findings. There are ethnically identified sociocultural factors that influence African American sport consumption. Event organizers and stakeholders can use this new information to inform future event strategies. In addition, sport marketing and management academicians and students benefit from the new information and knowledge gained from this research.

References
www.atlantafootballclassic.com website.