What Are the Most Important Factors For Maximizing Fan Attendance at Sporting Events?

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BACKGROUND

As an avid sports fan for many years, I have always been fascinated by the environment at sporting events. This environment, reliant on fan attendance and involvement, is fickle and subject to change that is dependent on many factors. Some variables are unpredictable and cannot be accommodated; however, some factors are controllable.

The question I would like to address in my research is, “What factors are most vital for increasing attendance at sporting events?” While it seems obvious that if a team is successful, then the attendance will be up, it may not be that simple. When fans attend games, they go to be entertained. Most would agree that close games are more entertaining, so it is possible that a team would draw more fans as an average team consistently in down-to-the-wire games than a dominant team that won nearly every game with little opposition and no suspense? Fans also attend games to see their favorite players. If a team’s front office personnel decide to get rid of a player fans adore, would attendance decrease even if the move improved the team’s record?

These questions can be vital for appeasing and understanding your fans. Because the sporting industry is so fan driven, the ability to make the fans happy can make or break a franchise. By selling tickets and generating more revenue, a team has more resources to use to pursue growth and success. This task is harder for some teams due to factors such as location, demographics, and tradition, which is why teams must do their best to control what they can. Finding out how attendance can be maximized is a topic I hope to better understand.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An interesting finding in past research on maximizing fan attendance at sporting events has been the close game factor (Levin 2009). This raises the question of what type of team will achieve optimal attendance at its games (Levin 2009). Would a dominant team accumulate the largest fan base by gaining loyalty from its fan base through consistent winning? One researcher suggests that fans would like to see a team that is more likely to be in a close, down-to-the-wire game (Levin 2009). While these games are more exciting and do generate more interest than a game in which the home team routinely blows out its opponents, the fans are also more likely to go home disappointed if their team loses.

In modern day sports, is it possible that both college and professional athletes are so well coached and well prepared that no team is going to simply annihilate every opponent they face? Other research suggests the sheer talent and skill of every player that competes at a high level will automatically create suspense and a reason to watch until the final buzzer (Bat-Eli 2011). These factors could differ among college teams versus professional teams. It is very possible that college athletics are more likely to feature a wide disparity in skill level between teams’ players than in professional sports, causing wider margins of victory and more likelihood of a dominant team. The presence of students at a college game is also not to be overlooked. Many factors go into a college student attending his school’s sporting event (Ferreira 2001). The unpredictable behavior of a college student adds more variability to this debate. So can one assume that college students would prefer a close game, where the atmosphere is serious, or a blowout, where they can get away with playing around more while feeling less stress throughout the game?

Thus, the following factors will be included in my study in order to address my research question:

- Team success
- Suspense level of team’s games
- Fan’s satisfaction/disappointment post game
- Athlete level of performance, and
- Demographics of fan base

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SURVEY

Possible Topics To Cover In Survey:
- Is fan male or female?
- Length of fanhood
- Average number of games viewed on television per year
- Does the fan typically leave before the game is over?
- Favorite player(s)
- What personnel decisions would make one attend fewer games?
- Personal commitment to being a fan