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The Kansas Shrine Bowl and consumer behavior: A report of findings

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Introduction

The 40th annual Kansas Shrine Bowl (KSB) was held on July 27, 2013 at Yager stadium on the campus of Washburn University in Topeka, Ks. The annual event brings together Kansans from all over the state for a variety of events including an all-star football game, various sports camps, a band camp, and other events.

The purpose of this research report is to quantitatively assess, identify, and provide basic consumer behavior information regarding Kansas Shrine Bowl respondents' perceptions, demographics, and behaviors. Working with event organizers, researchers from the Partnership for the Advancement of Sport Management (PASM) housed within the Department of Sport Management at Wichita State University were contacted in order to develop a collaborative consumer behavior research project in an attempt to provide event organizers with basic information, which can inform future event decisions. While consumer behavior research/studies focus on a variety of topics, the following basic research questions or areas were examined:

- 1) What is the demographic makeup of the Kansas Shrine Bowl sample?
- 2) What are respondents' sponsorship recognition rates and purchasing activities?
- 3) What are respondents' awareness of Kansas Shrine Bowl charity activities?
- 4) What are respondents' awareness of Kansas Shrine Bowl events, outside of the football game?
- 5) Regarding communication, how did respondents hear about the event and obtain their game tickets?

Methods

Instrument

Working with event organizers PASM researchers developed a survey instrument addressing the aforementioned research questions or areas. The instrument was developed, in part, based upon the unique needs of the event, previous studies done by PASM researchers involving consumer behavior, and the current literature regarding consumer behavior survey development and best practices. The resulting instrument contained questions addressing demographics, respondents' recognition of sponsors, current and future product or services purchasing activity, awareness of KSB events, awareness of KSB charitable activities, and aspects of communication, which involved how they obtained their football tickets, and how they were informed of the event.

Sample & Procedure

During the day of data collection, PASM researchers surveyed football game attendees in the seating areas prior to the game's start. Researchers worked in two-person teams distributing informed consent and surveys separately. Respondents would sign the informed consent, which was gathered by a separate researcher whom was gathering completed surveys. Informed consent forms were kept in separate bags so that responses and identifying information could not be matched up. Respondents were informed that researchers were working with the event and separate research teams canvassed opposite sides of the football stadium where the game was being held. Data collection ceased when the announcement the game began in 10 minutes was given. After data collection, 131 surveys were analyzed and constitute the research sample. Surveys were coded by researchers and entered into an electronic database, which was analyzed by SPSS (Version 20). Both the aforementioned survey instrument and data collection/analysis processes received university IRB approval.

Results

Survey results are broken down into four basic categories in order to better understand the obtained responses. These categories include: demographics, sponsorship and purchasing activity, awareness, and communication. Regarding demographics, the sample contained almost equal amounts of males and females (48.9% vs. 47.3%, with 3.8% skipping the question). Respondents tended to be older with over 30% of the sample

self-reporting their age to be between 50 and 55 years old; almost 20% was 60 or older, and almost 20% were between 40 and 49 years old. The percentages for both the age and gender categories were expected, since these responses indicate the traditional family atmosphere often associated with high school athletic events, such as parents and grandparents.

Respondents' education and income levels are associated with, and serve as proxies for, the concept of socio-economic status (i.e. social class). Over 84% of the sample had at least some college education with college graduates making up 30.5%. An additional 22.1% of the sample had a graduate degree, which might indicate why the self-reported incomes of survey respondents were so heavily skewed to levels traditionally associated with the upper-middle and upper classes. Specifically, almost 30% of the sample reported income levels between \$40,000 and \$69,999 per year, with almost 40% of the sample reporting income levels between \$70,000 and \$199,999 per year. (See table 1.) It can be hypothesized that the socio-demographic impact of education and income level influence purchasing activity.

Table 1 – Sample demographics: Gender, age, education and income		
	Freq (n)	%
*Gender		
Male	64	48.9
Female	62	47.3
*Age		
18-23 yrs	4	3.1
24-29 yrs	9	6.9
30-39 yrs	21	16
40-49 yrs	26	19.8
50-59 yrs	40	30.5
60 or older	24	18.3
*Education		
No high school	5	3.8
High school	10	7.6
Some college	42	32
College degree	40	30.5
Graduate degree	29	22.1
*Income		
Less than \$40,000	15	11.5
\$40-69,999	39	29.8
\$70-99,999	27	20.6
\$100-199,999	23	17.6
Over \$200,000	8	6.1
<i>*Percentages do not add up to 100% due to missing or skipped questions</i>		

The category of sponsorship and purchasing activity includes sponsorship recognition rates and the impact of sponsors' presence upon current or future purchases. Almost 75% of respondents recognized the title sponsor, Kansas Shriners, from the list of sponsor. The next most highly recognized sponsor was Cox Communications (58.8%) followed by Best Western hotel accommodations (33.6%). Catch-it Kansas, Direct TV, FCA, the Holiday Inn, and Via Christi Hospital were all recognized between 20% and 29%. (See table 2.)

Table 2 – Percent respondents recognized event sponsors			
<i>Sponsors</i>	<i>Freq (n)</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>SD</i>
Best Western	44	33.6	0.474
Catch-it Kansas	38	29	0.456
Cox Communications	77	58.8	0.494
Direct TV	27	20.6	0.407
Farmers	55	42	0.495
Geico	23	17.6	0.381
FCA	37	28.2	0.451
Holiday Inn	35	26.7	0.444
Kansas Sport Info	10	7.6	0.267
Kansas Star Casino	11	8	0.278
Sac & Fox	10	7.6	0.266
Shriners	98	74.8	0.435
Via Christi	29	22.1	0.416
Vype	16	12.2	0.328

Regarding respondents' likelihood of choosing goods or services from KSB sponsor (as compared to another competitive brand), almost 60% reported yes with nearly 40% reporting it did not matter if the brand/service was from a KSB sponsor. Finally, over 25% of the sample reported they are planning on purchasing either electronics or home improvement products in the near future, with almost one-third of the sample (32.1%) indicating they would be purchasing travel-related services (e.g. cruises, trips with hotel or car rentals, etc...). (See table 3.)

Table 3 – Percent of respondents planning on purchasing any of the following			
<i>Product or service</i>	<i>Freq (n)</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>SD</i>
Automobile	20	15.3	0.362
Electronics	36	27.5	0.448
Financial services	7	5.3	0.225
Fitness services	6	4.6	0.209
Furniture	21	16	0.935
Computer	21	16	0.368
Home	7	5.3	0.225
Home improvement products	35	26.7	0.444
Insurance	21	16	0.401
Travel	42	32.1	0.490

Results relating to general attitudes of ‘awareness’ were associated with respondents’ awareness of charitable works and Shrine Bowl events. For example, almost 95% of respondents reported they were, indeed, aware that all profits generated from the weekend’s activities go to the Shriner’s Hospital for Children with a similar percent of respondents noting they knew Shriner’s Hospital for Children do not charge families for medical services rendered. When it came to the weekend’s events, however, there was much variation in awareness rates outside of the actual game itself. As you might expect, between 80 and 90% of respondents were aware of the parade and football camp. Only about 65% of respondents were aware of the band camp with slightly under 60% aware of the cross country run/race. Only 45% of respondents were aware of the patient ambassador visitation opportunities and less than 20% recognized that a motorcycle show was part of the festivities. (See table 4.)

Table 4 – Percent of respondents aware of the following events			
<i>Kansas Shrine Bowl events</i>	<i>Freq (n)</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>SD</i>
Parade	117	89.3	0.310
Football camp	109	83.2	0.375
Motorcycle show	23	17.6	0.383
XC run	75	57.3	0.496
Band camp	85	64.9	0.479
Patient ambassador visitation	59	45	0.499

Finally, the last area of consumer behavior discussed in this report centers on communication. Specifically, questions were asked to ascertain how participants not only found out about the event, but also how they obtained their tickets. Traditional word of mouth seems to be a popular way to hear about the event with learning of the event from a player (39.7%), Shriner (26.7%), or band member (13.7%) being the most popular. Television advertisements were relatively important with almost 15% of respondents seeing a traditional TV ad. Regarding how they obtained tickets, the two most popular ways to get a ticket was from online purchases (32.8%) and from a Shriner (29%). Another strong category for obtaining tickets was the “other” category (22.9%), which could include a variety of activities, such as getting tickets from other attendees, players, or event organizers. (See tables 5 and 6.)

Table 5 – Percent for each category regarding how the heard of the event			
<i>Source of Information</i>	<i>Freq (n)</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>SD</i>
Newspaper ads	9	6.9	0.254
Radio ads	12	9.2	0.290
TV ads	18	13.7	0.345
Internet	9	6.9	0.253
Media coverage	10	7.6	0.266
Facebook	5	3.8	0.192
Shrine Bowl player	52	39.7	0.491
Shrine Bowl	35	26.7	0.444
Band member	19	14.5	0.353
Shrine Bowl	42	32.1	0.490
XC runner	8	6.1	0.240
Shriner	35	26.7	0.444
Word of mouth	17	13	0.337
Twitter	1	0.8	0.087
Other	17	13	0.404

Table 6 – Percent of how respondents obtained tickets

<i>Source for ticket</i>	<i>Freq (n)</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gate (day of event)	21	16	0.363
In advance online	43	32.8	0.471
From a Shriner	38	29	0.455
From a sponsor	10	7.6	0.266
Won through another group	0	0	0.000
Other	30	22.9	0.421

Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of the research was to identify KSB respondents' consumer behaviors, patterns, and perceptions. A secondary purpose was to bring together sport/entertainment event organizers with research experts in order to collaborate on a mutually beneficial project.

The following recommendations resulted from the study:

1. Opportunities exist for the KSB to leverage the attractive demographics of its fan base, which is mostly college educated (53% college degree or higher) and relatively affluent (44% at \$70,000 or higher income).
2. The fan demographics, combined with the fans' stated purchase intentions, bring to light a variety of sponsorship categories not currently filled. These include auto dealers, electronics retailers, home improvement retailers, home improvement services, furniture retailers, and travel service agencies.
3. The majority of fans indicated a likelihood to purchase products or services from a sponsor over a non-sponsor. This finding, combined with the demographics and purchase intentions, positions the KSB to craft highly attractive sponsorship proposals.
4. Based on the researchers' experience, the fans' awareness level regarding the event's support of Shriners' Hospital for Children is remarkably high. This is a major strength of the event, but sustained messaging will be required to maintain such levels of awareness.
5. The primary source of fan information about the event tends to be from direct participants. The KSB should continue to leverage such direct promotion through frequent communication with those audiences. A focus group regarding those participants' experiences may be helpful in identifying additional steps to take.
6. The lower response rates regarding other forms of promotion does not necessarily mean that such efforts should be discontinued. Television advertising in particular may be important to retain because it promotes not only fan attendance at the game but viewership of the game on television. Overall, a benefit/cost analysis may be in order to prioritize future promotional efforts.