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A SURVEY OF SELECTED FACTORS FOR FAMILIES AS RECREATIONAL SPECTATORS
AT PROFESSIONAL SPORTS EVENTS

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ABSTRACT

This article raises the question about the role of the family as spectators at sporting events. It was found that most professional sports organizations are not concerned about the family as a target market.

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Families appear to be missing from the equation for the success of professional sporting teams marketing plans for recreational spectators. The common joke that "I went to a fight, and a hockey game broke out" seems to be a common phenomenon in most every professional sport today. Texts such as Yeager's Seasons of Shame: The New Violence in Sports (and the numerous other texts and magazine articles) paint many pictures with words of lawless sport which is often mirrored in the stands with the consumption of alcoholic beverages and a similar or a more violent display of the lack of sportsmanship in the stands. These types of occurrences are something that evidently most spectators are accepting, have become calloused to, or just plain do not care about.

The author recently went to a football game with his family and has made the decision not to return. The majority of time spent at the ball park was used explaining why the people seated in front of us used profane words, smoked cigars and fought with one another. It was hardly the type of atmosphere that as a child I remember as common for sport. Sport is an activity where men are gentlemen and women are ladies, where the rules are more important than emotion, and where a boy or girl can model all that is good in a person. This is the type of situation I remember, whether in truth or fantasy. This is the type of situation that I would like to be characteristic of sport, so that it could be a place for families to recreate together and have a positive experience.

Obviously, the comments above are personal, weakly researched views, but in order to determine the importance of the family in the marketing plan of professional sports teams a simple five question survey was developed. The survey was mailed in the fall of 1985, to each of the major professional sports teams in football, basketball, baseball and ice hockey. The following questions were asked of the marketing director for each of the teams:

1. Does your organization currently have spectator areas specifically set aside for the use of families?
2. Does your organization sponsor special facilities for the use of families before or after games? (i.e. picnic areas)
3. Do you have specially priced tickets available for family purchase?
4. Do you have special events that attract families to your games?
5. Do you have special rules regarding the items (i.e. beer) that can be sold in the family spectator areas?

The survey instrument was returned by 20 of the 26 professional baseball teams (76.9%), 14 of the 23 professional basketball teams (60.8%), 16 of the 28 professional football teams (57.15), and 12 of the 21 professional ice hockey teams (57.1%). The overall response was 62 of 98 teams or 63.2%.

RESULTS

The survey revealed for question one related to specific family spectator areas that 10 (16%) of the 62 responding teams indicated they have family spectator areas; 52 (84%) teams indicated they did not. (See Table 1)

In question two, related to special facilities for families to use before and after games, 12 (19%) of the 62 teams had special facilities, 50 (81%) indicated that they did not. (See Table 2)

The response for question three, related to specially priced tickets for families, showed that 23 (37%) had specially priced tickets for families, and that 39 (63%) teams did not. (See Table 3)

Question four showed that special events to attract families were held by 44 (71%) of the teams while 18 (29%) of the teams did not have special activities. (See Table 4)

Question five is only pertinent if the teams responded positively to question 1. Of the 10 teams that responded positively to question one, only one team (10%) did not have rules for the sale of specific

items in the spectator areas; nine (90%) teams indicated that they did have rules for the sale of items in spectator areas.

A sort of sport yielded the results listed in Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8 for Football, Basketball, Baseball, and Ice Hockey, respectively.

CONCLUSION

There are many problems in sport today and this study identifies and defines to an extent the attitudes and marketing programs (or lack of programs) developed by professional sports teams for families. Families are not important from the perspective of revenue if all of the seats in the stadium are sold out, but they should be considered from other perspectives. Further study must be completed to determine if families should be or are of importance to professional sports teams and to what extent the team's administration should develop programs to accomodate them. This is a contemporary research topic that warrants further investigation by scholars of leisure studies.

Table 1

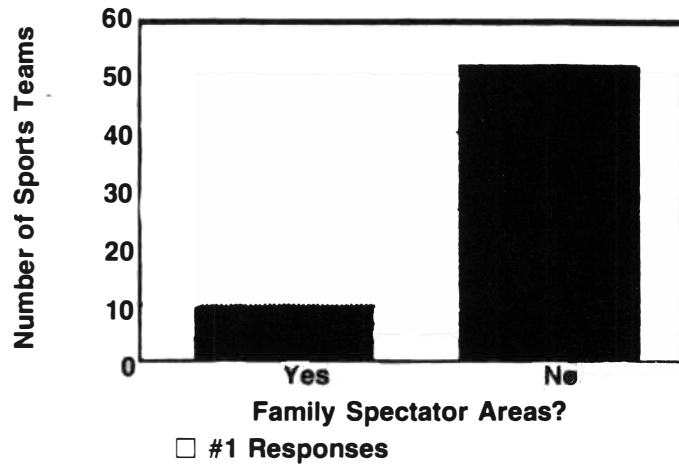


Table 2

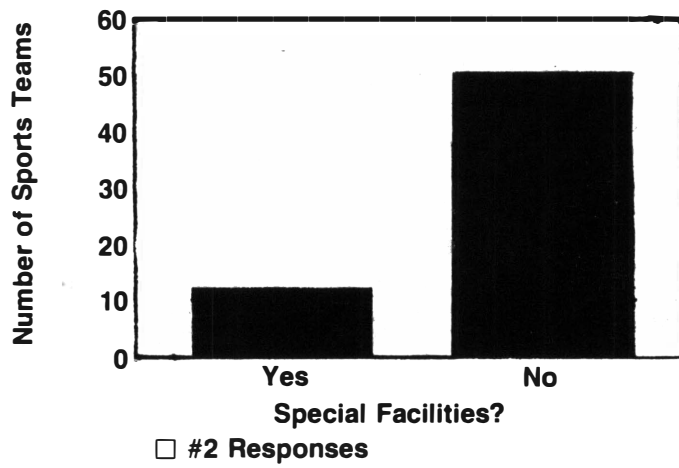


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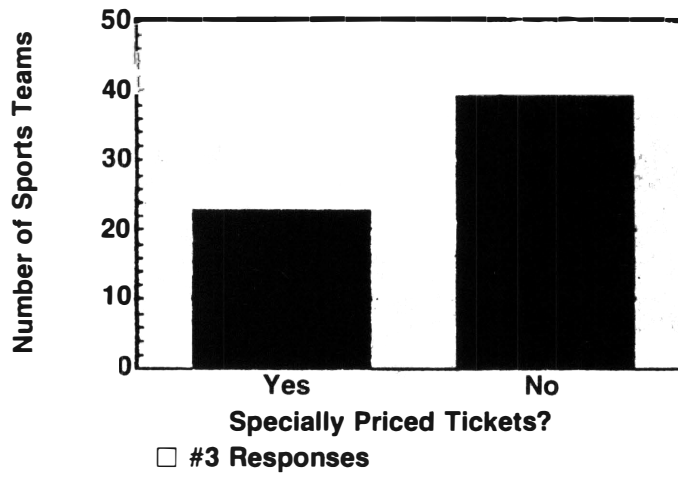
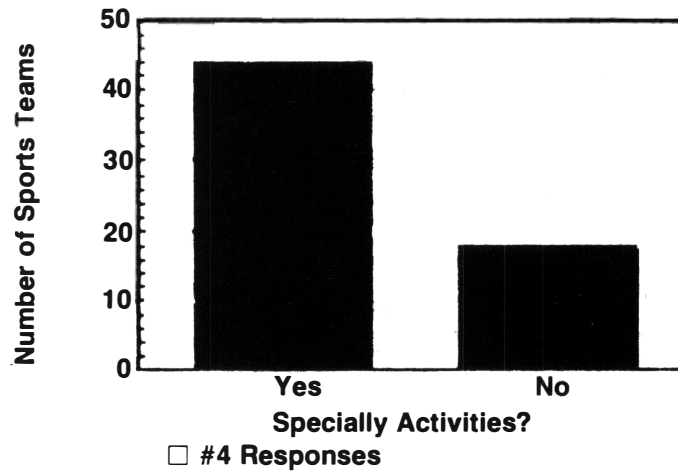
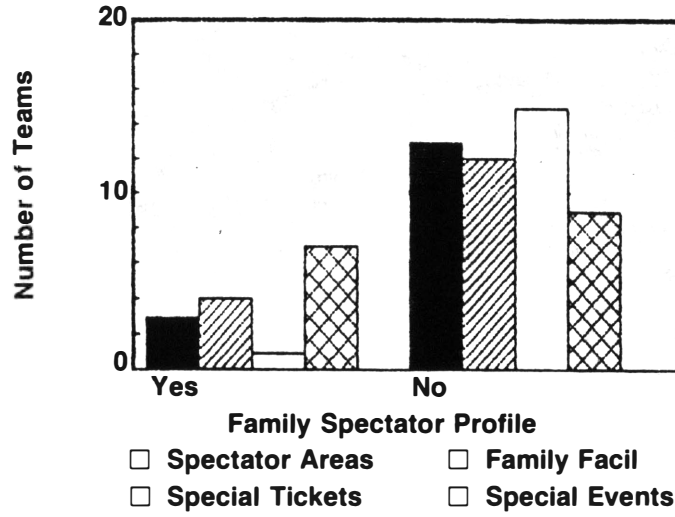


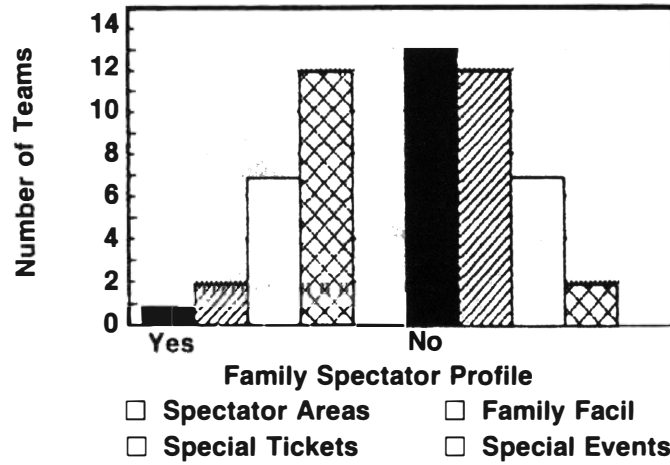
Table 4



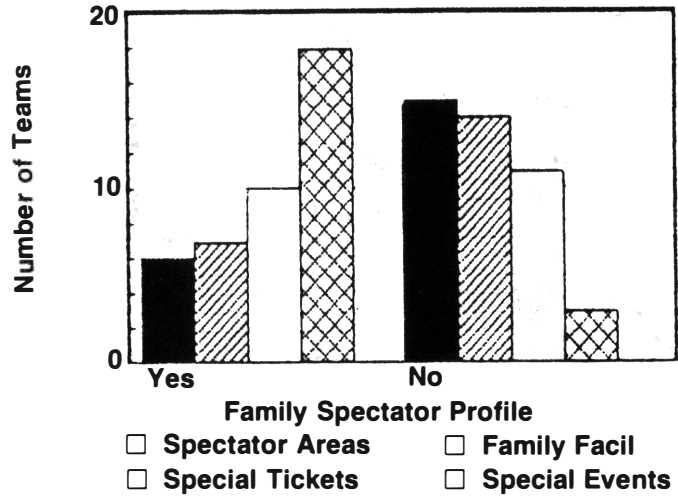
**Table 5
FOOTBALL**



**Table 6
BASKETBALL**



**Table 7
BASEBALL**



**Table 8
ICE HOCKEY**

