



CONSUMER INSIGHTS RESEARCH REPORT

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Ridhi Chibber, Konner Gross, Jazzmin Martinez, Caroline Monsour, Carmina Singleton

BRAND BACKGROUND

HISTORY OF THE BEARS

The Chicago Bears are one of the most iconic franchises in NFL history. Founded in 1920, the Chicago Bears are the second oldest NFL team in history alongside the Arizona Cardinals. The team was founded by A.E. Staley, a businessman in Illinois, and was sponsored by the Staley Starch Company. Staley then handed the team down to George Halas who was the head coach of the team until 1968. To this day, the Chicago Bears are still owned by members of the Staley family. In honor of A.E. Staley and all that he has done for the team, the Bears named their mascot after him, “Staley da Bear.”

The team leverages its notoriety to support numerous groups and organizations in the Chicagoland area. The Bears also have established a fund known as ‘Bears Care’ whose goal is to help disadvantaged children and their families. Bears Care has issued over \$27 million in grants to over 200 agencies since 2006.

Through these programs, the Chicago Bears have been able to positively impact thousands of individuals in the city.

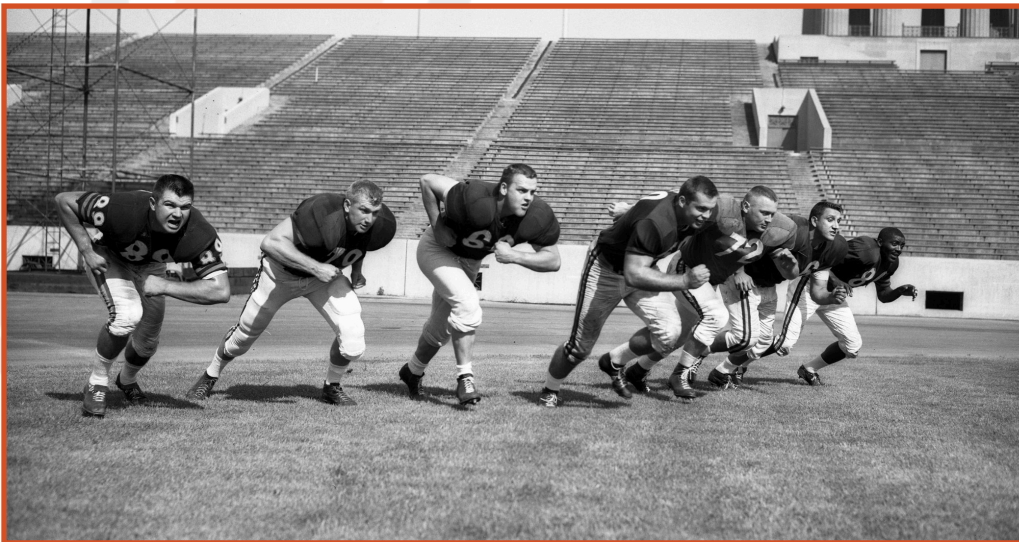


The Chicago Bears’ audience is about 68% male and 32% female. Their audience is primarily between the ages of 35-44. Although this may be true, they have various outreach programs for the community and younger audiences. According to the Bears official site, “Our community outreach provides essential support to schools, youth organizations, charities and community groups throughout the Chicago area” (Chicago Bears). These types of outreach programs allow for the Chicago Bears to be more involved in their community and reach a larger set of audience.

RESEARCH PURPOSE

Our research focuses on uncovering how the Bears franchise can reach its young female (18-24 years old) demographic more effectively – connecting the audience to the Bears and its fans back to the Chicagoland community.

The Chicago Bears demonstrate a far and wide outreach to their fans in Chicago. The team has social justice campaigns committed to diversity, equity and inclusion, education, and civic engagement. Campaigns for education include the Collin Wehr Scholarship and Homeroom Huddles. Health and Wellness are also included by the team’s Bears Fit Youth Challenge (sponsored by Nike) and Bear Hugs to lift hospital patients’ spirits. Additionally, there is the high school football portion of their outreach which



includes All-Star awards awarded to students across the Chicagoland area. Out of the recently rewarded, there are only three female students, two of which (Eliza and Kelly) are on flag football teams and the third (Olivia) is on a boy’s football team. We believe that there should and could be more female representation, outreach and recognition by the Bears. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the American population is

50.4% female; this should be reflected in awards and sports to give young women the representation they want and need.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Our target will surround the Bears' young female (18-24 years old) demographic.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- Age: 18-24 years old
- Gender: Female
- Location: Chicagoland

PSYCHOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

SPENDING HABITS

- Travel
- Education
- Donations
- Social experiences such as attending an in-person game or watching a game at a bar or restaurant
- Fitness and wellness such as gym memberships or therapy
- Transportation (car)
- Streaming services to watch games

HOBBIES

- Exercising
- Social activism
- Travel
- Concerts
- Cooking
- Reading
- Travel

THOUGHTS/VALUES/INTERESTS

- Interested in team sports, particularly football.
- Value social consciousness, diversity and inclusion, equality and support social justice campaigns.
- Special interest in education as many in this demographic are students attending either high school or college.
- Special interest in health and wellness more specifically including fitness and sports.
- Seek authentic and genuine connections and communities both online and offline.
- Crave connectedness following an altered

young adulthood due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Are environmentally and socially conscious, supporting brands and initiatives that align with these values.
- Extremely social media savvy, spending large amounts of their days online/digitally connected.

AUDIENCE'S CURRENT THOUGHTS

RECREATIONAL/ENTERTAINMENT EXPERIENCE

The audiences likely see the Chicago Bears as an entertainment option among other recreational activities. Attending a game, or watching it at a bar or restaurant, offers an opportunity to socialize and be part of a collective experience. This is something the target audience is likely quite fond of given their formative years taking place during the Covid-19 pandemic.

PERCEIVED LACK OF SOCIAL ACTIVISM

Given their value for social consciousness, diversity, and inclusion, this demographic may feel that the Chicago Bears could do more in terms of social justice campaigns. While The Bears are making efforts to do good, their deeds are not publicized in a way that makes it evident for average game-goers or other Chicagoland residents.

PART OF CHICAGO IDENTITY

The Bears are arguably integral to the city's culture and identity. So, even if the target audience are not die-hard fans, they likely have some level of attachment or opinion about the team simply by virtue of living in Chicagoland.

DESIRE FOR AUTHENTICITY

This audience seeks authentic connections and might feel that the commercial aspects of the sports industry, including merchandising and advertising, perhaps lack genuine connection to fans. This fact goes hand in hand with the issue of communicating the team's social activism.

DESIRED THOUGHTS FOR AUDIENCE

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

The Bears should want this demographic to view them not just as a football team but as an inclusive community that stands for the same values of

diversity, inclusion, and social justice, regardless of gender or demographic background — in other words, a valuable, welcoming member of the Chicagoland community.

"MORE THAN JUST A GAME"

Position the Bears' experience as more than just football – a coming together of like-minded individuals who value community, wellness, and personal growth. Paint the picture of Bears games and gatherings being opportunities for more than just spectatorship, but instead an avenue for genuine connections, both new and old.

SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION

Given the demographic's interest in education, the Bears might want to showcase any initiatives they have that support education in the Chicagoland area or any partnerships with educational institutions. This means increasing awareness and promotion of existing outreach campaigns, such as Bears Care.

CHAMPION FOR HEALTH & WELLNESS

The Bears should want the audience to associate the team with fitness, health, and wellness initiatives, showing alignment with the demographic's values and working in tandem to support its community values, as well.

GENUINE CONNECTION

The Bears would want to foster a genuine, two-way relationship, ensuring fans of this audience and beyond feel heard and valued. This audience should be aware of fan engagement initiatives, interactive events, or avenues where fans can have direct interactions with the team or its members.

PLATFORM FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The audience should know and care about the Bears' social activism initiatives, partnerships with social justice organizations.

RESEARCH METHODS

Working toward our goal of gaining insights to better understand our research goal — or finding how the Bears can better connect with young women — we executed research using multiple methods.

First, secondary research was conducted. A literature review of the existing data surrounding this topic was used as a basis for our understanding of the Bears' brand, its sentiment among consumers and in online rhetoric across channels.

Primary research was also utilized when coming to our conclusions. A survey was distributed using the snowball technique to women in the target geography (Chicagoland). The survey method provided rich qualitative data while supplementing research with quantitative resource, as well. Surveys also prioritized timeliness for participants of the demographic, avoiding school and/or work conflicts that often exclude research subjects from more traditional forms of qualitative research.

The survey questioned young women in this age bracket (18-24) on their thoughts and feelings surrounding the Bears' messaging and themes important to women, such as inclusivity, connection, social change, health and wellness, and education. This data helped us to gauge the women's current feelings towards the Bears' messaging and suggest changes accordingly based on the insights derived.

A netnographic research pull was also executed using the industry-standard software, Brandwatch. This data provided a digital-first understanding of generalized sentiment surrounding the team.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

SECONDARY RESEARCH

When considering what we know about the consumer based on the brand, a few factors can be looked at to gain further insights.

An Industry Report conducted by the website Statista.com provides statistical information on Bears fans that can help us learn more about the consumers. Focusing on game attendance, in 2022, the Bears had 538,410 fans attend their home games. This was the highest number of fans in attendance since 2006 (Gough, 2022). This statistic can show us many things about the consumers/fans. The first being that the Bears' local fan base is at an all-time high and that community unity is bigger than ever, possibly as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic in-which attending an NFL game or any popular event was strongly discouraged. Statista

also states that the average Chicago Bears ticket for the 2022 season was \$130.29 (Gough, 2022). This is almost a 30 dollar increase from 10 years ago. This shows fan loyalty in that the ticket prices are the highest they have ever been during a season when fan attendance was also at its highest. This also indicates there is a strong desire for Bears' fans to watch the games in person, perhaps to feel the camaraderie and team spirit in a setting beyond the living room.

Another industry report from the website SimilarWeb.com indicates the demographic characteristics of the Chicago Bears' fans/consumers. The website states that 33.7% of the fan base is female while 66.73% is male (Similarweb). This indicates that the consumers of the Chicago Bears are predominantly male. Age wise, the Bears have the most fans between the ages of 45-54, indicating that the team is resonating more with Generation X than it is with more youthful audiences (Similarweb).

On the topic of female fans of the Bears, a scholarly article by authors Jeffrey D. James and Lynn L. Ridigner examined what motivates a female vs. a male to become a sports fan. They measured nine different motives that included: action, escape, drama, achievement, aesthetics, knowledge, social interaction, empathy, and family. Their findings indicated that males rated all of the motives higher than females. The highest rated motives for males were Achievement, Empathy and Knowledge and the highest rated motives for females were Action, Escape and Drama. This comparison shows that the two binary genders had different motivations altogether for engaging with sports (James & Ridigner). When connecting this study to the previous stats indicating the concentration of female fans of the Bears being significantly lower than male fans, we can see that female Bears fans possibly look to the team for different expectations than men.

Looking at another demographic through a scholarly lens, we can draw insights into why Gen X may have the most popularity with the Bears franchise. In their article entitled Media Preferences of Action Sports Consumers, authors Bennett, Sagas and Dees explore the preferences and consumption behaviors of attendants of a sporting event and break them into categories of Generation X (people born between 1965 and 1980) and Generation Y (more commonly known as millennials; people born

between 1981-1995). The authors found that the two generations consume media differently and that millennials were less likely to watch traditional sports on television such as NBA or NFL games (Bennett, Gregg, et al). Applying the findings of this article to the demographic statistics mentioned above, we can infer that Bears fans who can categorize themselves as Gen X are more willing to watch NFL games on television versus the younger generations.

In addition to scholarly and trade research, brand-centric research from Brandwatch proved useful in providing high-level overviews of the Bears' digital connections to consumers. The Bears' yielded 85K unique authors — and 190K total mentions — of digital conversation during the 30-day period between August 28, 2023 and September 27, 2023. Nearly 75 percent of this online engagement was sourced from X (formerly known as Twitter), followed by traditional news sources (16%), and Reddit forums (4%). And while a majority of mentions online during this period were neutral (64%), the negative sentiment outweighed the positive with 25 percent and 11 percent respectively. Adding to this varied sentiment, the emotions derived from Brandwatch's data on the Bears also crossed the gamut. While nearly half of the online mentions were emotionally neutral, nearly 30 percent were deemed to exhibit sadness. Anger (9%), disgust (5%), and joy (7%) also appeared in emotion rankings. Consumers' top word mentions included rivals, like "Green Bay Packers" along with some specific players across NFL teams. Demographically, Brandwatch data indicated an 86 percent male audience, primarily engaged on Sundays — which aligns well with the popular Sunday Night Football tradition.

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Our survey served as our primary first-hand research method. The survey questioned young women in this age bracket (18-24) on their thoughts and feelings surrounding the Bears' messaging and themes important to the women such as inclusivity, connection, social change, health and wellness, and education.

The survey, as of Friday November 03, garnered nearly 30 responses from 18-34 year old women. Participants were identified from researchers' networks and were encouraged to share with their own — or snowball sharing.

Words that came to repondents' mind when thinking about the Chicago Bears

A word cloud of terms associated with the movie 'The Bad News Bears'. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with the most prominent words in the center. The words include: football, fan, team, lose, bad, bear, packer, past, couple, good, enemy, negative, people, heights, loyalty, play, can't, raise, perform, born, maker, runs, field, animal, bowl, jersey, deep, father, comeback, eberfl, aren't, awful, faith, law, badly, matt, chicago, movie, bet, cocaine, decade, soldier, lost, quarterback, hanging, expensive, arlington, amount, and negative. The words are in various shades of blue and green, with some in white. The font size varies, with the largest words being 'football', 'fan', 'team', 'lose', 'bad', 'bear', and 'packer'.

prominent losing streak of the team and reported a subsequent lack of excitement around games. Brandwatch netnographic data reinforced these qualitative findings. Other respondents did mention the loyalty and long-term support of the team from Chicago locals, which is seen as a benefit and reinforced the team's identity and mission to serve and entertain the Chicagoland community. While the insight that a winning team gains heavy attention is obvious, the Chicago-first takeaway also works to reinforce existing data the team harbors as well as secondary research conducted by researchers as part of this report — Chicago is not just a part of the team's name, it is a vital part of their brand's DNA and our target consumer's reason for engaging. Again, reinforcing the feeling of community requested (and nearly required) by young people today.

When it comes to perceptions of the Chicago Bears among participants of the survey, several respondents noted the



entering the “real world...” a sense of community in high transition times like these are appreciated. Many young women in this age group are also not at the height of their careers yet or making a huge salary – thus proving value is vital to encourage this audience to attend games and engage with the brand beyond the walls of Soldier Field or the local bar airing Sunday Night Football. These insights were corroborated with further data indicating that respondents of the survey seek more community involvement from the Bears, like pop-up events and support for the young adult age bracket.

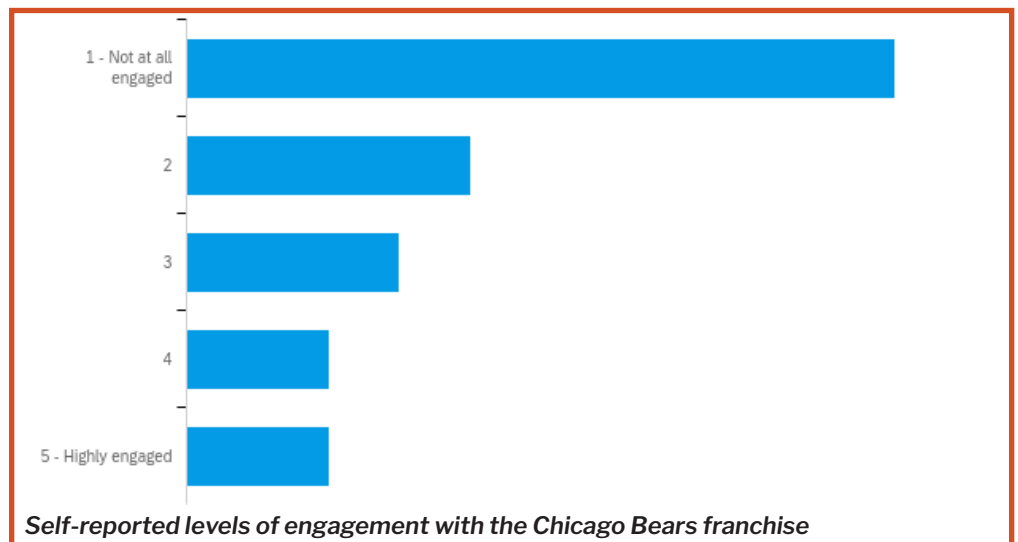
POTENTIAL STRATEGIES & TACTICS

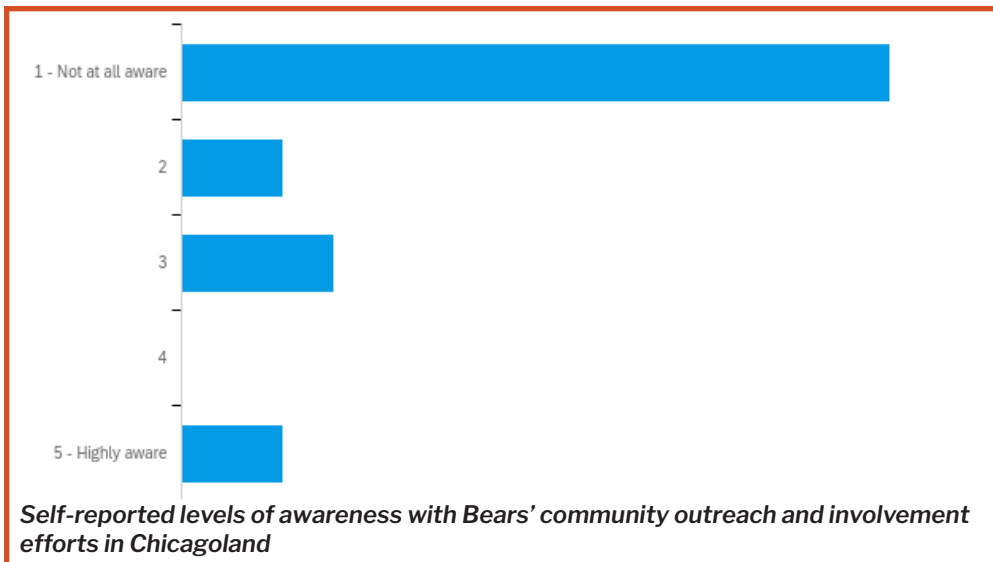
The Bears could form action-based solutions to close the gap between target consumers willing to engage and those unwilling to do so by more closely tailoring their social media content for the desired audience – this has already begun recently with the team’s increased presence on TikTok. Regardless, there are numerous channels the Chicago Bears can utilize to reach their female (ages 18-24) audience. Firstly, social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), and TikTok. On social media, the team could create engaging campaigns and videos aimed at the females they are trying to reach. These would be centered around the values the

women in our target demographic care about, such as inclusivity, education, health and wellness, and social change. And of course, keeping the through-line of “community building” present, as driven by insights. Increased player-fan engagement – a quality of social media content identified as favorable by survey respondents – could be crucial in bridging the gap between the Bears and their female fans. Primary and secondary research (James & Ridigner) corroborate this by highlighting the target audience’s unique needs and wants in social content.

On top of this, audiences also want to be represented. To represent the identified target audiences, the Bears could create campaigns that highlight females in sports, women’s involvement in the franchise, and even collaborate with certain influencers that tend to be popular with this age group. Education is also a cornerstone for this audience. Further showcasing the educational and community-based value the Bears and its subsidiaries bring to Chicagoland could aid in their engagement and retention numbers

Taking a page out of the NHL playbook – by using examples like Gritty, the mascot of the Philadelphia Flyers – to engage young fans on digital platforms, spawning shareability and conversation.





across digital channels. Tailored engagement tactics could exist beyond social media, too. For example, the Bears could initiate a women's fan club to give female fans a sense of community and belonging relating to the Bears – imagine special game day activations, in-app media, and social content devoted to this specific groups of fans that celebrates and invites community involvement.

On top of community for audiences, perceptions and rep-

utation surrounding the team can be improved among the target audience at-large, as well. While improving their performance to win more games is an obvious advantage, these things are easier said than done. Instead, the team could begin by honing support from their loyal fan base. To further bolster Chicagoland support among the target audience, the team could highlight its existing community involvement while continuing to provide aid and visibility around the city and suburbs. Putting a stronger emphasis on high schools and college campuses and continuing to support female-first initiatives for flag football, etc. could increase engagement and recognition, and eventually loyalty, among the target audience. Further, involving fans in media is also favorable for the target audience, per survey respondents. Interviewing fans on their positive feelings towards the Bears and highlighting their stories on owned channels could improve the brand's overall perception and engagement/loyalty, all while continuing to foster community and belonging among an audience that feels unrepresented in the pro sports fan base.

Leaning on the brand's mainstays and mission, such as its history, family ownership, and exemplary moments on and off the field, is also crucial to maintain consistency and future engagement. Each win and "big moment" for the team provides an opportunity to further foster familiarity and community for the target audience and beyond.

A prime message to be present when targeting the identified audience is that the Bears' value female engagement and community just as much as male engagement with their brand. Target consumers need to know that the Bears' listen and want to cater to and connect with their female audience via multiple attitudes

important to the consumer such as: inclusivity, connection, social change, health and wellness, and education. With this, the requisite feelings of community and familiarity are fulfilled.



Viral moments like these are just as possible for the Bears

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research report has examined and unveiled the imperative for the Chicago Bears, and by proxy, all professional sports organizations, to embrace a more inclusive approach to catering to women in the 18-24 age group. Through secondary analyses and surveying of the current state of inclusivity to young women within the sports world, we have uncovered the potential for growth, engagement, and visible diversity that remains untapped within this demographic and prevents subsequent community-building and brand participation.

The findings and key insights from our research underscored the fact that women between the ages of 18 and 24 are not only interested in sports, but also demonstrate qualities that pose the group as potentially vital stakeholders in the long-term success of the Chicago Bears franchise. As exemplified in the survey completed primarily by women between the ages of 18 and 24, it is evident that respondents were moderately interested in football. This moderate interest, we deduce, may be due to the lack of fan engagement among this age group, across demographics. By bringing to light the barriers and challenges this audience faces in accessing and participating in the culture of the Chicago Bears community and overarching sports world, the team can cultivate a more inclusive and equitable environment that has the potential to resonate with a broader fan base.

While further, broader research that explores the deeper motivations and insightful takeaways associated with pro sports media for young women is necessary, our data and insights development can be used to guide the Bears in their strategy and tactics to approach and engage our target audience while entering the 2024 season and year.



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