

4-18-2016

## **More Than Just Puck Bunnies: Female Hockey Fans**

Brianna Pitcock

Andee Pena

Alli Rogers

Cedrick Wilson

Ryan Wolpin

*See next page for additional authors*

---

## More Than Just Puck Bunnies: Female Hockey Fans

### Abstract

The sporting world continues to expand, as evidenced by growing legions of fans (Van Schaik, 2012). Those who follow professional hockey and attend its games tend to have a higher annual income than fans of other professional sports (Thompson, 2014), and are typically thought of as primarily male (Esmonde et al., 2015). The stereotype of the male hockey fan and its proliferation by the media create struggles for women as they become or remain fans (Crawford et al, 2004; MacDonald, 2014). Yet women are showing up for professional hockey games more than ever. The current study investigated the nature of the female hockey fan. Areas studied include motivation for being a fan, inclusion/exclusion, marketing, merchandising and the idea of "fan first." Evidence supporting the importance of focusing on all fans—not just men—is clear, and professional hockey has an opportunity to both reverse the male-dominant profile of its fans and capitalize on the burgeoning female hockey fan market. Interview research—both formal and informal—was conducted at local professional hockey games during the 2015-16 season. Results point to how female hockey fans consider themselves, how they prefer to be treated by the sport industry as well as the media, and what it will take for their numbers and satisfaction to increase.

### Authors

Brianna Pitcock, Andee Pena, Alli Rogers, Cedrick Wilson, Ryan Wolpin, Jen Hake, Sarah Lahren, Melanie Parker, Holly Tomlinson, and Kathryn Westlund

## Research Questions:

- RQ1: What makes women want to attend ECHL hockey games?  
 RQ2: What do women want when they attend ECHL hockey games?

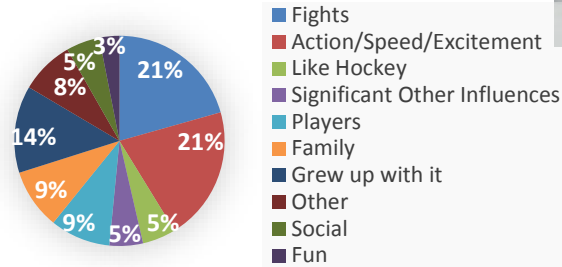


## Method:

Using a research protocol designed for female hockey fans, researchers interviewed 98 women at ECHL hockey games. These interviews were completed over five games.



## What draws you to the sport of hockey?



## Do you have a favorite Steelheads player?



Photo courtesy of Idaho Steelheads

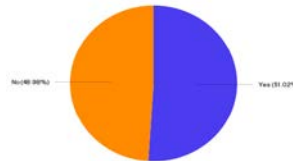


Photo Courtesy of Idaho Steelheads

57% of the respondents preferred to see apparel displayed on a person instead of a mannequin.

## Conclusions:

- The fights and the action/speed/excitement are the main reasons that women are drawn to ECHL hockey games.
- Following the pattern of attending the games for the experience, 75% of the respondents said they would attend a women's promotional night that offered discount ticket packages that included food and drinks.
- 52% of the respondents also attended or watched other college or professional hockey events outside of the games that they were attending.
- Over 50% of respondents had a favorite Steelheads player and number 27, Shawn Boutin, was the crowd favorite with 45% of the votes.
- Researchers discovered that women who were attending the game purely for the players could not name a specific player or their number.