



Black Twitter Use by the XFL's St. Louis Battlehawks to Engage Black Fans

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Abstract

The XFL St. Louis Battle Hawks needs to market within the Black community if they want to engage their audience. Professional Black football players are often marketed as an entertainment commodity with a predominantly white audience speculating on their games and lives. However, targeting and attaining a diverse audience helps humanize the players and fosters a more inclusive fan base. As such, this research set out to evaluate the ways in which the St. Louis Battle Hawks might utilize Black Twitter in order to obtain a larger Black audience among the St. Louis community.

This social science research project used multiple methods such as qualitative research methods including in-depth interviews and a focus group, as well as a quantitative survey. Our research suggests that the St. Louis Battle Hawks should target a not only a Black audience but also focus on a Gen-Z audience. Our professional recommendations for our clients, based on this research, includes featuring more Black-focused content on social media, expanding Black representation beyond the team's players, and not using Black players as an entertainment commodity for white consumption.

Research Question and Hypothesis

St. Louis Battle Hawks
@XFLBattleHawks

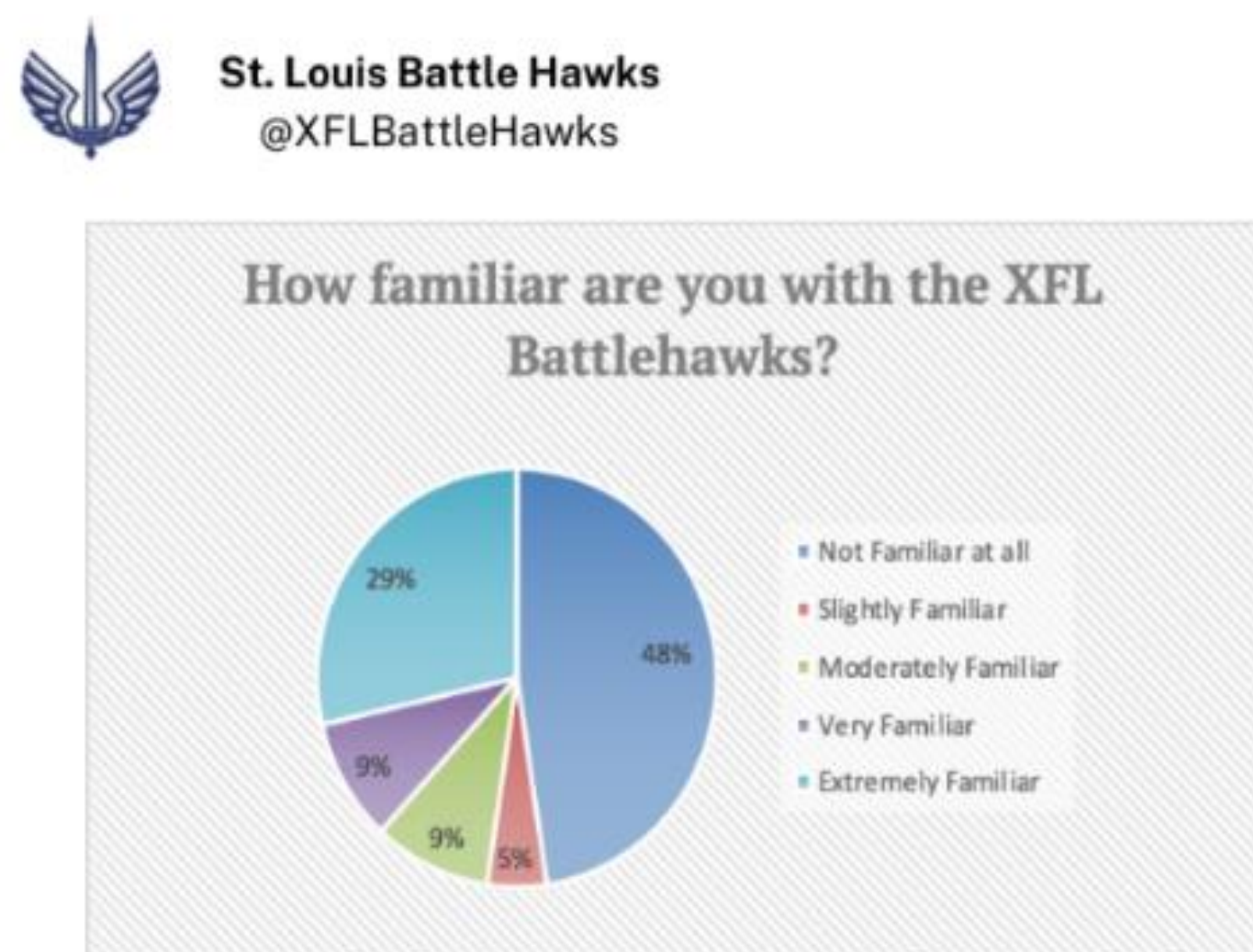
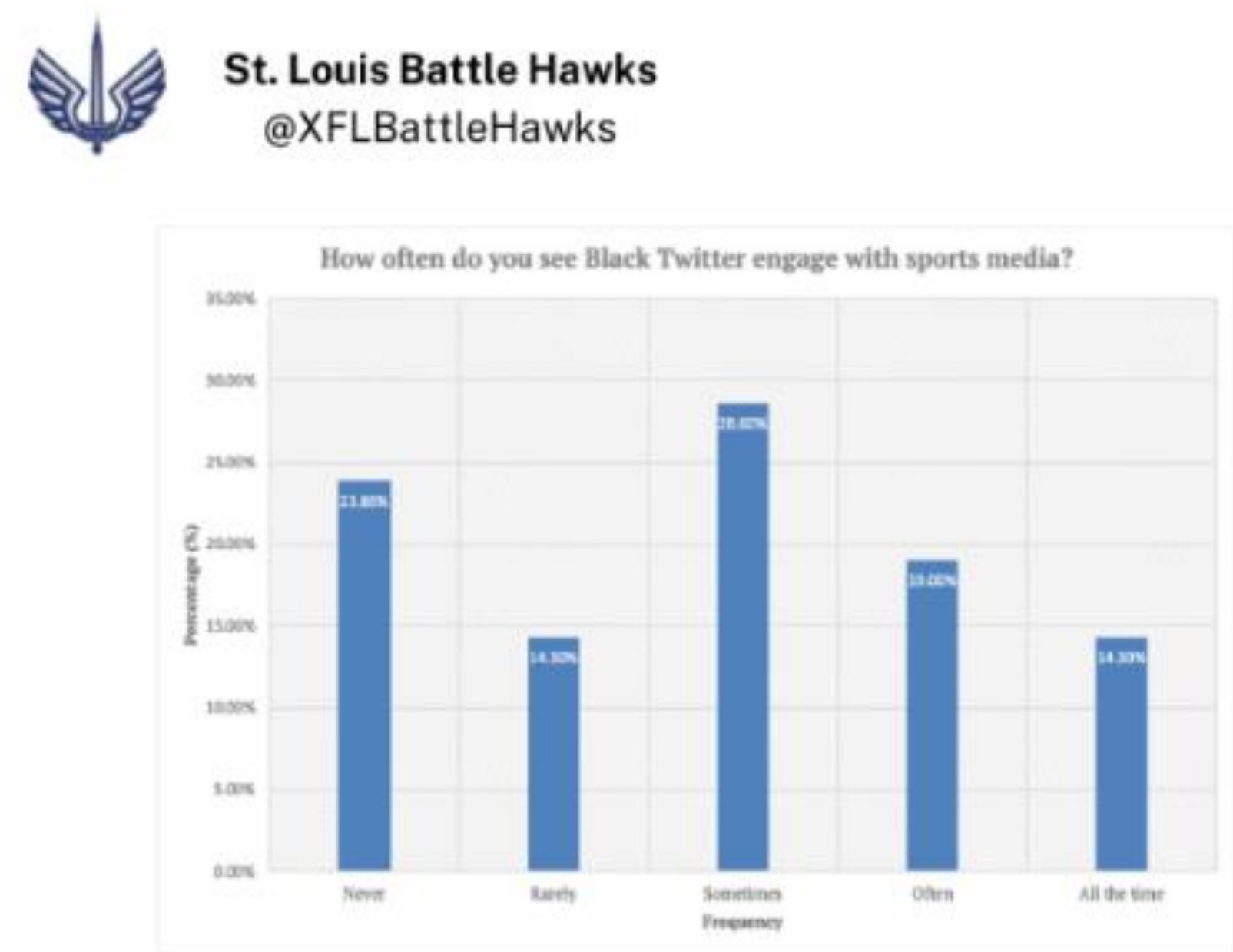
Hypothesis:
If the Battle Hawks effectively use Black Twitter to engage Black St. Louis fans, then they will increase their fanbase.

St. Louis Battle Hawks
@XFLBattleHawks

Research Question:
How are the Battle Hawks demonstrating their knowledge of Black fans through their twitter platform?

Quantitative Research

Black residents make up 44.8% of the St. Louis population (293,310), yet engagement on social media remains focused on predominantly white audiences. Twitter offers the unique opportunity to engage with an array of Black communities across topics, including sports. Our survey respondents, the majority of whom were Gen-Z, and Black or two or more races (76.2%), were familiar (66.7%) with Twitter and frequently used Twitter.



Qualitative Research

Using an inductive data analysis approach, this robust qualitative analysis of the focus group discussion provided three themes (see below). The focus group explained that Black Twitter is an outlet for news, current events, and Black culture. Most of the Black participants that indicated that they use Black Twitter frequently suggest that their social media feeds mostly consist of Black Twitter culture.

Participants	Demographic	Age	Gender
1	Black	49	Man
2	Black	21	Man
3	Black	20	Woman
4	Black	21	Woman
5	Hispanic/Asian	20	Man

There was a diverse response around prior knowledge about the XFL in the focus group. Some participants only knew about Dwayne Johnson (also known as "The Rock"). This could suggest that Johnson should engage in spaces like Black Twitter to accumulate a larger audience. Most participants enjoyed interacting with the St. Louis Battlehawks Twitter. The use of meme culture, pop culture, colorful infographics, and frequent posting makes the St. Louis Battlehawks Twitter attractive on social media. The focus group suggested that the St. Louis Battlehawk Twitter engage with a younger demographic (Gen-Z). That could mean that the St. Louis Battlehawks need to be more inclusive with content on Twitter to engage a more diverse audience.

Thematic Analysis:

- In order for the St. Louis Battlehawks to engage in Black Twitter, there needs to be Black representation in collaboration with Black social media influencers and Black players on the team.
- The St. Louis Battlehawks should regularly engage in social listening on Black Twitter.
- In order to be effective on Black Twitter the St. Louis Battlehawks should actively engage with the Black community in the city of St. Louis.

Professional Recommendations

Our research suggests the XFL's St. Louis Battlehawks will have greater success and a greater gameday turnout if they can relate to their Black audience—both online and in-person. Our professional recommendations include three major strategies:

- Highlighting Black players and featuring more Black-focused content on social media.
- Not using Black players as an entertainment commodity for white consumption.
- Featuring Black representation beyond the team's players.

