

Final Research Report: Secondary Research

Delaney Erb

Monserrat Salinas

Alessia Hernandez

Taylor Briggs

Savanna Stewart

Baylor University

4315: Strategic Communication Research

Professor Tefertiller

December 1, 2025

Executive Summary:

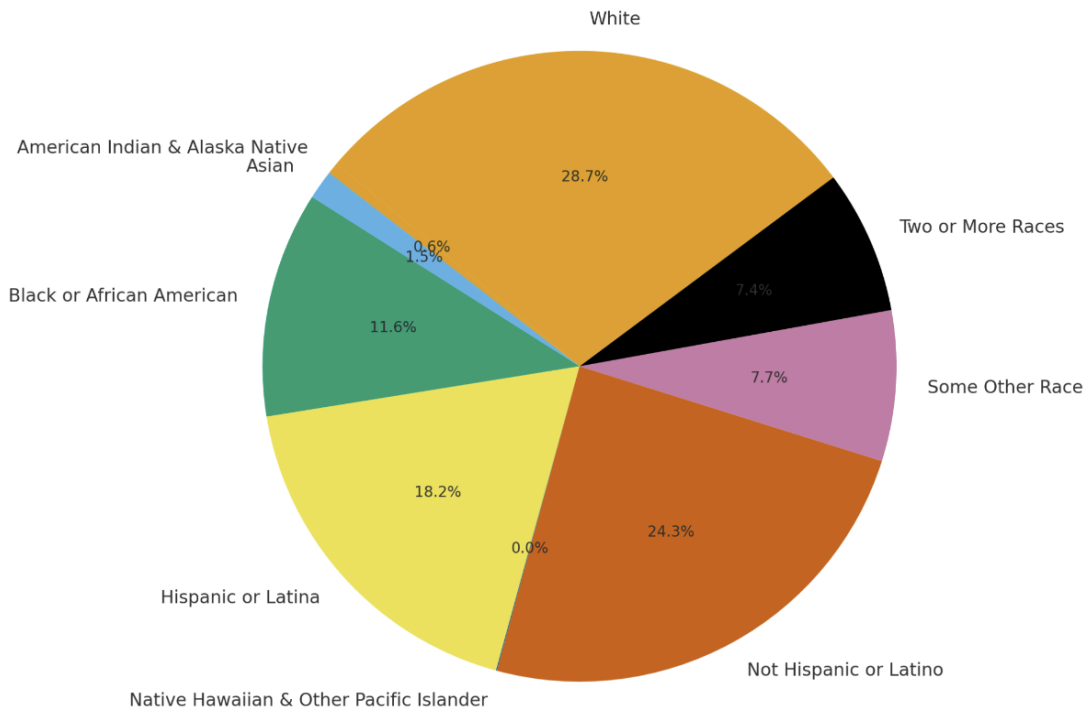
The City of Waco is currently in the planning stage of potentially developing a downtown multi-use sports complex consisting of both a minor league baseball and professional soccer stadium. This leads to questioning whether the sports listed above will boost community engagement and attract a large audience, therefore developing our overall research question, *What is the audience for a professional soccer team in Waco, and how would the team reach that audience?* After collecting data across three research reports, we have found that Waco does have both a large audience as well as an expanding market to support the development of a sports complex and the emerging of new teams. Reports indicate that the establishment of a professional soccer team in Waco would likely have successful results due to the community's consistent attendance of local sporting events, an increase of youth's participation in sports, and its ability to foster cultural engagement. Additionally, it's noteworthy to point out that the Waco community's sports scene mainly revolves around Baylor's Athletic Department, and while that's not necessarily a hindrance to the community it does demonstrate that there is opportunity for Waco to form a separate sports identity that appeals to a broader general audience.

Main Findings and Recommendations:

While the reports showcased various data on the demographics, channels, and media that revolves around soccer, throughout each report there was a consistent theme that soccer has an uprising and sustainable market for sports engagement. For instance, soccer has one of the strongest fan bases globally and increasingly gains more popularity in many different demographic groups, which is very beneficial because Waco does have such a diverse

population. Not only does soccer bring cultures together, but it also ranks higher when it comes to affordability. The more expensive it is to participate in a sport, the less accessible it becomes for those who have a lower income. This can consist of college students, families, and young professionals who were the main groups mentioned most often in these reports. Waco's population will also be able to support the long term sustainability of a soccer team because there are always families looking for activities or entertainment that they can bring everyone to and that have an affordable cost. College students are also a consistent audience because each year as more students graduate, more students move in and begin their journey through the next four years. Furthermore, as I mentioned above Waco is lacking a sports identity that goes beyond Baylor and is in need of sporting events that increase the pride of the general community. The introduction of this development also comes at a great time because the sports market is increasingly gaining more audience attention due the rise of youth participation, local attendance, and women's sports. Based on the findings from the reports, it's recommended that an investment of recreational soccer programs be established in this multi-purpose sports complex such as intermediate to advanced leagues, youth leagues, skill building clinics, and week-long camps. This will allow all ages to participate in an activity they enjoy and encourages them to grow their skills in the sport. Given that the location of the development would be in downtown Waco, these programs would be more accessible and closer to where families live. Additionally, it would be strategic to use social media and partner with schools to further promote the opportunities available as well as spread awareness to increase participation.

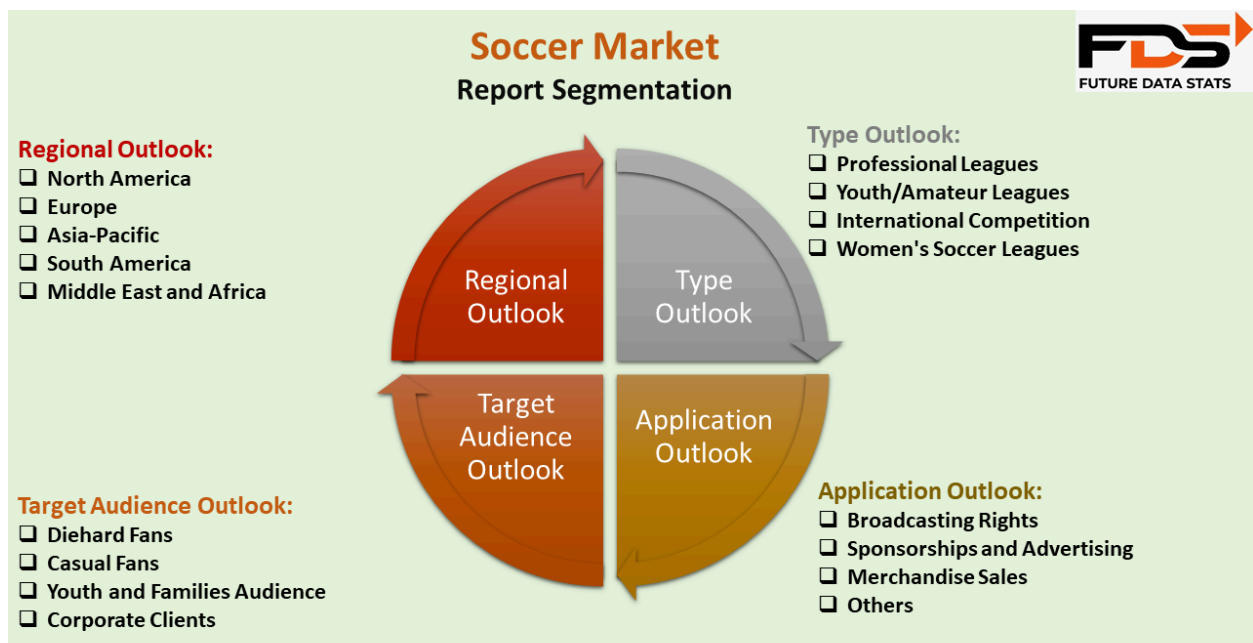
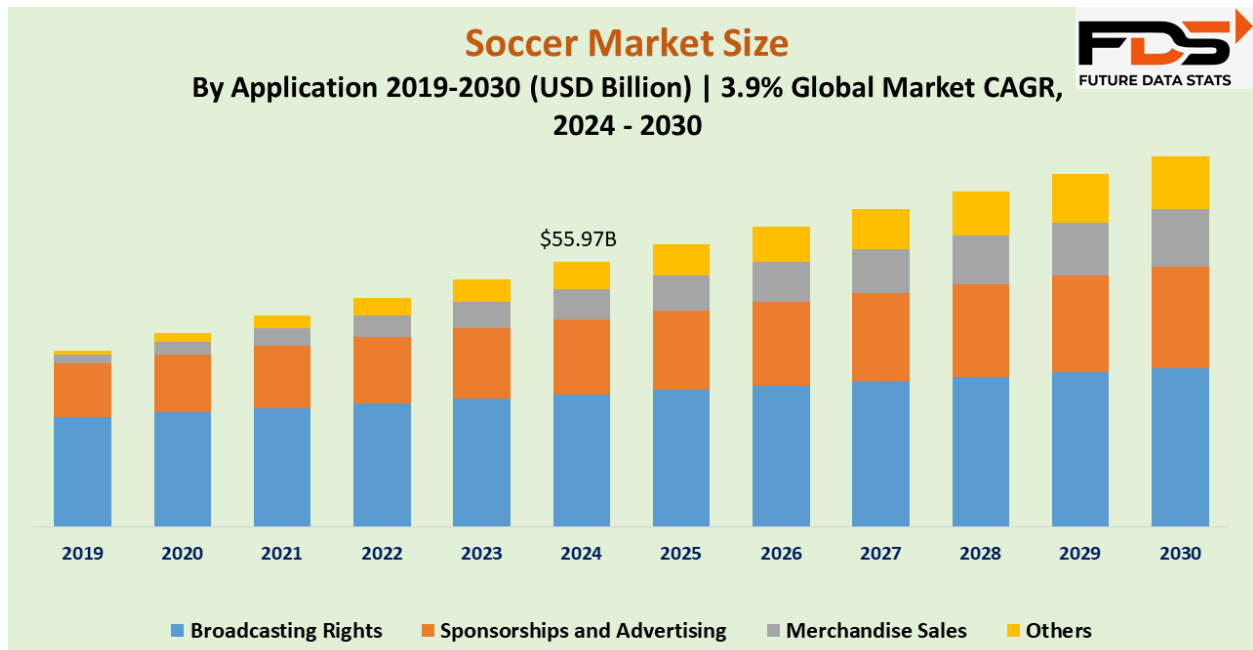
Waco, TX Population by Ethnic Demographics (U.S. Census)



Detailed Research Finding:

The rise in popularity of soccer is largely attributed to Gen Z, however how they interact with the sport widely differs than the generation before them. For instance, Gen Z often interact with sports through platforms such as Tik Tok or Instagram because they can watch the sport and engage with teams and other fans. One report shared that in the United States Fan Insights Report it found that, “the number of first-time fans is up 400% year over year in the U.S. This recent spike in interest can be attributed to the 2026 FIFA World Cup, the first in the U.S. since 1994. Much of this sport’s popularity in America is driven by young, diverse, and digitally connected fanbases,” (Ortiz). This demonstrates the importance of youth participation in soccer and highlights the significance social media has on fan engagement. Overall, the three reports

indicate that Waco’s audience for soccer involves various age groups, demographics, and incomes. Furthermore, in order to maintain that audience it’s recommended that different soccer programs need to be formed to show inclusivity and the use of digital marketing needs to be present, so larger target groups are well informed of the opportunities available to them.



Bibliography

Gentry, D. (2018, October 10). *Stadium employs the equivalent of 195 full-time workers in the first year. Nevada Current.*

<https://nevadacurrent.com/2018/10/10/stadium-employs-equivalent-of-195-full-time-workers-in-first-year/>

Hall, H. (2021, March 17). *Waco pro basketball team meets community for first time. KWTX.*

<https://www.kwtx.com/2021/03/17/waco-pro-basketball-team-meets-community-for-first-time/>

Hill, J. (2021, April 5). *No. 1 MBB wins the national championship. Baylor Bears.*

<https://baylorbears.com/news/2021/4/5/mens-basketball-no-1-mbb-wins-national-championship>

Joshi, A., Horn, B. P., & Berrens, R. P. (2020). Major League Soccer expansion and property values: Do sports franchises generate amenities or disamenities? *Applied Economics*, 52(44), 4881–4899. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2020.1751050>

Karakaya, F., Yannopoulos, P., & Kefalaki, M. (2016). Factors impacting the decision to attend soccer games: An exploratory study. *Sport, Business and Management*, 6(3), 320–340.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/SBM-05-2014-0024>

Rogers, M. (2024, January 12). *Waco City Council narrows down list to four in search of minor league baseball team stadium. KCEN-TV.*

<https://www.kcentv.com/article/news/local/waco-city-council-narrows-proposals-minor-league-baseball-team-stadium/500-0fb18538-df86-4671-8c88-d5c0efff2548>

Team, T. B. (2024, January 5). *Foster Pavilion debuts to rave reviews*. *BaylorProud*.

<https://www2.baylor.edu/baylorproud/2024/01/foster-pavilion-debuts-to-rave-reviews/>

Waco High School Athletics Department. (2024). *Athletics department: Waco High School overview*. <https://ath.wacoisd.org/schools/waco-high-school/overview>

Wenger, A. S., & R. (n.d.). *Katy Park*. *Waco History*. <https://wacohistory.org/items/show/111>

Wong, E., Jgoorin, & Loren-DiBlasi. (2024, August 5). *Women's sports: A growing fanbase and what they want*. *Vox Media*.

<https://www.voxmedia.com/2024/8/5/24213677/womens-sports-a-growing-fanbase-and-what-the-y-want>

Manue. (2022, August 9). *Gen Z & Sports Media Consumption: Why Sports entities need to innovate*. *Immersiv.io*. <https://www.immersiv.io/blog/gen-z-sports-media-innovation/>

Ortiz, K., Mead, T., & Le, L. (n.d.). *A data-driven analysis of fan engagement in USL League one soccer*. *Communications Analysis in Professional Athletics*.

<https://www.manhattanstrategies.com/case-studies/communications-analysis-in-professional-athletics>

Karlovitch, S. (2025, August 21). *Marketing to American soccer fans: Here's what the numbers say*. *Marketing Dive*.

<https://www.marketingdive.com/news/marketing-to-american-soccer-fans-heres-what-the-numbers-say/758338/>

Kottke, M. (2025, February 25). *Why sponsorships in football work*. SPORTFIVE.

<https://sportfive.com/beyond-the-match/insights/why-sponsorships-in-football-work>

Carbajal, A. (2025, July 18). *Former Baylor Women's soccer coach looking to create more opportunities for youth soccer in Waco*. Former Baylor women's soccer coach looking to create more opportunities for youth soccer in Waco.

<https://www.kcentv.com/article/news/local/former-baylor-womens-soccer-coach-create-opportunities-youth-soccer-waco/500-a353bd34-cba6-4b7f-ad1d-843aac4f7b28>

Rosales, A. (2014, February 14). *New sports facility kicks off in Waco - the baylor lariat*. The Baylor Lariat - The official student news source.

<https://baylorlariat.com/2014/02/13/new-sports-facility-kicks-off-in-waco/>