The Cheerleading Market

This year more than 3.3 million Americans will participate in cheerleading, and 1.3 million of these enthusiasts will cheer more than 60 days. Spirit sports have become much more than pom-poms and sideline cheers, and they attract young, passionate, committed athletes who are influencers among their peers.

Cheerleading has evolved over the past twenty years from being an activity where members were selected largely based on their popularity to a sport that now claims some of the most talented athletes in school. It is a high-intensity sport that requires strength, grace, and agility to perform complex maneuvers that challenge the limits of the human body. These energetic athletes train throughout the year, and enthusiasm for the sport is at an all-time high. Increases in traditional sideline cheerleading are reflected in organizations like Pop Warner Football, which has seen 20% growth in cheer participation since 2000. Pop Warner now has 5,400 cheer and dance squads, which account for 45% of total participation within the organization. Competitive or “All-Star Cheerleading” has also experienced tremendous growth since the mid ‘90s, as there are now close to 1.5 million participants competing on over 5,000 teams nationwide.

Advertisers look to cheerleading as an effective way to reach enthusiastic, dedicated, and influential girls, especially within the 7 to 17 age range. Cheerleaders are considered role models, leaders, and trendsetters among their school peers and local community. They are goal-oriented, achieve academic success, and are typically interested in enhancing their physical appearance. As such, cheerleaders are an ideal group for marketers to target within the youth segment. By partnering with Active, companies can gain access to cheerleading participants and activate marketing programs that harness the influence of these trendsetters.

“We take two weeks off a year. This is her life.”
-Mother of a 14-year-old cheerleader

66% Cheerleaders
29% Spectators/Parents
5% Coaches

Cheer competitions typically include 3,000 to 4,000 participants and 1,500 spectators. National championships draw as many as 16,000 total attendees.

Snapshot of Involvement at a Typical Cheerleading Competition
83% of cheerleaders carry at least a “B” average in school, and the same percentage are leaders in local student organizations.

75% of cheerleaders consider it important to keep up with the latest trends.

Cheerleading Facts and Figures

Why Cheerleaders are Attractive to Marketers

With 40% of all cheerleaders participating more than 60 days per year, the sport has one of the highest rates of frequent participation. Because cheerleading has a role in many team sports, in addition to cheer-specific competitions, participation requires year-round dedication. Teamwork within cheerleading is critical, and the high-energy athletes that the sport attracts typically create an extremely strong bond with each other.

This attitude and spirit is carried into their school and home lives. Cheerleaders are actively involved in local student organizations, they make good grades, and 97% plan on attending college. Despite the large commitment to cheering, 70% of cheerleaders play a second sport.

Cheerleading is also an expensive pursuit. Accounting for competition uniforms, practice clothes, warm-up jackets, personalized duffel bags, summer camps, tumbling classes, squad practices with professional cheerleading programs, and choreography fees, the total cost for cheer families can range between $2,500 and $10,000 per year. Participation on a school team as well as a competitive All-Star squad can easily double the expenses.

32% of cheerleaders come from households that earn more than $75K per year, compared to the national average of 21%. Cheerleaders have a large influence on the spending habits of their families, especially in terms of clothing, health and beauty products, food, and travel. Physical appearances are important to cheerleaders, and nearly half consider themselves a source of “what’s cool.”

Sources: NSGA, Chattanooga Times, Cheer America, Spirit Unlimited, Varsity Cheer, The Active Network

Trends in Pop Warner Cheer Participation

General Seasonality of Cheer and Dance Participation
Cheerleaders Facts and Figures

- Competitive cheer squads typically enter 6 to 7 competitions per year.
- Cheer squads typically have between 5 to 35 athletes.
- In addition to the number of cheerleaders, there are two million dance team members.
- There are 3.3 million cheerleaders in the U.S., and 1.3 million are frequent participants who cheer more than 60 days per year.
- 68% of all cheerleaders are between the ages of 7 to 17, and the average cheer participant is 13 years old.
- Total annual costs for competitive cheer participants range from $2,500 up to $10,000.
- Cheerleading is an effective vehicle for marketers targeting young, active, and influential females.
Connecting with Cheerleaders

Active Marketing Group provides Insight and Access to Active Lifestyle Consumers

Active Marketing Group is the only marketing and promotions agency that reaches and interacts with thousands of cheerleaders on a daily basis. We know how they prepare, where and when they compete; we can reach them during practice, at competitions and in the off-season. As part of The Active Network, Active Marketing Group has direct access to over 500 cheer event directors and 50,000 cheer participants that can be activated through offline, peer-to-peer and direct marketing programs. In addition, we have access to tens of thousands of cheer teams and coaches that can be reached online. With national reach and years of experience developing programs that engage at the local level, we help put brands front and center with this committed community of athletes.

Our Success Stories

Over the years we’ve activated integrated marketing programs for leading brands targeting cheerleaders, including:

Strategic Industry Partners

Reaching Cheerleaders Online

The Active Network websites attract cheerleaders from around the country. Through advertising, custom sponsorships and destination mini-sites, brands can connect with consumers as they are researching connecting with their team, registering for competitions or searching for training tips.

Active Network Advertising Opportunities

Standard IAB Units including Rich Media
Newsletter Communications
Promotional Emails
Annual Cheerleading Editorial Features
National Cheerleading Championships (December)

Active Network Sites That Reach Team Athletes

85 Million Monthly Page Views
2 Million Monthly Unique Visitors
4.2 Million Registered Users
3 Million Opt-in Email Addresses
2 Million Teams

Reaching Cheerleaders Offline

From turnkey event marketing to sampling that supports a new product launch, our relationships with thousands of events across the country make it possible to develop integrated programs that have a fresh, measurable impact.

Sampling & Promotions

500 Cheer Event Partners
Capacity to Distribute over 500,000 Samples
Geographic and Gender Targeting

Event & Sponsorship Activation

Sponsorship Negotiation
Staffing & Turnkey Event Management
National Promotional/Activation Platforms

Grassroots & Peer-to-Peer Marketing

Sponsored Ambassador Teams
Sports Specialty/Retail Programs
Club Seminars/Promotions

Research & Consulting Services

Online Research Studies
Focus Group Recruiting
Product Testing

Active Marketing Group was named by Promo magazine as one of the leading promotions agencies in 2004, 2005 and 2006.