

TAYLOR SWIFT & THE NFL: A LOVE STORY?

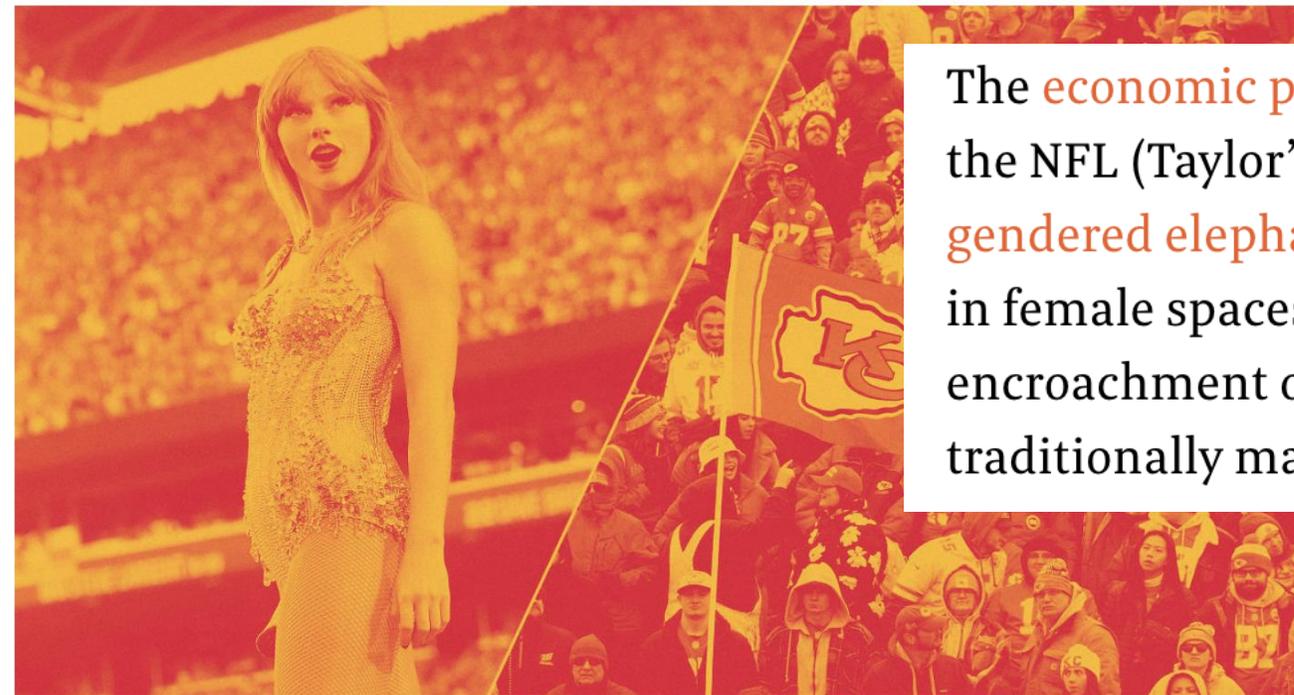


MARCH 6, 2025

10-08-23 | STRONG FEMALE LEAD

Swifties vs. NFL fans: An economist explains what happens when two rabid fan bases collide

Swifties and NFL fans, independently, have enough financial clout to create tremors in the economy, so what happens when the two worlds collide?



[Source Photos: Getty Images]

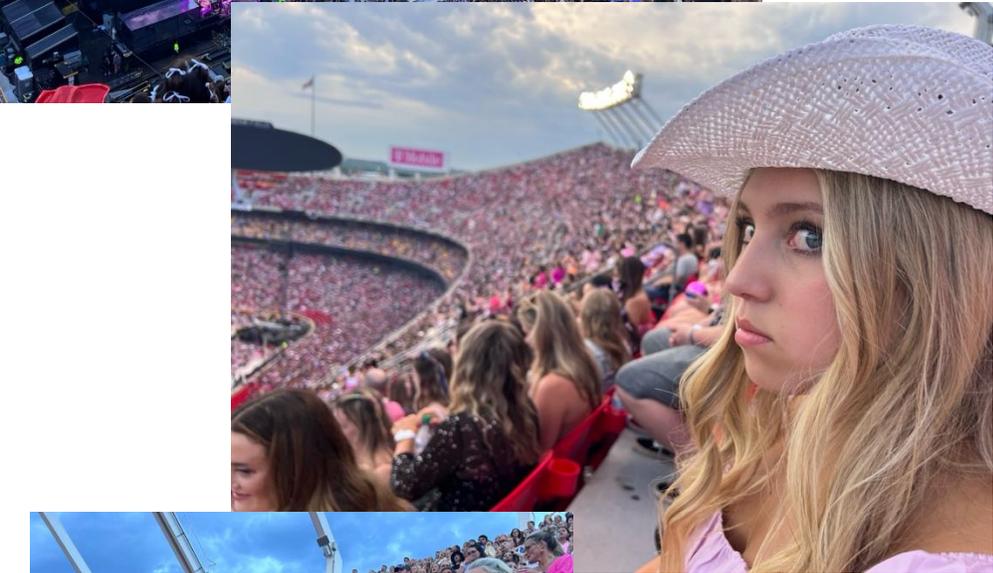
The **economic power of the female purse** is now arguably devouring the NFL (Taylor's version), and while we originally **ignored the gendered elephant in the room** when women's purse strings stayed in female spaces like concerts or movie theaters, this new encroachment of economically independent women in a traditionally male sport has made it impossible.



BY **MISTY HEGGENESS** 4 MINUTE READ



The National Football League (NFL) brought in a whopping **\$18.6 billion** in revenue last year, with an average of **\$5.1 billion per team**.



BY **MISTY L. HEGGENESS** APRIL 18, 2024 7:00 AM EDT

IDEAS

*Heggeness is a former principal economist and senior advisor for the U.S. Census Bureau and an associate professor of public affairs and economics at the University of Kansas. An expert on gender and the economy, her forthcoming book is **SWIFTYNOMICS: Women in Today's Economy** (UC Press)*

The exact moment **Taylor Swift** came gliding into my life was when she released “**The Man**” music video. I remember it all too well. I was leading projects in a predominantly male organization. Colleagues had been quick to criticize my violations of unwritten rules regarding how women should lead—rules dictating niceties, get-in-line supportiveness, and instruction with subtlety.

“The Man,” written from an ambitious women’s perspective, tells the story of living in a world built for someone else. It is fun, lighthearted, and empowering. Swift has another song, “**Mad Woman**,” written from the perspective of how the patriarchy perceives these ambitious women. This song is dark, intense, and isolating. The fact that these two songs tell the story of each “patriarchal opponent” with such precision is what makes Swift a lyrical mastermind. Her lyrics made me feel seen.

WEBINAR OBJECTIVES

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- Provide useful materials (slides, videos, readings, exercises) for use in an ECON101 classroom.
- Provide an easily accessible template to use today's pop culture help students learn about economics.

CONCEPTS ADDRESSED

- **In this Webinar – Focus on Taylor Swift + NFL**
 - Basic:
 - Theory of the firm + profit maximization
 - Advanced:
 - Economics of discrimination (economically inefficient human behavior)
 - Gender and economics (social norms and social norm violations)
- **For your Reference – Taylor Swift Specific Handout with Links:**
 - Supply & Demand
 - Monopolistic Behavior
 - Price Setting
 - Women in Economics
 - Economic Development + Local Economies (Cool Mastercard data!)
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- Overview of the storyline: *Whose love affair is it anyways?*
- Methods for presentation & engagement with students
 - Basic (theory of the firm)
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- Exposition: Additional materials for the classroom
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STEP 1. THE ONLY WAY OUT OF A FEELING IS THROUGH IT

- **Begin your class with:**
 - Open discussion of what students have seen on social media and the news regarding Taylor Swift (furthermore: TS) & NFL
 - **Everyone** will have opinions: **For**, **Against**, **Don't Care**
- **Options:**
 - Large class discussion, small group (group by opinion), or written responses:
 - Why are you for, against, don't care?
 - Use clear arguments and justifications – who/what has influenced you (family, friends, famous people)?

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STEP 2. REGROUP AND DISCUSS AS A LARGE GROUP

- **Discuss pros/cons**
 - ***Remind students:***
 - Perspectives and opinions should be separated from the human; your friends and family can have different opinions than you and you can still love them as a human – so debate respectfully and approach with open ears.
 - Be willing to be challenged – try to understand the other point of view.
- What are the benefits of TS attending games?
 - And to whom?
- What are the cons of TS attending games?
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STEP 3. ENTER THE MAIN STORYLINE: **NFL FANS**

- **Watch:**
 - This [video](#) of the TS/NFL saga timeline
- Questions after video:
 - Why might some core NFL fans be agitated?
 - See *Mad Dog* video cut
 - Some reasons:
 - Tradition, don't like change, are not interested in sharing their space with people who look/act different from them.
 - Don't care about pop singers – don't want their special NFL time interrupted by pop culture (female) singers (or anyone else) who may be dating an NFL player. Can also bring up Britney Mahomes who gets lots of shade. She is very active at games.

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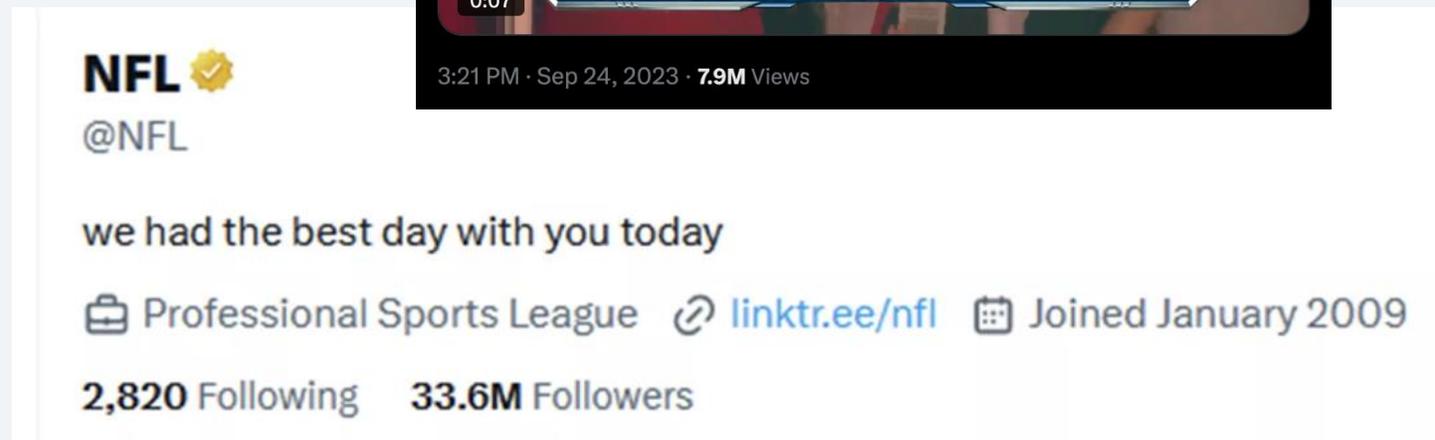
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STEP 4. ENTER THE MAIN STORYLINE: SWIFTIES

- **More Questions After Video:**
 - Why might some core Taylor Swift fans be excited?
 - Some reasons:
 - Fresh off The Eras Tour and 2023 summer of women excitement
 - Limited opportunities to see TS in public
 - In love with the love story – happy for the mega star, want to share in her joy through osmosis, want to support her boyfriend...

STEP 5. THE NFL'S INITIAL RESPONSE

- First response
 - Pure joy – novelty, panned to TS frequently during the game, changed social media posts – “We had the time of our life with you,” offered TS free entry to any game.



The NFL's X bio, updated with Taylor Swift lyrics. PHOTO: NFL/X

STEP 5. THE NFL RESPONSE TO FANS

- There are a subset of loud, agitated NFL fans.
 - Ask students to discuss how the NFL responded to those fans.
 - What actions did they take?
 - Note: NFL fanbase was already 47% female – so it is a subset of NFL fans being very loud.
- Why did the NFL respond this way?
 - (HINT: *Economic Theory!* – Theory of the Firm → Profit Maximization)

STEP 5. THE NFL'S RESPONSE

- **Discussion:**
 - Why did the NFL respond with excitement initially?
- See NYT articles

N.F.L. Hones Message for Its Female Fans

 Share full article  

By **Natalie Kitroeff**

Jan. 5, 2013

At Cowboys Stadium, fans can buy a standing golf bag, a Kobe beef burger and thong underwear emblazoned with the team's star logo.

Displayed alongside lacy sports bras and flared sweat pants, Cowboys underwear is one of many offerings at the stadium's Victoria's Secret Pink store, the first to open inside a sports complex.

The move is emblematic of a broader marketing effort by the N.F.L. to engage female fans, who make up a rising share of the league's base.

"We clearly get that our female fans are our consumers," said Charlotte Jones Anderson, a Cowboys' executive vice president, who pushed hard to get a Pink store inside the stadium. "They're really the ones that make our business tick."

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THE E-SPORTS GENERATION

Pro Sports Leagues Are Chasing Gen Z Where It Plays

Here's what sports marketers are doing to win back a lost generation and save the future of fandom.



By **Joe Drape** and **Ken Belson**

Published Jan. 12, 2022 Updated Jan. 13, 2022

The N.F.L. teamed with the gamer Ninja. Major League Baseball recruited influencers to produce TikTok content for the World Series under the hashtag [#mlbcreatorclass](#). The N.B.A. co-founded the professional NBA 2K e-sports league and tied it to individual franchises.

Voilà! The Charlotte Hornets help bankroll Hornets Venom G.T.

The leagues' marketing officers share a philosophy: Meet young fans where they are. That means using digital tools like Snapchat, Twitch, YouTube and TikTok as a way to get teenagers to engage with their sports and tune into games wherever they're shown. The leagues have become fluent in the jargon of digital media and say the digital platforms attract billions of views and likes.

If you want to make rabid fans out of Generation Z, as those born from 1997 to 2012 are often defined, it is no longer hip to be square.

STEP 5. THE NFL RESPONSE TO FANS

- Discussion:
 - Why did they change their tune/tone it down?
 - In response to loud fans complaining, they got quiet.
 - Then came out in moderated support:
 - [NFL Commissioner](#)
 - [Chiefs Owner](#)
 - Article on NFL Social Media VP response
 - Andy Reid [interview](#)

Taylor Swift has made the NFL almost \$1 billion since she started dating Travis Kelce

Going into the Super Bowl, the 'Taylor Swift effect' on the NFL looks even stronger than it did at this time last year. Here's why.

By [Weston Blasi](#) [Follow](#)

Last Updated: Feb. 9, 2025 at 1:17 p.m. ET

First Published: Feb. 7, 2025 at 12:21 p.m. ET



Share



Resize



20



Listen (8 min)



STEP 6. THE SWIFTIES TO NFL FANS

People ENTERTAINMENT CRIME HUMAN INTEREST LIFESTYLE ROYALS STYLEWATCH

10 of 10 Indianapolis, Indiana



Taylor Swift in Indianapolis in 2024; Travis Kelce in 2024. PHOTO: KEVIN MAZUR/TAS24/GETTY; KEVIN MAZUR/KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY

Kelce was spotted [dancing to "So High School" with Swift's mom Andrea](#) during her Nov. 2 show at Lucas Oil Stadium, which [is speculated to be about him](#).

Every Time Travis Showed up at The Eras Tour:
<https://people.com/every-time-travis-kelce-went-to-taylor-swift-eras-tour-photos-8649822>

Chicks in the Office VIDEO:
<https://www.tiktok.com/@chicksintheoffice/video/7384170355885165866>

Love the Love VIDEO:
<https://www.tiktok.com/@gma/video/7333622625408748842>



Travis Kelce and Ross Travis interacting with fans at Taylor Swift's show in Sydney, Australia on Friday, February 23, 2024.
TikTok/ @ckntiiiiii

STEP 7. TIME FOR SOME THEORY

- Options: Play the video on microeconomic theory of the firm (12 minutes long).
 - Ask students to think about how the theory applies itself to the NFL as a business.
 - What about extensions like:
 - Small businesses in clothing (<https://twitter.com/tswiftstyle>).
 - American Airlines (<https://x.com/NFLonFOX/status/1751765696684642413?s=20>).



American Airlines created two flights after the Chiefs won the AFC Championship 🤖

- Kansas City to Las Vegas: flight 1989
- Las Vegas to Kansas City: flight 87

(h/t @SouthernbeLLSU)

January 12, 2024	January 10, 2024
5:00 AM	1:35 PM
bus A321neo	irbus A321neo

STEP 8. LINKING THEORY TO CASE STUDY

- Use 2-minute [clip](#) on TS/NFL + Theory of the Firm.
- Have students complete the worksheet/quiz.
- Consider having students write an essay.
- Advanced Students:
 - Discuss the role of gendered expectations & discrimination.

The **economic power of the female purse** is now arguably devouring the NFL (Taylor's version), and while we originally **ignored the gendered elephant in the room** when women's purse strings stayed in female spaces like concerts or movie theaters, this new encroachment of economically independent women in a traditionally male sport has made it impossible.

Nobel prize-winning economists have spent decades arguing **discrimination is rational**—meaning we do not need policies to mitigate discriminatory behavior because economic agents will eventually see that discrimination hinders their ability to maximize profits and will readjust accordingly. These same economists have also developed economic models where **women “rationally” choose to take up the bulk of unpaid family care** that, by the way, severely disadvantage them in the formal labor market.

Even today with **mounds of evidence**, many economists refuse to believe that gender biases, however *irrational*, do not need any kind of intervention. They believe we can just let it be, and the market will work it out, that Adam Smith's **invisible hand** will soft pat the fragile male ego off stage right.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Curriculum: See articles, worksheet, videos, etc.
- Desk copy of Swiftnomics for courses:
 - <https://www.ucpress.edu/contact/exam-desk-requests>
 - Will be available at the link above once the ISBN is established (soon, keep checking!)

THANK YOU!

- Misty Heggeness, University of Kansas
- misty.heggeness@ku.edu
- Author of *Swiftynomics: How Women Mastermind and Redefine Our Economy* (Forthcoming Fall 2025, University of California Press)