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COLLEGE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT ON CAMPUS: ATTENDING COLLEGIATE
SPORTS EVENTS

BY
ISLAMIAH FUAD

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Science
Major in Sport and Recreation Administration
South Dakota State University
2020

THESIS ACCEPTANCE PAGE

Nur Islamiah Mohamad Fuad

This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the master's degree and is acceptable for meeting the thesis requirements for this degree.

Acceptance of this does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

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ABSTRACT

COLLEGE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT ON CAMPUS: ATTENDING COLLEGIATE
SPORTS EVENTS

ISLAMIAH FUAD

2020

While attending collegiate sports events is part of the college experience, especially in the United States, there is a decline in students' attendance at collegiate sports events shown in the past years. The purpose of this study is to (1) investigate college students' experience in attending collegiate sports events, (2) identify college students' motivations and constraints in attending collegiate sports events, and (3) recognize possible strategies to improve collegiate sports events attendance and engagement on college campuses. A qualitative research approach, focus group, was used to facilitate discussion and interaction with a group of students sharing their experiences and perspectives at college sports events. Purposeful sampling was used to recruit juniors and seniors at a Midwest university. A total of nine students participated in three focus group discussions. Content analysis was applied to analyze text data from focus group transcripts, where a systematic classification process was used for coding and identifying themes. The result shows two themes were identified as students' overall college experience: the university's impression and connection; and also, opportunities and a sense of self-growth. Three main motivations emerged; social network, new is exciting, and incentives. There are six constraint factors experienced by students: weather, parking, other commitments, event atmosphere, unfamiliarity with sports, and friends. Students

suggested three strategies to increase their attendance: marketing tactics, target programming, and meal plan at concessions.

INTRODUCTION

Attending sports events is part of the college experience, especially in the United States. Students will have the opportunity to showcase their school spirit and cheer for their school's teams. Not only that, but they also get to share the experience with the community. The past few years have shown a downward trend in student attendance at collegiate sporting events. The decrease not only affects the small schools but also the top-tier schools such as the "Power 5" schools (Cohen, 2014; Smith, 2015; Solomon, 2014). The average students' attendance for college football games declined by 7.1% since 2009, when analyzed in 2013 (Cohen, 2014). Besides non-attendees, some students who did attend the event arrived at the games late, leaving early, or both. Many conditions factored into the decrease in students' attendance at collegiate sports events including weather (Noll, 1974; Rovell, 2014; Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Trail, Robinson, & Kim, 2008), facilities (Blankly, Sweeney, & Fuller, 2014; Rovell, 2014; Trail et al., 2008), comfort and convenience (Hyatt, Sutton, Foster, & McConnell, 2013; Omar-Fauzee, Yusof & Zizzi, 2009; Tuttle, 2014), lack of interest (Havard, & Dwyer, 2012; Wood & Danylchuk, 2012), and social commitment (Simmons, Popp, McEvoy, & Howell, 2018; Trail et al., 2008; Wood & Danylchuk, 2012).

Millions of people attend collegiate sports events every year. Almost 50 million people attended the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) football games in 2010 (Faure & Cranor, 2010). The total number of fans attending college football for NCAA Division I FBS and FCS schools in 2017 was 36,632,625 and 5,509,277 (NCAA, 2017). In 2016, the total number of fans attending for the same sport was 38,073,667 and 5,473,956, in their respective sub-division (NCAA, 2016). Despite having millions of

people in attendance in the past, the actual number of students attending collegiate sports events has been declining. This trend continues to be a challenge for other college sporting events to this day, though this is not a new issue for athletic departments. Some institutions require students to buy tickets, and some do not. Students who have to pay entry fees may choose not to attend their college's sporting events because of the additional costs they will incur in order to support their school. Not attending these activities is a way for them to cut costs, especially when they think it is not a priority to attend the games while they are in college (Cohen, 2014). However, even when students do not pay extra for tickets, attendance has shown a decline as well.

Watching sports through streaming services from where fans feel it is convenient might contribute to the decreasing in attendance for collegiate sports. ESPN+, HULU Live, and multiple other streaming devices that are available for sports fans, are all favored alternatives for fans to watch games from the comfort of their own homes. Internet services and television networks allow these college-goers to enjoy a lot of the same perks by not going outside their comfort zone, such as home or bars. Students can watch a game on television, computer, or even mobile phone while eating any snacks or drinking any beverage they desire that might not be available at the stadium. Advancement in technology has helped improve the at-home experience that could beat the experience of watching at the stadiums or arenas (Hyatt et al., 2013). The creation of virtual reality in sports supports this statement. The NBA and the PGA Tour took the initiative with virtual reality to have a more realistic experience for their fans watching the game in the comfort of their homes.

Attending collegiate sports events could be considered as an extracurricular activity and part of the college experience, which is essential for college students to build their skills with the sport, interact with other students and enjoy their free time on campus (Forrester, 2006). The current decline of sports events participation on college campuses across the nation has been a concern by many collegiate athletic departments and college administrators. Although collegiate sports events are categorized as an extracurricular activity, they are not listed as an officially approved activity and thus do not give any academic credits. However, many studies have shown the importance of student engagement (Dalrymple & Evangelou, 2006). With various extracurricular activities provided on college campuses, collegiate sports events are one of the most visible and influential venues to engage with students, fans, and communities due to the media exposure and public relation associated with college sports events.

Although some researchers have studied college students' attending or not attending college sports events as a sports consumption decision (Ferreira & Armstrong, 2004; Peetz, 2011; Simmons et al., 2018; Snipes & Ingram, 2007; Swanson, Gwinner, Larson, & Janda, 2003; Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2005; Trail et al., 2008), other studies indicated the significance of attending college sports events can positively affect and increase the connectedness and engagement to the school (Libbey, 2004), university spirit and pride (Ervin & Rosser, 2017), and attachment and identity (Laverie & Arnett, 2000). It is important to understand how to further use collegiate sports events as a tool for engaging students with the campus community, building strong connections with the university (Laverie & Arnett, 2000), and providing a satisfactory sports events experience on campus (Trail et al., 2005). Hence, the purposes of the study is to: (1) investigate

college students' experience in attending collegiate sports events, (2) identify college students' motivations and constraints in attending collegiate sports events, and (3) recognize possible strategies to improve collegiate sports events attendance and engagement on college campuses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Students' Engagement on Campus through Sports' Participations

Engagement on campus is crucial in students' college experience. The term students' engagement and students' involvement used interchangeably and with vital importance considering both terms are used to highlight students' participation (Robert & McNeese, 2010). Axelson and Fick (2010) defined students' engagement as "involvement or interest shown by students in their learning and how connected they are to their affiliated institutions, classes, and each other" (p.38). "Students' involvement referred to as the amount of physical and psychological energy that students devote to academic experience" (Astin, 1984, p.518). Astin (1984) proposed a theory of student involvement implemented for higher education, emphasizing the importance of being actively engaged on college campuses. Astin (1984) drew up five basics that make the involvement theory:

- (1) One of the basics of students' involvement theory is the term 'involvement,' referred to as putting effort into an activity mentally and physically (Kuh et al., 1991).
- (2) Involvement occurs along a continuum. Each student has an individual pace of learning, and the same students show a different level of involvement.
- (3) Involvement is not restricted to qualitative and quantitative features. The qualitative feature can be understanding students' experience attending the events. Quantitative features, on the other hand, it can be learning different factors impacting students' decision attending events.

(4) The knowledge gained and personal progress connected to an education program is proportional to the involvement the student will get from the program.

It is possible that students can relate tangible knowledge to their academic experience. An example of this is marketing strategies that business students can analyze or find beneficial for future use.

(5) The effectiveness and capacity of an educational policy or practice increase students' involvement. Students who attend the collegiate games might aspire to look deeper into pursuing a career in it or even venture on the opportunity the athletic departments can provide for their educational experiences through internships.

Generally, there are two types of participation in explaining students' engagement in art and sport-related activities: active participation and passive participation (Montgomery & Robinson, 2006). Active participation refers to students involved in activity by doing it, such as joining the intramural activities offered at the university. Passive participation refers to spectating an activity such as watching a basketball game. Active participation in sport is shown to help relieve daily life stresses, sense of belonging, and having the opportunity to achieve desired results (Tokuyama & Greenwell, 2011). Tokuyama and Greenwell (2011) also indicated that passive participation in sports-related activities helps students achieve positive impact, including aesthetic (the artistic aspect of sport), competition (being in a competitive setting), social facilitation (socializing with others), and affiliation (associate oneself with a group).

For most college students, leaving home to attend a college is the first time where nearly all decisions need to be made by themselves. Healthy habits such as regular

physical activity and social interaction created in high school can be negatively affected by the sole responsibility of the student. Students who have adapted and are engaged learn better, mainly when proper services and facilities provided to students (Goudih, Abdallah, & Benraghda, 2018). Students can also improve or master their preexisting skills if they choose to attend tailored events (Dalrymple & Evangelou, 2006). Both activity and social-based events can have a positive influence on the individual. Being involved on campus, even by just attending events, can help to improve an individual's mental and physical health. It also allows students to be social by making new friends or strengthen current relationships by figuring out their similar interests.

Several studies have explored students' experiences and perspectives in attending sports events. Ervin and Rosser (2017) identified five main experiences students gained from attending collegiate sports events on campus, including unity and connectivity, and pride and good feelings to be essential. Unity and connectivity refer to the feeling of being part of the team and sharing the moment with peers (Ervin & Rosser, 2017). Pride and good feelings are associated with team identification (Ervin & Rosser, 2017). The behavior of attending sports events can be affected by team identification, social rewards, and quality of life (Hudson, 2010). Team identification defined as the psychological connection between the fan and the team (Wann, Melnick, Russell & Pease, 2001). Students can feel proud of their school when they are surrounded by other spectators who have the same school or team spirit as them. Students can also show their pride to other attendees. Participation and engagement play a crucial role in the membership and identification of the school (Libbey, 2004). Being surrounded by others who have the

same spirit can help boost the feeling of pride and connection with the team and school hence can grow the feeling of identification with the team.

Students' Motivation to Attend Events

The definition of motivation and the relationship between motivation and engagement can create a base for understanding the decision-making factors of the student. Motivation defined as a person who is “moved to do something” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 54). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are some of the most common approaches in discussing motives in sports. Intrinsic motivation is the motivation that comes from the individual, such as the feeling of wanting to go to the events (Alkaabi, Alkaabi, & Vyver, 2017; Hsieh, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation is the motivation that comes from outside factors such as rewards offered at the events (Alkaabi et al., 2017; Hsieh, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Maddox (2010) noted that there is a relationship between motivation and engagement. If a participant has a higher level of motivation and engagement, they are more likely to increase their want to achieve (Fraser & Fisher, 1982; Ryan & Patrick, 2001). However, despite having the relationship between motivation and engagement, it does not predict the outcome of whether the students act upon it or not (Hsieh, 2014).

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can also be seen in marketing strategy when looking at getting students to attend collegiate sports events. Peetz (2011) conducted a study focusing on students' attendance at college basketball and touched on extrinsic and intrinsic motivation components to get more students to attend more sports events at UNLV. He applied a case study approach to investigate the student reward program in college basketball at Kansas State University (K-State). The reward program at K-State

was expanded later towards other sports such as women's basketball, volleyball, and baseball. Maehr and Branskamp's (1986) personal investment theory was incorporated into Peetz's study to analyze factors affecting a person's decision-making process. Peetz (2011) concluded with three suggestions for college athletic marketing strategies:

- (1) Supplemental marketing strategies designed and enforced to increase the attractiveness of the event or programs such as giveaways and promotions,
- (2) Marketing activities aimed at developing stronger connections with teams such as highlighting the teams' qualities, and
- (3) Marketing campaigns emphasized on social aspects of attending events such as theme nights.

Besides reward programs offered by athletic departments, Snipes and Ingram (2007) found that different marketing strategies are needed to attract different demographics and backgrounds. Marketers found that males focus more on food quality and giveaways, while females are more interested in entertainment value. Admission price is the key to targeting people with lower education, and a combination of promotion and entertainment would work the best when targeting people 25 years or younger (Snipes & Ingram, 2007). As for the intrinsic motivation of sports fans, Kim and Trail (2010) found that fans are motivated to attend events if they identify themselves with the team. Fans who identify themselves with the team will stick with the team whether they have a winning streak or losing streak (Kim & Trail, 2010).

Additionally, motivation is viewed as a dynamic process over time. Reeve (2008) proposed a four-stage motivation framework to understand participants' motivation and decision-making process. Reeve (2008) applied Deci and Ryan (2012) self-determination

theory into the motivation framework with a “focus on inner motivational resources, innate growth characteristics, needs, and sociocultural factors while people successfully develop and attain a state of autonomous self-regulation” (p.198). The four-stage motivation framework centers on antecedent, motive status, sense of and urge to, and energizing and directing (Alkaabi et al., 2017). These stages may affect individuals differently, as there is more to consider after they experience antecedent. Motivation framework has been used to look at a student's motive status, what their needs are, what they think of the collegiate sports events, and how they feel about it. The result of motive status will give almost clear signs of the student's sense of and urge to which then goes forward to the next stage. Students’ behavior, engagement, physiology, and self-report falls under the energizing and directing stage where they will decide if they can attend the collegiate sports events based on all four aspects.

While attending sports events can be an indicator of students’ engagement, it is primarily used to study consumer behavior in sports and on increasing marketing efforts. Understanding sports consumer motivation is important to allow the marketing team to create a promotion plan that will be successful (Bernthal & Graham, 2003; Funk, Filo, Beaton, & Pritchard, 2009). Considering there are many motivation factors that exist for fans to attend events desired, it is crucial to recognize what is important to the fans.

Factors Hindering Students from Attending Events

The concept of constraints has been commonly studied in various disciplines, such as tourism, recreation, leisure, and sport, which has been considered a key concept in understanding individuals’ behaviors and choices (Kim & Trail, 2010; Wood & Danylchuk, 2012). In the leisure realm, a constraint can be considered as reasons that

could prevent someone from enjoying leisure (Kleiber, McGuire, Aybar-Damali, & Norman, 2008). Kim and Trail (2010) conducted a study focusing on sports fans' leisure participation as spectators in sporting events. They concluded and defined constraints of sports spectators as "factors that impede or inhibit an individual from attending a sporting event" (Kim & Trail, 2010, p.191). This definition featured both leisure experience and sport management practice, which is preferable in the study.

Within the concept of constraint, the internal and external constraints are the most common elements in studying sports events involvement. The internal constraint is defined as internal psychological cognitions, including intrapersonal and interpersonal, that affect behavior (Crawford, Jackson & Godbey, 1991). Intrapersonal constraint refers to the combination of individual's psychological states and the factors that might negatively influence their leisure preferences such as stress, not liking the sport, while interpersonal constraint refers to the result of relationships or lack of relationships, with others that might have a negative influence on both their leisure preference and participation such as not having friends interested in attending collegiate sports events (Crawford et al., 1991). Kim and Trail (2010) defined internal constraints that are known to be a common constraint, which is a lack of knowledge. For example, international students might not be familiar with American football rules, so they might lose interest even if they attend a game and enjoy the game atmosphere. The students might have a memorable experience, but they may not understand and lose interest in the sport. Lack of interest is recognized as an internal constraint for attendance (Havard & Dwyer, 2012). Peer influence could hinder the individual from being more involved in the group due to the difference in interest (Wood & Danylchuk, 2012).

The external constraint can be defined as hindered action caused by the social or environmental situation and may or may not be controlled (Crawford et al., 1991). An example of a constraint that cannot be controlled is weather conditions. Weather conditions can be a huge factor for students who are commuting, especially during the winter or for students who do not have transportation when it rains. Another aspect of weather conditions as a constraint is the game experience. Cold weather might deter students from attending outdoor sports. Whether it is cold or rainy, students would rather watch the game from the comfort of their home rather than sitting on cold bleachers and having to pay for hot chocolate or hand warmers. Students do not have to worry about the weather or visibility as they can get better visuals from live broadcasting. Hansen and Gauthier (1989) found that bad weather can affect attendance negatively (Noll, 1974; Trail et al., 2008). An additional factor that could correlate with weather is the accessibility and location of the venue; this can be a constraint to some students. Students will not attend the events if they have issues accessing or getting to the facility (Omar-Fauzee et al., 2009).

Sports facilities such as stadiums or sports arenas can be another contribution to the external constraint. Constraints that stood out from the review fell into two categories: venue and non-venue. The constraints that tie into the venue include concessions, restrooms, seating, cleanliness, staff, and parking (Trail et al., 2008). The constraints that were non-venue included alternative activities, lack of success, the ability to watch on television, work, financial cost, social commitment, location, and weather (Trail et al., 2008). The financial cost might not be an issue for students who already have the ticket included in their tuition fee, but not all colleges have that system. Even when tickets are

included in tuition fees, other expenses such as food and beverages are not included, and they are sold at the concessions at a high price. In addition to students, even regular game goers think going to games can be costly, especially for professional games (Blankly et al., 2014). Fans with a higher team identification level do not feel the physical environment of the stadium to be a constraint in comparison to fans with lower team identification levels (De Carvalho, Boen, & Scheerder, 2015). Many fans who have a high level of team identification will probably try to attend every game possible regardless of the flaws of the stadium if they are safe. Fans with lower team identification, however, might find every reason not to attend the games.

Other social or family commitments had hindered students' participation in attending sports events with their friends (Trail et al., 2008; Wood & Danylchuk, 2012). Thus, social commitment, such as family gatherings or out of town trips, might be another constraint that can be controllable, to an extent, depending on how high the student's desire is. Students might have a low desire to attend collegiate sports events when they have guests around that are not a student from the university because their guests will have to pay for admission and not to be able to sit together. This is seen in a more recent article that relates to fan passion but still attached to collegiate football games (Simmons et al., 2018). They investigate the constraints students have when planning on going to the game. However, the researchers are putting the students' passion for their school into consideration (Simmons et al., 2018). The two high-scoring constraints are a commitment to school and friends. Students feel like they always have stuff to do regarding school, whether it is assigned schoolwork or group work. Besides

schoolwork, they also have other plans with their friends that hinder the students from going to the game.

From the student's experience, they feel many stadiums they have been to do not have or provide good enough Wi-fi connections for them to have internet access on their phone, which directly hinders the intention to become the audience of a game (Cohen, 2013). Nowadays, students are attached to their smartphones, and the need to access social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat are overwhelming. Not having access to their "social needs" can cause difficulties to the fans to focus when watching the game and end up losing interest in the game entirely as they might have missed part of the game.

METHODS

Research Design and Procedure

A qualitative research approach was used to serve the purpose of investigating the constraints and motivation experienced by college students to attend sports events as being engaged on campus. The approach commonly used to “help understand the nature, strengths, and interactions of variables” (Black, 1994, p. 425) and explore what is happening and serve as clarification (Black, 1994). The focus group was chosen in the study to explore and understand college students’ experiences attending collegiate sports events. The process of conducting a focus group allows facilitated discussion with a group of students, which allows members to interact and influence each other throughout the discussion rather than an interrogative approach (Hoang, Cardinal, & Newhart, 2016). To ensure the clarification of focus group discussion questions, the researcher conducted a pilot study by having the discussion in a group of two students. The pilot study was a helpful process to review the discussion questions and evaluate the discussion process to prevent any confusion and provide clarity.

The author led all sessions and responses. First, the author explained the research purpose, procedure, and background information about the project before proceeding focus group discussion. The participants were informed that the focus group discussion is entirely voluntary and was allowed not to answer the questions or terminate themselves at any point in the discussion if they are not comfortable or feel threatened. Reminders were given on how all responses were confidential and no names listed on the final report. The discussions were audio-recorded and will be terminated once the study ends. The

university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study before conducting the discussion (Approval number: IRB- 1911016-EXM).

Sampling and Research Participants

The sample used for this study is undergraduate students from a university located in the Midwest region. Purposive sampling was utilized to recruit a group of students who are in their junior and senior year. They have more knowledge about the opportunities and resources available for students to be engaged on campus after attending the institution for two years, where they could recall their experiences over the years.

The recruiting process started by attending multiple 300 and 400 level classes at the university in January 2020. The author attended the classes with permission from the class instructor, explained the purpose of the study, and invited students to the focus group. The initial email and reminder email were sent to all participants, including the location and time of the session. To find out how often the students attend collegiate sports events at the institution, the participants were asked to answer the survey, and recall their sports event attendance between fall 2018 through spring 2019, and which sports events they attended. Three focus group discussion sessions took place to: (1) investigate college students' experience in attending collegiate sports events, (2) identify college students' motivations and constraints in attending collegiate sports events, and (3) recognize possible strategies to improve collegiate sports events attendance and engagement on college campuses. Each participant received an Amazon \$20 gift card at the end of the discussion.

Instruments

The focus group used a discussion approach where the questions were asked openly in a room and the participants were expected to answer and discuss with other respondents. Each session took 25 minutes to 45 minutes, with a range of two to four participants. A short survey was given to the participants to gather their background information such as gender, year in school, major, and sports event participation experience such as have the students been to any games and how many games they have been to from fall 2018 through spring 2019) at the beginning of the discussion. The author conducted multiple discussion sessions to accommodate student's schedules and availability. All participants were able to provide their opinion to the questions asked and discussed with other students in the same focus group. The author facilitated the discussion and was able to ask for clarification or follow up questions.

Each discussion session consisted of three parts. The first part includes their overall experience with the university, such as their understanding of resources and opportunities available on campus. The second part focuses on what motivates and prevents them from attending collegiate sports events. The final part is to ask for recommendations to retain students who have been attending collegiate sports events. Some example questions include (Appendix A):

- 1) What motivated you to attend the game?
- 2) What would prevent students from attending collegiate sports events?
- 3) What is your suggestion or recommendation for retaining students who have been attending the collegiate sports events?

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was applied to analyze the data collected from the focus groups. This analysis was primarily used to analyze text data and the focus group transcripts in the current study, for the subjective interpretation of the content through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Each focus group discussion was audio-recorded and later transcribed into Word documents for further analysis. The author reviewed and checked all transcripts from multiple focus groups before the coding process to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts. The author read the transcripts line-by-line multiple times to allow codes to emerge from the data. An open coding process was used to identify potential themes from the transcript. During the process, the author took notes that reflected the meaning of participants' responses and repeated the coding process to identify potential themes. The author coded the raw data from the discussions into blocks to depict the three main purposes of the research. Significant quotes were selected from the raw data to capture the meaning of identified themes. To strengthen the in-depth interpretation and increase the validity of the results, a senior researcher provided additional assistance by following a similar data analysis procedure. The final themes and results were finalized and concluded after several research meetings.

RESULTS

The results of this research discussed in four parts: (1) Overall college experience, (2) Motivation to attend collegiate sports events, (3) Constraint to attend collegiate sports events, and (4) Students' suggestions on attracting more students to attend the collegiate sports events.

Research Participants and Demographics

The sample of 9 undergraduate students consisted of two males and seven females with ages ranging from 20 to 23 years old, and five of them juniors and four of them seniors at the time of data collection (Table 1). Participants were predominantly white, with two out of nine self-identified as Asian. Among the research participants, five students are from education and human sciences. All students indicated that they attended at least one game since they started attending the institution. However, one student reported that she did not attend any collegiate sports events since fall 2018. Students went to twelve different sports total with seven women sports and six men sports. Football is the most common sport attended with eight out of nine students going to at least one football game in a (one-year) timeframe.

Table 1
Participants' Demographics

	Gender	Age	Race	Year	College	Attendance since Fall 2018	Type of Sports ¹	Total Sports	Most Sports (Frequency)
P1	Male	21	White	Senior	Education & Human Sciences	Yes	FB, MBB, MTF, WR,	6	FB
P2	Female	20	White	Junior	Education & Human Sciences	Yes	FB, WR	2	FB
P3	Female	21	Asian	Junior	Education & Human Sciences	Yes	FB, MBB, WBB	3	FB
P4	Female	22	White	Senior	Education & Human Sciences	Yes	FB, MBB, BB, MSW, MTF, WR, WBB, SC, SB, WSW,	12	FB, MBB, WBB
P5	Female	23	Asian	Senior	Education & Human Sciences	No	NA	0	NA
P6	Male	22	White	Junior	Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences	Yes	FB, MBB	2	FB, MBB
P7	Female	21	White	Junior	Agriculture, Food & Environmental Sciences	Yes	FB, MTF, WR, WTF	4	FB
P8	Female	21	White & American Indian and Alaska	Senior	Agriculture, Food & Environmental Sciences	Yes	FB, MBB	2	FB, MBB
P9	Female	22	White	Junior	Natural Sciences	Yes	FB, EQ	2	EQ

Note 1: Football= FB, Men's Basketball= MBB, Men's Track and Field= MTF, Wrestling= WR, Women's Basketball=WBB, Women's Volleyball=VB, Men's Baseball= BB, Men's Swimming= MSW, Women's Soccer= SC, Women's Softball= SB, Women's Swimming= WSW, Women's Track and Field= WTF, Women's Equestrian= EQ

Overall College Experience

The content analysis identified two themes of students' experience on the university campus and outside of campus within the local community, including: (1) university impression and connection, and (2) opportunities and sense of self-growth.

University impression and Connection

The university is located in a small town with a 24,000 population, in which 13,000 are students. In a small college town, students experienced an inseparable relationship between the university and the local community. Three out of nine students mentioned that the university is a big part of the community, where students feel a close connection with other students and residents. Students also appreciate the openness of the community toward college students. A white, female student (P4) explained the comfort and welcome of the community:

“Like you can go out to the community, you know that people are going to recognize that you are a college student, but yet they are going to treat you the same. Like no shy away, almost they welcome you into the community, and it is just like one big family while you are here.”

Especially for students from smaller towns pursuing their degrees in a larger community, it could be an overwhelmed experience. Therefore, the small-town feeling with the hospitality that the local community provides is essential for students to feel safe and comfortable. A white, female student (P7) from a small town explained her experience on campus and in the community:

“It is not like overwhelmingly huge especially for me since I am from a small town of 800 people. The amount of people that live in the residential hall is about

the same that live in my town, so it is just really nice to be able to come here.”

Students further explained the uniqueness of the small-town environment and the big Division I (D1) school experience. A white, female student (P4) said, “I came because I like the D1 school part of it while also having the small-town community”. As a public and land-grant university, the university is famous for a great learning environment for higher education. Nevertheless, the Division 1 reputation in sports is viewed as a significant attraction for students. This explained the dependent relationship between community and university; the local community is the backbone of the university, and the university creates the identity for the community.

Opportunities and a Sense of Self-growth

Each university has its unique ways to get students engaged and have memorable experiences while they are earning their degrees. A variety of activities ranging from sports events, Greek life, university programs, and clubs or department-sponsored offers on campus can also be opportunities for students to build connections and keep them occupied. Greek life is philanthropy divided between sorority and fraternity. Greek life provides many opportunities for students to engage in philanthropic activities and build connections with alumni and other philanthropies. Among the research participants, three out of nine students explained how Greek life plays an important role in their college experience. A white, female student (P8) explained how being part of sorority requires time and effort “...I have been involved with sorority these past four years. It has been a lot with that, just going to socials, other people’s formals, and meetings.”

Besides Greek life, students have also been involved in clubs and organizations offered on campuses such as Robotics club, HEROH, or rugby club. The clubs and

organizations are normally organized by departments such as the mathematics department, student run soccer club, or based on their personal beliefs, Oasis. Six students are involved in clubs, student organizations, or a subdivision of club categories that may be related to a future career or skills. A white, female student (P4) explained her involvement:

“I am on exec board for State A Thon¹ this year, which takes a lot of time especially this year since it’s in April... And then a couple clubs like working out and then HEROH² through the wellness center. I want to tie everything together and representing the department as well.”

Even though there are many opportunities for students to be engaged on campus, some might not be able to participate in various university activities because of their work schedules. All students have jobs at the time of the discussion. The working hours ranged from seven to 30 hours per week, with some holding multiple jobs. The students also put aside the opportunities to be engaged on campus by putting work as another focus besides school as they understand that they need to pay bills. A white, male student (P1) said, “on the work side of things, I think like realizing need to finance my life and stuff like that. So, I think working, maybe, I can miss one or two games if I have to go to work whatever it is, I am doing.”

Education experience is also part of the opportunity that affects students’ experience while in college. Students can select the major they enjoy doing and

¹ State A Thon: Part of a nationwide movement, Miracle Network Dance Marathon, on college campuses. It is comprised of volunteers from the university. All year long, volunteers work to raise money by asking friends, family, and their communities to donate. All the money raised by State A Thon participants goes to the local Children's Miracle Network Hospital.

² HEROH: Health promotion student organization that functions as an extension of the wellness center. Members develop and implement educational programming on college health issues and provide campus-wide health promotion campaigns to educate & encourage healthy lifestyles.

potentially have a career in the field they are studying in. Not only that, but they can also choose classes that range from general to major-specific. P3, a female student, mentioned: “there’s a lot of passionate professors here, there’s a lot of well-educated students that really want to get stuff out of the university and I think we get it back”. A male student (P6) also mentioned, “I enjoy the class’s aspect too. It is different than high school where you’re just sitting in boring classes. You actually learn a lot of your classes so. I’d say overall, I enjoy my college experience thus far.”

Not far behind is the responsibilities these students learned as they move away from their home and family. For some students, leaving for college is their first time being separated from their family, and having to be responsible and independent which certainly pushes the self-growth in them. P5 (female, Asian) expressed how she traveled alone from another country to attend university. It pushed her to be independent and responsible. Students will take advantage of the opportunities given, especially in their field of interest. However, they have priorities such as work to pay rent and personal essentials, besides their academic responsibility. For most of the students, their priorities are education and work.

Motivation to Attend Collegiate Sports Events

There are many ways to get students motivated to attend collegiate sporting events. Some motivation comes from within the students, and some have external factors that resulted in them wanting to attend the events. For these students, three main themes emerged: socializing, new is exciting, and incentives.

Socializing

Collegiate sports events can be an avenue for students to experience social interaction with friends, Greek life community, and family members. Collegiate sports events are an option for students to share their interests with their social group. As stressed by all students that attended the focus group, they will go if they have friends to go with. P5 (female, Asian) expressed:

“if somebody asks me to, my friend, willing to go to spend their time to go with me, I would probably say yes if that day, I don’t have work or any assignments; then yeah. I would be open to any invitation.”

Some students use collegiate sports events to bond with their family members. They see attending the events as opportunities to not only bond but also share their passion for the sport. They enjoy cheering their team to victory and attending consistently. A white, female student (P8) explained:

“definitely social aspects. Absolute favorite sport is basketball. Me and my dad didn’t miss the past three, except the last one. Glad we missed the last one because we didn’t win the conference but before that, we went to all the conference tournament and we’ll go to the collegiate one every single time and it was just the best.”

With the new initiative implemented by the athletic department and Greek life at this college, students who are associated with Greek life can fundraise for their philanthropy. The philanthropy that has the highest student attendance rate will be receiving extra funding. Another female Asian student (P3) mentioned:

“Greek life has this thing going on where like if you go to as many basketball games, then you get money, fundraising to your philanthropy. So, we all go to that for one of the football game, is the college gameday. Mostly friends.”

New is Exciting

The fan and facility atmosphere at collegiate sports events play a significant role in the experience of the event attendee. The football stadium at this university has recently been upgraded in 2016 with larger seating capacity and stadium-size in general, seating 19,300 instead of 17,300. The excitement of the new stadium was a driving factor for a white, male student, P1, especially with the opening of the stadium celebrated with a concert: “... and having the big stadium. That was brand new and I think they did Jacks Bash³ like three days before the game. It was really cool. We wanted to go.”

Incentive

Free gifts are common in many marketing tactics to attract people and it works. At this university, some departments use fridge magnets, sunglasses, or even koozies to make their department known. The athletic department will sometimes make free gifts more exclusive by only offering them at specific collegiate sports events. Many students look forward to collegiate sports events knowing that they will get rewarded. A white, male student, P6, can attest to that:

“I think for me something more, kind of incentives to go, but I know a lot of my friends like to go if there’s like something before the game, free hats for ‘x’ amount of people or shirt or something like that, then it is a bigger factor for them to go.”

³ Jacks Bash: Referring to Jacks Bash concert, the kickoff celebration for the new stadium with joint effort by SDSU and **South Dakota** based First PREMIER Bank and PREMIER Bankcard.

While collegiate sports events are a preexisting subject that causes antecedent, students need a source of motivation to attend the collegiate sports events. The results reveal new is exciting and incentives fall into extrinsic motivation, which is motivation that comes from outside factors. The intrinsic motivator is the motivation that comes from the individual, such as the feeling of wanting to go to the events (Alkaabi et al, 2017; Hsieh, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2000). When looking at social as a motivator, it belongs to both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The student attending collegiate sports events because of an invitation from friends falls into extrinsic motivation and the student attending the collegiate sports events because of personal passion for the sport falls into intrinsic motivation.

Constraint When Attending Collegiate Sports Events

The constraints from this study observed factors that hinder an individual from attending a sporting event. The external constraint can be defined as hindered action caused by the social or environmental situation, and may or may not be controlled: weather, parking, other commitment, and event atmosphere. The internal constraint defined as internal psychological cognitions that affects behavior: unfamiliar with sports, and friends.

Weather

The weather was recognized as the most common constraint, especially when the winter season is near and the temperature drops. The average condition during winter includes moderate snowfall, with the average high temperature between 25°F (-3.9°C) to 45°F (7.2°C) range and the average low temperatures are in the freezing 5°F (-15°C) to 19°F (-7.2°C) range. Four out of eight students said the weather would be a factor that

can stop them from going to football games. A white, female student, P8, expressed her frustration when the football events are being held in the cold weather, especially when the stadium is outdoor and open to all elements. She explained “the biggest thing in football, when we close out the season, the weather. If it is chilly, I am not going. Just because I hate cold.”

Parking

The university implements a parking permit year-round, which means even during summer and winter break, everyone needs to have a parking permit to park on campus. Even though students are required to pay for the parking, when there are collegiate sports events taking places such as football or basketball games, permit holders will need to move their vehicles to make way for the event attendees to park their vehicles. This has caused frustration in many people, especially students and staff that are staying on campus for night classes or studying at the library. Three students mentioned that not only at the commuter lots, a parking lot designated for students who are living in the dorms are also being affected. A white, female student, P9, mentioned:

“At the beginning of the school year, they oversell the lot so they do not have enough parking spots, to begin with and asking them to move like there is just no way that you can do that. I know some people just park at Walmart and have friends give a ride back because there is no other spot. And it is just insane because you pay \$160 for that. It just needs to be better organized with parking. “

Unfortunately, parking is not just an issue for students living on-campus but also off-campus. Students who are living off-campus would typically drive to campus and park at designated permit areas. With limited parking spaces currently available, it

becomes an issue when events are going on, especially when these students are trying to get the closest parking spot to the stadium.

Other Commitment

Students, over time, learn how to prioritize their needs and wants. With that, it can be complicated when there are many things scheduled at the same time. Most students have jobs when they are in their junior and senior years while being a full-time student. Not only that, but some students also make efforts to attend other events offered by the universities. A white, female student, P8, explained their dilemma:

“When I mentioned UPC events, those are just more active where I am more involved with it instead of watching a sport. So, I rather do one of the scavenger hunt or go to the movie that they’re hosting, or, I really love their speakers and so, that is one of my favorite things.”

Event Atmosphere

Another factor that proves to be either motivating or hindering students from attending collegiate sports events is the atmosphere at the event. Most of the time, collegiate sports events are where students and fans share their love and support for the team. Unfortunately, not all sports have the same treatment. An Asian, female student, P5, talked about her experience when attending a volleyball game:

“I used to go to the volleyball games but it seems like the days that I went there, it was, there are not many people there. I just do not feel like I have any energy. There is nothing that brings to me. I don’t feel like I really want to so.”

Community events tailored around collegiate sports events are also essential to create an energetic atmosphere for students. It is a gateway for students to build

friendships and connections. Tailgating is one of the community events where students could interact with university alumni and members from the community before a football game starts. While this university used to allow students to share their tailgating experience with alumni and community members, they changed the tailgating policy a few years ago. Currently, the university is working on having a designated student tailgating area. Even though tailgating typically involves alcoholic drinks, the students' section should have activities that can keep students that are not allowed to drink engaged and still offer an exciting experience for them. A white, female student, P9, explained her opinion as one of the community assistants:

“Yeah. They should just do more, have more tailgating experience for students, especially residents. Fall semesters are stressful especially for first-year residents so having like fun activities for them, another opportunity to build a community, and do some fun games, activities, again for them to win free stuff. That whole group can kind of go to the football stadium together.”

Unfamiliar Sport

Not all sports are known worldwide. Students are attending the university without a prior understanding of the rules and are unfamiliar with the sport overall as it is not part of their culture. American Football is an example as not many countries are familiar with the sport. Without having a proper introduction to the sport, many students, especially international students, lose interest in going to the football game. P5 (female, Asian) shared her experience:

“Another reason why I don't usually go to the games is because for example the football games and stuff like that, it's not a sport that I know before because it's

not popular in my country and in my culture. If there's a soccer game or something like that that I am more familiar with."

Social Group

Generally, students attend collegiate sports events more when they are in their freshman and sophomore years. At that time, students are still learning what is available to them and worth going for. Eight out of nine students expressed that they went to more games during freshman and sophomore but less frequent as they become juniors and seniors due to other obligations such as work and school. Three out of the eight even expressed that they went to every collegiate sports event in the first two years they attended the university. It relates to the social group they are involved with, as P7 (female student, white) is different. She went to more collegiate sports events when she became a junior. P7 chose not to attend the collegiate sports events during freshman and sophomore year due to her peer group not interested in sports:

"I guess it's the opposite of me, I only went to one game in my freshman year, and I don't think I went to any in my sophomore year. But I went to 4 football games last fall. I think that is because I do not really have that many friends who are interested in sports in my freshmen year. So, I did not really have anyone to go with and I did not want to go by myself. But now I have a lot more friends from different friends' circles that I can go with. So, there are different people to go with."

Students unanimously agree that the change in their college lifestyle affects their decision when attending collegiate events. There were a few external constraints that are

out of their control, such as weather, parking, other commitment, and event atmosphere. Unfamiliar sport and social group fell under internal constraints.

Students' Suggestions on Attracting More Students to Attend the Collegiate Sports Events

After understanding college students' motivation and constraints attending collegiate sports events, the third primary research purpose is to explore possible strategies to improve students' attendance through focus group discussions. Marketing strategies and suggestions emerged from the focus group discussion. Students also provided several possible ideas for future sports events, such as target programming and allowing students to use their meal plan at the concessions.

Marketing Tactics

Currently, the university sends out reminder emails to students about collegiate sports events that will take place throughout the current week. The university utilizes social media to post updates on all sports and promotions available to fans and students. However, for some students, they do not think it is sufficient as there are students who still miss out on the reminder emails and not knowing about what collegiate sports events are taking place. This excludes more significant events such as College Gameday⁴, which was promoted everywhere throughout campus and the city. Two students suggested creating more awareness throughout campus, such as having someone to invite other students to the games. P3 (female, Asian) suggested:

“I think one of the things they can do is, you have the sporty and outgoing people.

A lot of the marketing is going towards them. So, I feel like going towards the

⁴ College Gameday: [Pre-game show](#) broadcast by [ESPN](#) as part of the network's [coverage](#) of [college football](#), broadcast on Saturday mornings during the college football season, prior to the start of games.

people that don't really know what's going on cause there's a lot of people like it. They have no idea what's going on or like what game."

On top of creating more awareness amongst students through invitation, the university promoted their events near the dormitories area. The staff used a more interactive approach in marketing about the collegiate sports events that are happening, such as announcing upcoming collegiate sports events around campus and holding signs of the event. Even though posters and social media posting might seem a lot, having face-to-face promotion shows the effort and creates a welcoming experience that a person could remember. P4 (female, white) shared her experience with the hands-on marketing approach by the coaches:

"I know one year, I don't know which coach it was, they were driving around campus on one of the golf carts and shouting in the megaphone and handing out free prizes and stuff. Just something little like that, you're on a D1 campus but it's still small enough where the coaches show that they care about the students."

Besides promotion throughout campus, students always look for activities they can do while being on campus, especially when they are stuck on campus for the weekend or school break. The athletic department can take advantage of the opportunity by making promotions tailored toward students. Promotions can be competition between two students that attended the event for a chance to win give cards or activities that promote engagement with students at the event. P3 (female, Asian) mentioned:

"...If you're at a basketball game and stay until the third quarter, they do the foul for howl or whatever it is with Buffalo Wild Wings, like that's a huge hit where students want to be there, in the atmosphere. Tailor things towards students is

what going to get students there. If you do not have things for them, they are not going to stay engage and want to be there.”

Another marketing suggestion from students is focusing on appreciating collegiate sports events attendees. The athletic department can create individual appreciation messages to attendees. The message is to show the department recognizes the effort attendees put in to attend the collegiate sports events. Some coaches such as the head football and basketball coaches took it into their own hands and posted from their social media a picture or video expressing their appreciation to all fans who attended the collegiate sports events and how important that the fans show their support. Three students suggested that a better way to approach this is to send out personal appreciation messages. P1 (male, white) mentioned:

“I guess telling the people that being there means a lot for everyone there, whether it be the facilities or just like. I think people like being told that they are appreciated... Some people might take that like a grain of salt too where it’s you being there probably meant everything to somebody and meant nothing to somebody else.”

Target Programming

The university has a reward program for students where they check-in at the event using the application on their phone. The reward program is based on points as certain collegiate sports events have higher points, and for some, students can get extra points for staying past the half-time. Students with the most points will receive the best value prize, such as a gaming console, and by rank, other students will get prizes comparable to their

points such as gift cards. Three students mentioned their interest in this type of program.

P9 (female, white) mentioned that:

“I know you have to scan your jacks card for each game, so maybe if there is a system that, at the end of the year/season you can have the jacks biggest fan to somebody who went to the most games, would get \$100 worth of flex or gift cards or you know, a bigger prize for that.”

However, the issue universities will need to combat if this program were implemented is false check-in, where students take advantage of other students to get their run in winning the prize.

Meal Plan at Concessions

Several meal plans are used at this university. The meal plan is broken down into two types, which are flex dollar and block. Even though the block plan can only be used in the common dining area, the university implemented the ability for students to use their flex dollars at the concessions. This might open a new opportunity for students to use their leftover flex dollars and not have to carry any cash to the game. P8 (female, white) mentioned, “and another big thing that I think they are doing well is that I just heard that they are allowing you to use your flex at concession stands which I think is going to be very helpful to students. Just you know, wanting to have the broader, the game food, and watch your game.”

DISCUSSION

The study involves five juniors and four seniors attending a university in the Midwest. All of them attended at least one collegiate sports event since they attended the university with eight out of nine having gone to a collegiate sports event since fall 2018. The most attended collegiate sports event amongst the students is football. The result of this study addresses the main purposes of this study is to (1) investigate college students' experience in attending collegiate sports events, (2) identify college students' motivations and constraints in attending collegiate sports events, and (3) recognize possible strategies to improve collegiate sports events attendance and engagement on college campuses.

The results showed that students recognized their overall college experience impacts their lives in various ways, including the university's impression, connection, opportunities, and a sense of self-growth. University's impression and the connection are important for students as they feel that they belong in the community. The university, where this study took place, is a Division I NCAA school where some students look forward to their collegiate sports experience. It coincides with the unity and connectivity theme found in attending collegiate sports by Ervin and Rosser (2017). A common bond, the local community, and the student section help provide a robust environment that creates the feeling of unification and connection. Besides university impression and connection, students felt there are opportunities for them to be engaged on campus and have an environment to promote self-growth. There are activities on campus that allow students to be engaged and try new things such as Greek life, clubs, organizations, and attending collegiate sports events. Students also felt living in the dorm or off-campus as a step towards learning to be independent and learn to be responsible in their studies as

well as other aspects of their lives such as job and relationship. Students gain a sense of self-growth while interacting with friends, classmates, and faculty, with different backgrounds and skills, and open to trying new things (Hoang et al., 2016). Students' overall college experience is determined by the university impression, connection, opportunities, and a sense of self-growth. These factors indicated students' desire and willingness to participate in university organized programs, including athletic events, which also viewed as a consideration of choosing a college.

The results of motivation in this study showed similar findings with existing studies. Socializing is the most important motivation factor when attending collegiate sports events. Peetz (2011) mentioned that marketing efforts, especially at the collegiate level, should be made toward the social aspect when attending events. The social factor of personal incentive is a crucial factor in having successful reward programs (Peetz, 2011). Socializing affects not only students' decision making but also their wellbeing. Students with less chance to socialize tend to be associated with a higher probability of poor mental health and perceived stress (VanKim & Nelson, 2013). Many different group students chose to attend the collegiate sports events with; friends, family, and organizations such as Greek life. Another study found that levels of team identification correlated with a portion of friends interested in the same team, number of friends supporting the team, and the view that the team plays a role in maintaining friendships (Wann et al., 2001). In this study, one student specifically mentioned that she did not attend collegiate sports events when she was a freshman and sophomore because none of her friends wanted to attend, and she refused to go alone.

The results show other commitments are a common constraint experienced by students when attending collegiate sports events. Each college student shows different commitments and priorities that determine their course of action, such commitments range from school, work, social, and relationships. Other commitments to school such as homework, exams, and friends such as playing sports, go to a concert, or shopping are commonly recognized as constraints (Simmons et al., 2018). Although commitment to school and friends are the most constraint, high passionate fans might still be dedicated to attending the game. Outside of attending events, people can also have trouble balancing their recreation time with the commitment they have, such as work and family commitment. A study showed that women have trouble setting time commitments to the recreation group due to work and family commitment (Wood & Danylchuk, 2012). Generally, women try to adjust family commitment to fit their involvement in group leisure. The current study targets juniors and seniors as research participants because of their knowledge and familiarity of the university sports programs and events. As a result, the participants pointed out a few main constraints which might be more prevalent among upper-classmen than lower-classmen. For example, juniors and seniors might require more time and effort to maintain their academic performance in their area of study instead of taking general classes such as English and College Algebra. Other hand-on experiences or volunteer opportunities relevant to their major and future career are seen as priorities than attending sports events as they are closer to finishing their degree entering the workforce.

The weather has been known to be one of the most common constraints in sports events attendance (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Noll, 1974; Rovell, 2014; Trail et al.,

2008;). This constraint was also brought up by four out of eight students who went to football games. Students expressed how cold weather affects their decision to attend collegiate sports events outdoors. The weather has been recognized as a vital factor in sport spectators' decision making for going to sports events (Hansen & Gauthier, 1989; Noll, 1974). Poor weather, for example, too cold, too hot, raining tends to have a more significant adverse effect on females than males regarding sports event attendance (Trail et al., 2008). A watching section in a common area such as student union could be created by the university to give students the option to continue supporting their school team.

Many universities have tried reward programs. While some universities such as this university have tried implementing some type of reward program, it has not been successful and decided to end the program. Peetz (2011) recognized that one program could not fit at all universities when the reward program was placed in a trial at his university. Participants in this study showed a high interest in participating in the reward program and expressed there will be a stronger desire if they get rewarded for the effort they put in into going to the collegiate sports events. A possible issue if this program gets implemented is false check-in, where students take advantage of other students to get their run in winning the prize. The university can combat false check-in by checking the student ID when they get to the entrance.

A type of programming that this university is currently implementing that gets some traction from students is the marketing effort that targets the Greek life community. Participants who are involved in Greek life mentioned they have been attending the collegiate sports events to help support and raise funds for their philanthropy. The system

implemented is to target a bigger group of students with the hope students will come with friends or in groups.

A meal plan is a system that exists at many universities. Normally, the same company handles on-campus food, catering, and athletic concessions. With that, it is easy to implement an initiative that promotes students to use their meal plan at the concession. This university uses the existing meal plan system and implements the usage at the concession. The participants see this as a game-changer and great opportunity for students who are living on campus that still have many leftover meal plan dollars to use it at concessions so that they do not lose the money.

Marketing is an important key to get the news out about the events that are being hosted by an organization. Most marketing efforts done by universities are focused on revenue, getting more scholarships for student-athletes, and creating better sports facilities. With that, their focus is getting more ticket-buying fans such as faculty alumni, donors, community members, and university faculty members. Enticing students with rewards might be the best option. Like target programming, students want to feel appreciated after trying to attend collegiate sports events. Incentives such as free cups and free t-shirts can help boost the students' motivation. Not only that, but theme nights can also be used to promote the collegiate sports event such as pajama night, where students can get free soda if they attend the collegiate sports event wearing a pajama. While university email has been utilized to market events towards students, social media such as Instagram or Facebook can also be done to increase the awareness amongst students. The athletic department could set up an event page where students or social media users could share the event on their page to spread awareness amongst friends and other users. With

the flexibility of technology, the athletic department can also focus on after-game outreach, such as sending appreciation messages to attendees that tagged the university social media on their social media postings.

Parking is a common issue on university campuses. The current issue that was brought by students is not having enough parking spots for students who live off-campus to park and attend the event. A way that could minimize this issue is to provide a shuttle service that goes through town when there are collegiate sports events. The university can expand the current program they have, giving a safe ride for students two nights a week, which could have the possibility of covering nights where collegiate sports events take place. Not only will this program help prevent students from driving under the influence, but it could also potentially minimize the parking issues for students living off-campus.

Unfamiliarity with sports is an issue that is possible to solve by providing a fun learning experience of the sport. An example is American football, which is not a common sport in many parts of the world. Departments on campuses such as the Office of International Affairs, student organizations, and university programming can help build a program to educate not only international students but also to students who are interested in learning about the sport. The program can be done at the start of the fall semester before football season starts. The program also could have an interactive setting where international students get to learn the sport through playing the sport with students who are in the sports-related program, such as physical education, and sport and recreation management. By doing so, it promotes peer to peer engagement while international students get to learn and experience playing the sport. The students with career goal involving in teaching and sport-related fields can gain hands-on experience.

The housing department could also make a program where students attend collegiate sports events together with other students on the same floor. It will allow students to get to know and help each other understanding the sport they are watching.

Student engagement has a strong connection with student retention, academic achievement, and graduation (Astin, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1975, 1993, 1998). It goes back to connectedness and engagement to the school (Libbey, 2004), university spirit and pride (Ervin & Rosser, 2017), and attachment and identity (Laverie & Arnett, 2000). Students have desire to stay at the institution if they feel like they are part of the school, sharing their school spirit, having the opportunity to be active, and growing their skills. By attending collegiate sports events, not only students will be able to feel the connectedness and sharing school spirit, but they also can have the opportunity to be active such as participating in the half-time game show, or volunteer at the game to experience what it is like to prepare or run the event.

Limitation and Future Recommendation

The focus group was the primary data collection method of the study because it allows students to interact and influence each other throughout the discussion rather than an interrogative approach (Hoang et al., 2016). Despite having only two to four students in each group, the method was beneficial to keep the conversation going. It also allowed the author to ask follow-up questions when it is necessary, including a question that was brought up during the focus group discussion and became an essential question to the study. The downside is the “mob mentality” that could happen during the focus group discussion. It is easier to occur as participants could think alike or quickly agree on an

idea; they know it makes sense. For future suggestions, the individual interview is encouraged to receive more individualistic answers.

While there are benefits in using focus groups, the number of participants and demographic can affect the result and validity of the study. Nine students participated in this study, and the focus group was done in three sessions to accommodate students' availability. While the group of three and four had various responses, the group of two seemed to have similar answers with personal experience, which happen since they only have each other to respond to questions. Besides the small-sized focus group, the demographic of participants could also affect the overall view of the study as there were more females (seven students) than male participants (two students). The two male participants' answers may not capture what all male students experience when attending collegiate sports events. A suggestion for future studies is to recruit an equal number of male and female participants or the same ratio to the current student population at the university.

This study focuses on collegiate sports events as one category. It might be beneficial for future studies to investigate students' decision making in attending collegiate sports events indoor versus outdoor. By doing so, it could be used to understand the insight of what motivates and hinders students from attending collegiate games or events. For example, comparing motivations and constraints between indoor and outdoor sports might be helpful for the athletic department to create planning for accommodation. Also, the marketing department could use the information to create a better and specific marketing strategy based on the potential difference between outdoor and indoor sports.

While this study only focuses on one university in the Midwest, it might be beneficial to include schools in a different region, especially weather identified as the most common constraint. Winter in the Midwest area of the United States of America may be harsher in comparison to the south such as Florida, Alabama, which could affect the constraint experienced by the students in attending collegiate sports events.

Universities with different student population sizes or categorized in the different divisions might also result in a variation of the number of attendances at collegiate sports events.

Conclusion

Not all students have the same college experience, motivation, and constraints to attend collegiate sports events. Different students desire different needs and want when they attend university. When it comes to attending collegiate sports events, students face many motivations, and constraints that drives and hinders them from attending collegiate sports events. Social being the most talked about in all focus group sessions as that factor can be the student's motivation or constraint when deciding to attend collegiate sports events. Other motivation includes new is exciting and incentive. Weather and other commitment are the most relatable constraint amongst the students. Parking, event atmosphere, unfamiliar sport and social group were also mentioned as constraint the students experience. However, these motivations and constraints can vary upon different years in college, college size, and region. Strategies to improve the issue of students' attendance at collegiate sports events will only be effective to the extent to which marketers can identify what students' desire when they attend the collegiate sports events.

APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP SURVEY AND QUESTIONS

Demographic SurveyPlease tick boxes that applies to you for each question:

1. Are you a junior or senior?

<input type="checkbox"/> Junior	<input type="checkbox"/> Senior
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2. Age _____

3. What is your gender?

<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female
<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer	

4. What is your race?

<input type="checkbox"/> White	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian
<input type="checkbox"/> African American	<input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian and Pacific
<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian and Alaska Native	<input type="checkbox"/> Islander
<input type="checkbox"/> Others _____	

5. What is your major? _____

6. How you been to any SDSU games since you attend SDSU?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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7. How you been to any SDSU games since Fall 2018? If no, your survey ends here.

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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8. If you answered yes to the question above, how many SDSU games you have attended since Fall 2018?

<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2
<input type="checkbox"/> 3-5
<input type="checkbox"/> 6-9
<input type="checkbox"/> 10+

9. Please select the statement below that best describe who you typically go to the sport events with:

- By myself
- With family members
- With friends
- With an organized group (e.g. student clubs, Greek life, work, etc).

10. Which SDSU games did you attend since Fall 2018? Please circle 'yes' or 'no'. If yes, state how many times you have attended. See example in the first row of the table below.

Sports	Attendance	Frequency
Example: Hockey	Yes / No	2
Football	Yes / No	
Men's Basketball	Yes / No	
Men's Cross Country	Yes / No	
Baseball	Yes / No	
Men's Golf	Yes / No	
Men's Swimming and Diving	Yes / No	
Men's Track and Field	Yes / No	
Wrestling	Yes / No	
Women's Basketball	Yes / No	
Women's Cross Country	Yes / No	
Equestrian	Yes / No	
Women's Golf	Yes / No	
Soccer	Yes / No	
Softball	Yes / No	
Women's Swimming and Diving	Yes / No	
Women's Track and Field	Yes / No	
Volleyball	Yes / No	

Interview Questions

Part I: Overall University Experience

1. What do you like about your college experience?
2. What do you usually do besides go to classes?

Part II: Motivation and Constraint

1. Why did you attend the collegiate sports events?
2. What can stop you from attending collegiate sports events?
3. What activities did you choose to do instead of attending the collegiate sports events?
4. What motivates you to do something else besides attending the games?
5. How different are your attendance compared to freshman and sophomore year?

Part III: Possible Strategies to Improve Students' Collegiate Sports Events Attendance and Engagement on College Campuses

1. What can Athletics Department do to improve students attendance for the games?
2. Can you think of suggestions or recommendations that can help retain students who have been attending the collegiate sports events?
3. Is there anything else you would like to add about what motivates/hinder you going to SDSU games?

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