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Relationship Marketing and Intercollegiate Sport Promotion

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Relationship Marketing and Intercollegiate Sport Promotion

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Health, Sport, and Exercise Science

by

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July 2020
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Abstract

The first article, a case study on a NCAA Division I Power Five university in the southeastern United States, employed a case study framework, explored target markets and exposure techniques through both the planned behavior theory and social identity theory theoretical lenses. This study aimed to better understand how university students and booster club members identify as a social group. The data emerged into four distinct themes, including communication, social interaction, connection, and hospitality. The findings suggested booster club members are primary fans and help the team generate fan interest. The importance of sociability was clear and the implications for target marketing and team exposure to acquire fans are discussed within. The second study utilized a transcendental phenomenological framework and focused on a Division I tennis team booster club and eight participants' experiences of reality versus expectation regarding booster involvement. This study used the social identity theory as the theoretical lens to better understand how the booster club members identify as a social group and the relation to team identity and brand equity. Multiple themes emerged from the data, including reciprocity, investment, and connection and belonging. Each of these themes fell under both reality and expectation but were experienced differently under the two categories. The invariant essence emerged as a desire for purpose and engagement with the team and athletes. The importance of connection to team identity was clear, and implications for marketing the booster club to enhance team identity and brand equity are discussed within. The final study explored the influence of relationship marketing in college athletics on Power Five faculty members. It aimed to investigate the motivation impact of a faculty member's team identification or relationship with college athletes in their respective class(es) on intercollegiate athletic event attendance. Results showed a significant difference in motivation scores from faculty participants, and higher levels

of both faculty identification with university athletic teams and faculty perceptions of student

athletes contributed to increased athletic event motivation scores.

Acknowledgements

For as long as I can remember, I have aspired to earn a doctorate. I cannot begin express my gratitude to the many individuals who have positively influenced and encouraged me. I am grateful for my time at Arkansas and for the many friends I have made throughout this journey.

First to my committee, my appreciation for each of you cannot be described by words, but I will do my best to express it. You all have been outstanding teachers and mentors. Dr. Dittmore, Dr. Robinson, Dr. Stokowski, and Dr. Velliquette, I feel honored that I was able to build relationships with each of you. Dr. Robinson and Dr. Velliquette, thank you for openly sharing your knowledge and encouraging me throughout this process. Thank you, Dr. Dittmore, for your continuous support and guidance. Your mentorship the past few years has been invaluable. To my chair, Dr. Stokowski, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for not only your mentorship, but also your friendship. Thank you for welcoming and including me when I was, for lack of better words, "dropped into your lap." Your guidance allowed me to feel confident and enjoy this journey. Once again, thank you.

To my parents, thank you for a lifetime of support. Your constant encouragement made this possible. Dad, thank you for the countless hours you spent proof reading, seeing documents you sent back with less and less red marks built my confidence (I really hope you weren't getting lazy). However, Dad, I mostly appreciate you for being my role model. Mom, thank you for the inspiration. You genuinely enjoy your work. I know, because of you, some days will be hard, but persevering will always be worth it.

Table of Contents

List of Published Papers

Chapter 2

Fridley, A., Popejoy, E., Bell, C., Stokowski, S. (accepted). Not your typical fan: A phenomenological study on booster club membership for a men's division I college tennis program. *Global Sport Business Journal*.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

According to Grönroos (2004), marketing is the act of managing market relationships. Kabus (2016) added to this definition, stating marketing is "a collection of actions of an economic character, a purpose of which is not only to achieve an economic profit, but also fulfill the needs of a social and psychological character, expressed by clients," (p. 45). In other words, marketing can be explained as the process of promotion with the goal of profit. Sport marketing consists of the activities specifically designed for the needs and wants of sport consumers (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2014), with the purpose to encourage fan interest through the connection of sport products and fan behavior (Ratten 2011). Sport marketing "developed two major thrusts: the marketing of sport products and services directly to consumers of sports and industrial products or service using partnerships and promotions with sport properties," (Mullin et al., 2014, p. 13). Effective sport marketing includes communication and allocation of resources to the best target market (Ratten, 2016). Relationship marketing can be defined as the marketing strategies directed at establishing, enhancing, and maintaining successful relationships (Abeza, O'Reilly, & Reid, 2013; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Nufer & Buhler, 2009) is an ongoing process without a singular product (Grönroos, 2017). The prominent marketing strategy, relationship marketing, was first mentioned in the service marketing literature in 1983 (Berry, 1995; Williams & Chinn, 2010). Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh (1987) were among the first to outline the importance of relationships as marketing strategies; they developed a framework designed to establish relationships among buyers and sellers. The authors believed a strong consumer franchise depended on the relationship between a buyer and seller. Dwyer et al. (1987) decision to move past discrete transactional strategies to ongoing relationships commenced the study of

relationship marketing, a prominent tactic used in marketing today. Researching relationship marketing in the context of sport marketing is important to further develop lasting connections between sport entities and primary consumers.

A common interest between a brand and its consumers provided a foundation to establish brand communities (Popp & Woratschek, 2016). Brand communities increased consumer loyalty through the enhancement of relationships (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002; Popp & Woratschek, 2016), and motivated invested consumers to provide meaningful feedback (McAlexander et al., 2002). Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould (2009) found 12 value-creating practices, categorized into four themes, present in brand communities. Theme one, social networking, concentrated on brand community member relationships and included welcoming, empathizing, and governing practices. Theme two, impression management, focused on creating positive brand impressions and consisted of evangelizing and justifying (Schau et al., 2009). Theme three, community engagement, practices reinforced member engagement in brand communities and encompassed staking, milestoning, badging, and documenting. Theme four, brand use, related to brand improvement and included grooming, customizing, and commoditizing. The more practices utilized drive stronger brand community and as such marketers should encourage large practice diversity (Schau et al., 2009).

Rational

This dissertation focuses on sport marketing, specifically addressing team identity and relationship marketing, and includes three separate publishable research papers. These papers are designed to be practical references for marketers in the setting of intercollegiate sport by providing a more in depth examination of primary consumers at institutions included in the Power Five Conferences, Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big Ten, Big 12, Pac 12, and

Southeastern Conference (SEC). Lastly, the papers included have their own approaches of investigation into under focused areas of intercollegiate athletic marketing, ultimately, providing unique contributions to the sport marketing literature.

　　　　Paper 1. Utilizing a case study approach (Merriam, 2009), the first manuscript, Cookie Cutter Marketing Might Not Cut It: A Case Study on Men's Tennis Marketing, explored the best target market and exposure techniques for a Division I Power Five men's tennis program in the southeastern United States. This study used both the planned behavior theory and the social identity theory as the theoretical lenses to better understand how university students and booster club members identify as a social group and the relation to team identity. Cunningham and Kwon (2003) stated the planned behavior theory could be used specific to sport spectators, as the subjective norms of relationships influence is significant in sport settings. Team identification has been aligned with social identity theory (Lock & Heere, 2017), a psychological theory which describes a person's identity based on the relationship between the person and the groups they belong to (Delia & James, 2018; Heere & James, 2007; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Four distinct themes emerged from the data, including *communication*, *social interaction*, *connection,* and *hospitality*. The findings suggested booster club members are the primary fans and help the team generate greater fan interest through events, such as a booster club barbeque. The importance of sociability was clear and the implications for target marketing and team exposure to acquire fans are discussed within.

　　　　Paper 2. The second paper, Not Your Typical Fan: A Phenomenological Study on Booster Club Membership for a Men's Division I College Tennis Program, utilized the transcendental phenomenological approach. The study focused on a Division I tennis team booster club and eight participants' experiences of reality versus expectation regarding booster

involvement. This purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of men's tennis team booster club members in a NCAA Division I Power Five university in the southeastern United States. Without revenue production, such as concessions and ticket sales, booster club memberships provided an opportunity for the team to increase their budget. Team identification is an attachment designed to provide fans with a sense of belonging (Delia & James, 2018; Heere & James, 2007). This study used the social identity theory as the theoretical lens to better understand how the booster club members identified as a social group and the relation to team identity and brand equity. Multiple themes emerged from the data, including *reciprocity*, *investment*, and *connection and belonging*. Each of these themes fell under both reality and expectation but were experienced differently under the two categories. The invariant essence emerged as a desire for purpose and engagement with the team and athletes. The importance of connection to team identity was clear, and implications for marketing the booster club to enhance team identity and brand equity are discussed in the paper.

 Paper 3. The third paper, The Forgotten Inherent Relationship: Faculty and Intercollegiate Athletics, explored the influence of relationship marketing on potential consumers with an inherent relationship to the organization and people involved. The primary goal of relationship marketing is to assemble a committed consumer base (Adomah-Afari & Maloreh-Nyamekye, 2018). "Relationships are among the most important and powerful aspects of sports marketing," (Bee & Kahle, 2006, p. 110). The purpose of this paper was to investigate if a faculty member's team identification or relationship with college athletes in their respective class(es) impacted intercollegiate athletic event attendance or team loyalty. This investigation was analyzed through a survey composed of the following: Trail & James' (2001) Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption; Woo, Trail, Kwon, and Anderson's (2009) Points of Attachment

Index; Lawrence, Hendricks, and Ott's (2007) Perceptions of Athletic Departments Questionnaire; and the number of athletic events attended each year by the faculty. Multiple regression was used to determine the impact of faculty identity and relations on athletic even attendance and team loyalty. Results revealed differences in motivation type from faculty participants, and levels of faculty identification with university athletic teams and their perceptions of student athletes impacted athletic event motivation scores.

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CHAPTER 2

Cookie Cutter Marketing Might Not Cut It: A Case Study on Men's Tennis Marketing

Consider the following scenario: It is one of the biggest collegiate tennis matches of the season, and the men are playing their hearts out, wanting nothing more than to win. In the stands, however, a small crowd is watching court one, and there are a few other people scattered behind courts two and three. The player on court four has his family there to support him. From time to time a few fans watch court five, yet no one has wandered out to court six. While players do not play the same court every match, this is the typical location of spectators for each match. When the home team wins a point, one can hear the player's name followed by words of encouragement. This suggests that while the team might not have a large fan base, they have a loyal and caring one, a rather common occurrence with non-revenue generating collegiate sports. But why is that?

The purpose of this study was to examine the barriers and challenges associated with marketing a non-revenue generating sport when the team finished in the lower half of a NCAA Division I Power Five Conference. Specifically, this study focused on understanding the fan awareness of the men's tennis team at University X, a NCAA Division I Power Five university in the southeastern United States. According to the university's head men's tennis coach, who has a marketing background, awareness is unacceptably low for men's tennis (personal communication, February 12, 2018). University X's sport marketing department typically uses high profile sports like football and basketball to cross-promote other sports. The men's tennis team is not mentioned at all, even if it is the only team with an event the next day (personal communications, February 12, 2018). Athletic revenues increase every year, allowing athletic departments to spend more money and keep up with other programs (Chudacoff,

2015). According to the head coach specified above, the men's tennis team had expended their entire marketing budget very early in the season, before conference play started; and as such, it began to use its operational budget to attempt to raise awareness in the community (personal communications, February 12, 2018).

Review of Literature

Sport marketing is used to encourage fan interest through linking sport products with fan behavior (Ratten 2011). Effective sport marketing techniques include directed communication and the allocation of resources toward the best target market (Ratten, 2016). Awareness, in the sport marketing context, describes the knowledge of team existence, and it is characterized by low levels of involvement and a lack of psychological connection (Funk & James, 2001).

Motivation

Athletic event attendance is a primary sport fandom consumption behavior (Melnick & Wann, 2011). Yim and Byon (2018) found service satisfaction impacted a consumers' attendance intention. According to attribution theory (Weiner, 1985; Weiner, 2000), consumers disconnected from game satisfaction after a loss and used service related satisfaction to make future consumption decisions (Yim & Byon, 2018). For this reason, Yim and Byon, (2018) suggested sport marketers designate increased time and resources to customer service related strategies.

Earnheardt (2010) found uncommitted observation was a primary motivation for sport spectator event attendance. Spectators' expressed higher interest in quality, competitive games with teams of similar abilities (Trail, Robinson, Dick, & Gillentine, 2003). Sport fan's, conversely, indicated a persistent desire for connection to a team, player, or sport as the primary motivation for athletic event attendance (Hunt, Briston, & Brashaw, 1999; Toder-Alon, Icekson,

& Shuv-Ami, 2018). Sport fans can be described as consumption driven (Bodet & Bernache-Asollant, 2011); they experienced sport fandom through social and emotional value resulting from group affiliation (Toder-Alon, Icekson, & Shuv-Ami, 2018).

Team Identity

The linking psychology and marketing enables effective sport marketing techniques (Chalip, 1992). The understanding of consumer identification allows for effective marketing (Ratten, 2011). Fans with high team identification exhibit team support regardless of game outcome (Yim & Byon, 2018). For long term success, sport marketers should would to increase team identification (Avourdiadour & Theodorakis, 2014; Yim & Byon, 2018). Satisfy fans with low team identity, as satisfaction is key to future consumption (Yim & Byon, 2018). There are many people and experiences that comprise the meaning of team (Delia & James, 2018). The meaning of a team evolves as components of a team change, coaches leave and players graduate. Researchers have suggested fans may identify with a team, players, coaches, and even the community (Trail, Robinson, et al., 2003). Delia and James (2018) suggested attachment to players, coaches, and community are included in the meaning of team.

Social Identity. Athletic event attendance allowed for more than simple entertainment; it allowed spectators to engage in social activity and in turn enriched their social psychological lives (Melnick, 1993). Team identification has been aligned with social identity theory (Lock & Heere, 2017), a psychological theory which describes a person's identity based on the relationship between the person and the groups they belong to (Delia & James, 2018; Heere & James, 2007; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Sierra and Mcquity (2007) found those with positive feelings about group membership showed higher susceptibility to sentimental feelings. Alumni, a group predisposed to higher interest in booster membership, have been known to form social

identification through an appreciation for team history (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007). Social identity groups might consist of players, coaches, and other fans (Lock & Heere, 2017). Boyle and Magnusson (2007) found social identity positively impacts brand loyalty and equity in college athletics. Tajfel (1982) described social identity as the self-concept the individual derives from the knowledge of and emotional value placed on group membership. The social identity theory was used to help shape interview questions for the third research question. Sociability, as defined by Melnick (1993), is a need for group contact and refers to a casual, frequently unexpected, social interaction. Food has been used as a conduit for social interaction; however, Slavich et al. (2018) found fans showed interest in the ability to socialize, but did not see food as a vehicle for the social interaction.

Planned Behavior Theory

The planned behavior theory is one of the most cited psychological models used to predict human social behavior (Ajzen, 2011); it has been used to predict behavior in diverse fields including exercise, leisure, and marketing (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003). The planned behavior theory used attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control to predict the intention to participate in an activity (Choi, 2016; Cunningham & Kwon, 2003). Cunningham and Kwon (2003) defined attitude as the extent to which a person views a behavior as favorable or not, subjective norm as the social expectations a person has to engage, or not engage, in a given activity, and perceived behavioral control as the concept of perception of difficulty in engaging in an activity (see also Choi, 2016).

Cunningham and Kwon (2003) found reason to support previous behavior, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control positively relate to a person's intentions to attend an athletic event. The participant's attitudes and subjective norms were found to be of

higher importance in the prediction of consumption intentions over perceived behavioral control. It was noted that the findings could be specific to sport spectators, as the subjective norms of relationship influence is significant in sport settings (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003). For this reason, Cunningham and Kwon (2003) suggested social clubs, booster clubs, and other efforts should be made to encourage a social atmosphere at sporting events.

Athletic Donors

College athletics in the Power Five have multimillion-dollar budgets generated from multiple sources, including booster donations (Ko, Rhee, Walker, & Lee, 2014); athletic departments have become dependent on such donations (Stinson & Howard, 2004). Koesters, Brown, and Gradey (2015) mentioned athletic departments are continuously looking for new ways to generate revenue, as outside income is a large part of collegiate athletics (Keys, 2010). Stinson and Howard (2004) found over half of the examined university donors contributed financially to athletic departments. Athletic departments rely on booster club members for their financial donations to intercollegiate athletics. However, booster clubs provide more than financial services to intercollegiate teams and athletic departments; they have been used to generate excitement for upcoming athletic events, or athletic seasons (Vilona, 2013) and provide emotional support to athletic programs during the competition season (Gladden, Mahony, & Apostolopoulou, 2005).

Prince and File (1994) identified seven types of donors: communitarians, devout, investors, socialites, altruists, repayers, and dynasts. The Athletics Contributions Questionnaire outlined four broad donor motivations: Social, philanthropic, success, and benefits (Billing et al., 1985). Gladden et al. (2005) found donors motives included: supporting and improving the athletic program, support of the local community, tangible benefits, philanthropy, personal

entertainment, and commitment. While booster clubs and athletic donors appear well

documented in the literature, there is little to no prior research allocated to booster clubs in low

profile athletic teams.

Relationship Marketing

The primary goal of relationship marketing is building and maintaining committed

customers who provide profit to an organization (Adomah-Afari & Maloreh-Nyamekye,

2018). Consumer led planning increases sales by developing relationships (Ratten, 2016).

Relationship marketing includes the process of managing market relationships (Gronroos, 2004)

and the marketing strategies directed at establishing, developing, and maintaining successful

relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Retaining customers through long-term mutual

satisfaction by businesses and their customers (Abeza, O'Reilly, & Reid, 2013). Establishing and

maintaining positive, mutually beneficial relationships between sport organizations and

stakeholders (Nufer & Buhler, 2010).

Nufer and Buhler (2010) expressed relationship marketing emphasized close personal

connections and long-term relationships with consumers in order to maintain existing customers.

Successful reciprocity in relationship marketing involved accessibility, acknowledgement, and

appreciation (Magnusen, Kim, & Kim, 2012). Sponsorships and partnerships are an important

income source and strong relationships between partners led to more successful sponsorships.

This stimulated organizations to build long-term relationships with stakeholders (Nufer &

Buhler, 2010).

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Purpose

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The purpose of this study was to examine the barriers and challenges associated with

marketing a non-revenue generating sport and ultimately to understand the best way to identify

the correct target market and create exposure for the men's tennis team at University X. This study is driven by two primary research questions:

1. What are the barriers and challenges to effective marketing for men's tennis at an NCAA Division I Power Five institution in the southeastern United States?

2. What are the challenges for a men's tennis team at an NCAA Division I Power Five institution in the southeastern United States to emotionally connect to fans and create team or brand loyalty?

Methods

The purpose of qualitative research is to provide exhaustive insight into the topic studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researchers believe that a better understanding of this case study may benefit the specific team under study to obtain additional fans. Understanding the current booster members and university students may allow the coaching staff and marketing department to better recruit and serve potential new fans.

Planned behavior theory. The Planned Behavior Theory uses attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control to predict the intention to participate in an activity (Choi, 2016; Cunningham & Kwon, 2003). The theory could be specific to sport spectators, as the subjective norms of relationship influence is significant in sport settings (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003). Social clubs, booster clubs, and other efforts should be made to encourage a social atmosphere at sporting events (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003). The development of semi-structured interview questions was guided by the planned behavior theory, while data analysis was conducted through the social identity theory lens.

Social identity theory. For a person to accept a social identity (s)he must have knowledge of belonging to a group and an emotional attachment to the group (Heere & James,

2007). While reviewing transcripts, and surveys, the research team searched to understand how each participant developed the social identity of a booster club member.

Participants

Thirty-nine individuals participated in this study. Eight participants were current booster club members for the tennis team and aged between 42 and 81 years old (see Table 1). Of the eight participants three identified as male, the other five identified as female and all eight identified as Caucasian. The booster participants of the study indicated household incomes over $150,000, on average. This demographic data indicates that the sample is homogeneous. One participant was the head coach of the team. Thirty participants were current students at the university aged between 18 and 30. Of the 30 students 15 identified as male and 14 identified as female.

Table 1

Booster Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Gender
Mrs. Marla	81	Female
PM	42	Male
Ken	55	Male
Tracy	55	Female
Mary Lou	59	Female
Kathryn	60	Female
Carrie	66	Female
Alan	67	Male

Researcher Reflexivity

The primary researcher grew up with tennis, beginning competitive play in middle school, where she ultimately advanced to a top 10 ranking in the state and top 150 in the South before committing to a Division II university for a tennis scholarship. Throughout her masters education, the primary researcher, worked as an intern for the university's athletic marketing department as well as a tennis manager for a Division I men's team. She is a certified tennis official. These personal experiences will influence how the primary researcher interpreted the interviews with participants and the meaning attributed to each transcript. In order to minimize the impact of personal biases the researcher not only utilized self-check through reflexive memoing, but also engaged in peer debriefing with the research team throughout the research process.

Data Collection

After receiving institutional review board approval to conduct the study, the head coach was contacted to initiate participant selection. The researcher explained the risks and benefits of participation, the voluntary nature of the research, and confidentiality and its limits. Each interview participant signed an informed consent document. Student participants filling out the open ended questionnaires verbally consented to participation in the study.

Coaches interviews. The focus on the coach's interviews was on their perceptions of awareness levels, and promotional marketing techniques effectiveness at recruiting match viewership. The coach was asked to explain what he would like to see happen in marketing, what he likes about the current marketing of tennis and what he believed should be done to improve the current marketing strategies.

Booster club interviews. The focus on the booster club interviews was on the participants' opinions on level of awareness of tennis matches. The researcher also asked what promotional marketing techniques help to drive desire of attendance.

Student questionnaires. The focus of the student questionnaires was on student levels of awareness of tennis matches and what promotions would create interest in attending a tennis match. The students will also be asked if they have attended a tennis match, and if they have what they liked or did not like. If the students have not attended a tennis match, the questionnaire inquires if they are interested in attending one in the future and asks what could be done to make tennis a more attractive sporting event.

The primary tool for data collection was a semi-structured interview guide. This allowed the interviews to remain fluid in a conversational manner, while ensuring the interviews covered the same general information. The interview questions for the different participant groups were created with the primary research questions in mind.

There were three different groups of participants, who were chosen based on convenience sampling. The first group included coaches, one head coach and one assistant coach at a Division I FBS institution in a Power Five Conference, only the head coach participated. The second group consisted of eight booster club members. The nine interviews were conducted in person at the university tennis courts, unless a location was requested by the participant. Some participants requested coffee houses and other preferred the interviews be held in their homes. The interviews were audio recorded and lasted between 30 minutes to 1 hour. A transcription of the interview was returned to participants for member checking. Casual follow-up communication allowed for additional information or clarification. A questionnaire used to describe the sample's major characteristics such as: age, ethnicity, education level, and socioeconomic status was included.

Finally, the researchers surveyed 30 university students with an open ended questionnaire. All participants were at least 18 years old.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was demonstrated through thorough documentation of the data collection process. Data was portrayed without distortion though descriptive validity, peer debriefing, triangulation, and member checks (Maxwell, 2013). Documentation of data collection and analysis, descriptive accounts of the participants' experiences, and a clear framework of researcher biases and assumptions helps to certify credibility of the data. Once the data has been accurately described, it was important to interpret the data correctly. The researchers showed this through research team discussions and theoretical validity. The theoretical frameworks of this study are social identity theory and the theory of planned behavior.

Analytical theoretical triangulation, or understanding the back and forth between theory and data (Ravitch & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016), was used by the researchers through the planned behavior theory, social identity theory, and data gathered from the three groups of participants. The researchers also engaged in conversations about the data, while maintaining amenity required, with peers who are not on the research team.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process began with organizing the data (Ravitcha & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016). The primary researcher took notes of interesting, important, and repetitive responses while conducting the interviews. The primary researcher documented her experience through journaling. The digital recordings of interviews were transcribed verbatim utilizing a transcription service.

Coding, the process of showing meaning in the data (Ravitcha & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016), began with categorizing the data based on similarity. Next the codes were be connected to develop major themes. Maxwell (2013) moving from one coding strategy to the next, as expressed above, will enrich the research findings. Deductive coding was utilized by the research team. Deductive coding allows researchers to use literature, research, and prior experience as a way to read the data in a way to look for something specific (Ravitcha & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016). With the prior experience, and field expert interviewed prior to forming the research questions, an inductive approach would be inappropriate.

<div align="center">**Findings**</div>

The findings emerged into four distinct themes driven by the research questions about increasing fan awareness and brand loyalty. Under the first research question asking about barriers and challenges to increase fan awareness the themes *communication* and *social interaction*. For the second research question addressing barriers and challenges to emotional connection and brand loyalty two more themes emerged: *connection* and *hospitality*.

Research Question One

What are the barriers and challenges to increase fan awareness for men's tennis matches when the team finished in the lower half at an NCAA Division I Power Five institution in the southeastern United States?

Communication. Booster club members' desire communication that bring them closer to the team, including newsletters and customizable information, and a more of a personal touch. Students expressed a lack of knowledge of men's tennis matches and desire to be informed through email, word of mouth, social media, and fliers/posters. Students and boosters

noted social media was a preferred way to market the matches. One booster club member, Mary Lou, stated she liked Instagram because, "it's not pushy."

Carrie pointed out how she loved to receive reminders from the team about upcoming matches. She said,

> I love it when somebody from the team or a secretary or somebody sends out a quick little reminder on Wednesday saying, "Don't forget the match on Friday and Sunday. The men are playing [a conference team]. It's going to be a great match. [They are ranked top 20]. Should be a great match. We have a chance to really improve our ranking.

Ken commented on the difficulty of finding match information. He did not know how him, or his family would have known about the matches to begin with. He stated,

> I know that if I'm looking at another sport that I just want to go see or something, I have to dig and find out where it is, so I really can't remember specifically how we learned about it. My wife might have looked it up.

Tracy, similarly to Ken, did not know anything about tennis on at University X. She explained word of mouth communication was her primary source of information about men's tennis on campus. She said,

> The only way I know anything about tennis is through [a tennis club in town] or if I have a personal friend who is on the board, and again I can't remember who it was or at the time who the President was that said, "join the booster club."

Alan, unlike Ken and Tracy, expressed very little issue in finding information about upcoming men's tennis matches at University X. He stated, "I've got a schedule in my office that I look at every day."

Social Interaction. Tennis matches were described as social, family, and community events. Both boosters and students expressed a desire for a social environment. Student 27 said "a student section [or] hype [area] for the team" would increase her interest in attending a men's tennis match at University X. There is a clear preference to active promotions, such as kids' activities and t-shirt throws, versus passive promotions, such as t-shirts given at the entrance.

Student 12 expressed the interest in an interactive social experience though naming promotions she enjoys, including "[the school mascot], music, [and] games with the crowed."

PM spoke of the importance of personalizing promotions. How changing one aspect of a promotion could change it from something passive and impersonal to something interactive. He said,

> This is just top of my head thinking right now. But I wonder, rather than doing t-shirt toss, do like a marked ball toss. And then go to the booth, because one, whenever you get to the booth, now you get to exchange it for your gift of choice, whatever t-shirt of your size, but you also make sure you give them the magnets, the schedule, the letters and so on. And it's an opportunity to connect face-to-face.

Ken agreed with PM's importance of a social atmosphere saying, "I think that anything that we can do that can promptly promote that social community, family kinds of things, I think it would be really, really good." He also brought up the importance of including team-fan engagement and acknowledged an understanding for weighing fan interaction desires with player needs. Ken explicitly stated,

> I know some teams and stuff have, like, an after the match greeting and stuff. Well I know it's tough out there. They just worked their rear ends off, and it's a big victory, they want to celebrate. It it's a tough loss, they want to kind of just go lick their wounds, if you will, so I understand that. And I know they do some kind of events with the players, but for the casual fan, they're not going to those special events or coming out. And I know that in the past there's been certain player days where there's a button or information about them. I think that could be really kind of taken up a level, if you will, where you have matches that are about certain players, more information pushed out, and maybe somehow communicating more information. Have that player, maybe, just somehow interact with the fans before or after in some fashion.

Research Question Two

What are the challenges for a men's tennis team at an NCAA Division I Power Five institution in the southeastern United States to emotionally connect to fans and create team or brand loyalty?

Connection. Booster club members want a relationship with the team. Students and boosters alike indicated the importance of connecting with the team. For example, student six, who has never attended a men's tennis match at University X, would be more interested in attending one "if [she] knew the person playing.'

Alan revealed team involvement or, "getting involved with the team and getting to know them personally," was one way he supports the tennis team. He also expressed the importance of connection and the consistency of it. Specifically he said,

> I think there are times when the men do a great job, but it's not consistent. That's what we need, we need consistency. At first, it's gonna be chipping at the block. At first you're gonna get a little off, then more, and then more, and then more. But I think involvement with the tennis community is paramount. You have to have it. As I said before, this is not a top sport in the United States. It's considered a country club sport for the most part. We're trying to break down those walls and get more people to realize that anybody can play this sport, and we have great public facilities, and you can get out and use them. But its still, football is the number one sport ... American football, not even the real football. But American football, the number one sport in America. Soccer, number one sport in the world. And the number two sport is basketball, believe it or not, in the world. And then I forget what's number three, but number four as far as people following it and participating, is tennis. But in the United States, it doesn't make the top 10. So, I think involvement with the community is paramount, and that's something that the girls had tried to do on a consistent basis for so many years. So, the guys do it one season, don't do it the next season. Do it one season, don't do it the next season. Consistency is what we need to have in that respect.

Mrs. Marla talked about the difficulties of connecting with tennis in a place that prefers football. She stated, "We seem to be more football oriented as a state." Tracy discussed gender barriers as a female connecting with a men's team. Tracy did not feel a strong connection to the men's tennis team. She said, "The men I've never really connected with or I don't even… I don't know if I've been to that many of the men's matches… Maybe a couple." Specifically stating,

I mean, I think I sometimes feel like I have a stronger connection to my nieces than I do my own boys. Because you just… it's just different… I don't think they're doing anything wrong. I don't

think they're doing anything right. It's just the way it is and I don't know who would connect. I don't know, you know?

Katheryn further addressed the importance boosters placed on getting to know the team and expressed a clear desire to have personal connection with the players. She said, "The nice thing about the tennis teams are the teams are small enough that you can get to know the players." She went on to compare the differences she perceived in tennis booster club membership to other sports. She said,

> The basketball team has a huge booster organization. Even softball has a really big booster organization. So it's harder as an individual to get to know the players, but we get to interact with the players in mixers and events. They come to our Meet, Greet, and Eat every year, so it's just a nice way to know the people who are playing for the team.

Hospitality. Booster members repeatedly mentioned that they were a part of the booster club to help the players. Carrie notes how they players express gratitude for the hospitality the booster club members how the players. She said,

> You know, for a long time I think the girls did a better job of that, but the guys have gotten so much better at that. I don't know if George is coaching them, but after a match they'll come up to you and they'll tell you that now. It's really sweet to see that. Yeah, they do. They express that. I'll get notes in the mail, "Thank you for your snacks. Thank you for coming." So they do express that.

Ken, similar to Carrie, mentioned, "making sure the college athletes feel like there are people in their corner" as a major reason for being a booster club member. Mary Lou talked about how the staff are always helpful and welcoming, making volunteering is an important aspect of her membership. She further stated,

> Honestly, the staff of the tennis courts… the tennis programs, they work hard. Both the men's and the women's and so just being a volunteer for them… It just made me want to work harder for them because they work so hard. [We] have been through a lot of different coaches and all of them have been so encouraging and fun.

Katheryn talked about a yearly event for members of a local tennis association, "TTA Day," where "would come out and somebody from the board would do the first serve." The first serve is a popular tennis promotion at University X and is similar to the first pitch often seen in baseball. Katheryn felt this welcomed the TTA and acknowledged their effort to grow tennis in the area. She further explained the event saying,

> That was incredibly popular. We had more TTA members come out for that because they could have beer and a glass of wine and some snacks and have a meal. I mean, I was really surprised at how much people wanted to come out…

Similarly, Student 19 attended a match for an engineering night. He said, "I thought it was fun and fast paced, but I had a difficult time knowing where I should focus my attention." This suggests people without tennis backgrounds might require guidance from either seasoned fans or team staff to maximize their experience.

Discussion

The men's team has the ability to bring more spectators to the stands. Existing fans are willing to proactively look up match information because they already have a connection with the players and coach. However, as expected, potential fans need more direct marketing. This study found the best way to reach, or communicate with, potential new fans is through email, word of mouth, social media, and fliers/posters. Students mentioned the importance of word-of-mouth marketing, the marketing tactic where those who are interested in the event share with friends. Word of mouth is directly tied to the subjective norms or social expectations a person has to attend the tennis matches. This supports previous research on the theory of planned behavior and perceived behavioral control, the perception of difficulty in performing a behavior (Choi, 2016; Cunningham & Kwon, 2003). Without proper marketing of tennis matches, students are required to look up the information on their own, limiting awareness and providing a reason

to accept a perceived difficulty of match attendance. Through utilization of social media to attract potential fans to matches, even more fans people will chose to attend the matches.

Booster club members and students expressed a desire for a social, interactive experience. There is a major emphasis placed on active promotions where fans must compete with one another for prizes over passive promotions such as freebies given at the entrance. The active promotions allow for increased sociability in the stands. This finding is consistent with Melnick's (1993) findings that the promotion of social possibilities help satisfy society's desire for sociability. Creating community and family events leds to more people in the stands. The social interactions allowed by these events relate to social identity research. According to Lock and Heere (2017), individuals seek group membership with others who are consistent with their self-concept. Community and family friendly events are deemed as positive through the booster club members. The positive attitude and social expectations would be used to predict intention to attend matches.

The connection theme is expressed by booster club members more than students. Connection is expected as booster club members currently experience a relationship with the team. This is consistent with prior research on relationship marketing, promoting the retention of consumers through long-term mutual satisfaction (Abeza et al., 2013). The importance of relationship marketing for athletic donors is also expressed by Tsiotsou (2007), suggesting athletic marketers must motivate donors, build trust, enhance loyalty, and increase donor involvement. Athletic donors give the required monetary amount to receive tangible benefits (Stinson & Howard, 2010). Relationship marketing can be used as a tool to increase athletic donations; as one study found (Stinson & Howard, 2010), the donors contributing more money have preexisting relationships with teams and institutions.

The third theme, connection, is related to social identity theory. Social identity is the self-concept individuals derives from the knowledge of and emotional value placed on group membership (Tajfel, 1982). The knowledge of the group is indicated by financial investment, and the emotional value of group membership is shown through the desired connection to players, coaches, and other booster club members. Boosters identify as a group with a purpose to support and aid the team. This supports prior research regarding social identity theory. The booster club members were interested in similar benefits and connections, leading them to join the club. This is consistent with Locke and Heere (2017) research, indicating social groups are formed by consumers of coherent interests.

The final theme of the study is hospitality. Booster club members wanted the team to feel welcome in the community. Tennis teams at Division I Power Five institutions often include players from multiple countries. The booster club at University X wanted the college athletes who may be far from home to know they have support in the area. Each booster participant had a different way to make the college athletes feel welcome, but they all expressed the importance of hospitality. Booster club members stated that the main reason for joining the club was to support the team, shown both physically and emotionally. Physically, all boosters donate money each year. Some bake the team goodies, while others practice with the team. Emotionally, the boosters attend the majority of matches throughout the season, learn the players' names and nicknames, and cheer for them from the stands.

The hospitality theme is consistent with prior research on booster club members. Ko et al. (2014) found growth, relatedness, and existence were strong psychometric properties of donor motivation. Growth includes philanthropy, illustrated in the current study's through financial investment and time commitment. Relatedness includes socialization, shown by club

membership and desire for connection. This study indicates existence, including power, public recognition, and tangible benefits, does not motivate booster membership at this Division I Power Five men's tennis program.

Prior research found tangible benefits as a main motivation for donation behavior (Gladden et al., 2005; Stinson & Howard, 2004). Gladden et al. (2005) note the tangible benefits factor was included in all prior research on donor motivation. However, this study is consistent with Tsiotsou (2007), where intangible motives exceed tangible motives in athletic donation, or booster club membership.

Implications

The current marketing plan for the men's tennis team is similar to the majority of teams that do not generate revenue at the university. There has been little to no research conducted to understand the barriers and challenges for generating awareness for the team. To attract new fans, the marketing must be active, while the marketing strategy is currently passive.

The booster club members are the primary fans of the tennis team. The booster club helps the team generate fan interest through events such as the booster club barbeque. In order to keep events like this happening, it is important to continue to grow the booster club. The promotion of the booster club must be active, which is similar to attracting potential new fans, and provide opportunities to connect with the team and other booster members.

Students are not attending matches because they do not know about them. Even when students do come once, they do not continue attending. The stands need to be socially active and exciting. Students stated interest in interactive competitions instead of freebies by the entrance. Currently, there are a decent amount of freebies at the gate and limited opportunities for

interactive competition. This can be adjusted to allow students a desire to come back to win something, rather than everyone receiving it at the gate.

Future Research and Conclusions

This study is limited to one university, one booster club, one coach, and 30 students. Apart from the one booster club, the participants in the study were highly homogenous and only represented boosters that were highly involved with the team. All booster club members invest financially, however only members with higher levels in involvement invest time. Future research should include all levels of involvement in booster club membership, with only financial investment being the lowest level of involvement. Future studies should examine a larger participant pool, including tennis booster clubs and students from a large sample of universities. A quantitative study on booster club membership would be beneficial to allow a generalizable understanding of booster club membership. A future, follow-up study should be completed on the same university to analyze if the recommended changes are successful.

A similar study on a team with a large fan base to compare marketing techniques would be beneficial. There should be a study solely interested in student attendance to small sports, such as tennis. These studies would help raise academic understanding of non-revenue generating sports fandom and a practical purpose for sport marketers in the field.

When marketing for the men's tennis team at University X, one must remember the importance of communication through email, social media, word of mouth, and posters/fliers around campus. Social interaction helps create positive attitudes and subjective norms to increase attendance from the target market. Boosters desire a connection to the team, and based on the social identity theory, a stronger connection with the players will create a stronger bond to the

team. The importance of hospitality shows boosters want to help the players. The boosters

identify as the team's booster club, and they show it though giving back to the players.

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CHAPTER 3

Not Your Typical Fan: A Phenomenological Study on Booster Club Membership for a

Men's Division I College Tennis Program

The financial challenges faced by college athletics have remained persistent (Kim, Kim, & Lee, 2019). In an effort to justify the existence of big-time college athletics, which provide exposure and other economic benefits to universities, institutions of higher education looked to their associated athletic departments to become financially self-supporting. (Dwyer, Eddy, Havard, & Braa, 2010; McCormick & Tinsley, 1987; McEvoy, 2005; Roy, Graeff, & Harmon, 2008). As such, athletic departments relied on alumni and boosters for donations to avoid funding deficits (Kim et al., 2019).

As Power Five athletic departments pursued lucrative payouts related to men's revenue sports, they are financially incentivized to move away from any non-revenue sports (Marburger & Hogshead-Makar, 2003). Title IX does provide some protection for women's sports; although, any non-revenue sport is subject to the chopping block. General university funds used to subsidize an athletic budget, known as athletic institutional support, can reduce financial strain on individual programs (Stinson, Marquardt, & Chandley, 2012; Weight & Cooper, 2011); however, decreased institutional support, donor support, or revenue production prompted budget deficiencies which depicted the highest influence for athletic directors confronted with sport elimination decisions (Weight & Cooper, 2011). As such, men's college nonrevenue generating sports have suffered from program elimination, budget deficiencies, gender equity implications, departmental emphasis of athletic success, and regional sport popularity (Weight & Cooper, 2011). Weight and Cooper (2011) recommended coaches attempt to understand why athletic directors eliminate nonrevenue generating athletic programs and develop strategies to maximize

sustainability efforts. For example, teams supported by lucrative donors and active fans were unlikely to suffer program elimination.

College sports are the glue that bind alumni to the university (Markus, 2018). Sport has the ability to connect people of different cultures, races, and genders. It can act as a conversation starter between strangers at a bar and can fuel a friendship among coworkers in an office. These external groups, when properly fit with team identity, can bolster team loyalty (Heere & James, 2007). Booster clubs are one way to appropriately align external groups with team identity thus increasing team loyalty. Further, booster clubs for college athletics create an opportunity for financial support and could provide a revenue stream for non-revenue sports.

The majority of university donation research has utilized a myopic framework of organizational success and individual traits of donors and thus hindered research and scholarly progress (Ko, Rhee, Walker, & Lee, 2013). As such, this study provided a better understanding of a booster club and its members providing insight necessary to increase team identification, team loyalty, and financial support for a team without a winning record in a Power Five conference. The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experience of booster club members in a NCAA Division I Power Five university in the southeastern United States for a men's tennis team.

Review of Literature

Identification

The social bonds that are shared by a group of friends can be included in one's identity (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007). Team identification, a psychological attachment, provided fans with a sense of belonging to a larger social structure (Delia & James, 2018; Heere & James, 2007). Katz, Ward, and Heere (2018) found that higher levels of team identification positively

impacted event attendance. Furthermore, identification with a team influenced a number of other variables, including sociability, psychological health, and brand equity (Lock & Funk, 2016). Brand equity, the recognition and value of one brand over another, was a central construct for identifying purchase preferences and consumer loyalty (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007). Individuals formed social connections to teams though, or brand equity. A group of brand admirers (i.e., a fanbase) who engaged in social interactions are part of a social brand community; individuals acknowledged their membership in the group and engaged with each other through various means (Carlson, Suter, & Brown 2008). In fact, the strength of an individual's relationship with a social brand community has been suggested to predict stronger commitment to the brand itself (Carlson et al., 2008).

Sport consumers belong to various small groups and each group membership contributed to behavior and experiences (Lock & Funk, 2016). Upon researching the impact of individuals belonging to subgroups inside the primary group, Lock and Funk (2016) found that consumers specifically choose the social relationships and subgroups they participate in. A group identity was based on a number of factors: public and private evaluation, interconnection, interdependence, involvement, and awareness (Heere & James, 2007). Social relationships and group membership allowed individuals to advance and alter their self-concept and experiences (Lock & Funk, 2016). With multiple in-group identities a consumers were able to maintain both individual and in-group roles in sport fandom (Lock & Funk, 2016).

Team identity. Delia and James (2018) indicated the exact meaning of team remains contextual, consisting of many micro-level components, including attachment to players, coaches, and the community. Team identity, reinforced through sociability (Heere & James, 2007), was included in the *social identity theory*, a psychological theory based on group

membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identity represented part of an individual's self-concept that was derived from their knowledge of belonging, or membership, to a social group and the value, or emotional significance, attached to that membership (Heere & James, 2007). Social identity described one's identity based on the relationship between the person and their surroundings, while disregarding the part of the person's identity that comes from personal attributes (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Sociability, defined as a drive state or an inherent need for collective involvement (Melnick, 1993), may result in a social or team identity. Social identity can be adopted with both the knowledge of belonging to the group and an emotional attached to the group (Heere & James, 2007). As such, sociability aided brand equity by increasing associations with and attachment to a team's community (Heere & James, 2007).

Donors

Bühler and Nufer (2010) found a strong fanbase contributed to athletic success, and the development of successful relationships with potential fans contributed to a strong fanbase. Booster clubs have been used to generate excitement for upcoming athletic seasons (Vilona, 2013). Alumni formed social identification through an appreciation for team history (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007). As such, alumni represent individuals predisposed to be of higher interest to become booster club members.

Limited community resources challenged funding for university teams and athletic departments (Hoch, 1999). The need to produce adequate funding compelled teams compete for donors (Hoch, 1999). As such, individual sport booster clubs produced inequitable spending among teams (Anderson, 2017). While this might be an issue, it also created opportunity for each sport to establish relationships with booster members and increase funding.

University fundraising. Division I FBS university athletic programs operated on multimillion dollar budgets with large funds generated from athletic donors (Ko et al., 2014). Outside income remains a part of college sports (Keys, 2010). One university attributed the largest amounts of outside compensation to their athletic foundation, television and radio rights, and shoe and apparel deals. Booster club memberships contributed to outside income. Yost told Keys (2010) about one booster club paying their baseball coach $840,000 a year.

Higher education utilized athletics to attract new donors to institutions (Stinson, 2017). Specifically, Stinson (2017) found 70% of donors at a single institution provided their initial donations to athletics. Donors contributing to both academics and athletics, or split donors, gave substantially more than athletic donors (Stinson & Howard, 2010). Split donors contributed more money and had higher retention rates than solely athletic or academic donors (Stinson, 2017). Stinson (2017) found the majority of donors giving to both academics and athletics were first contributed to academics or athletics and more than double first donated to athletics. As such, this finding demonstrated that universities can utilize athletics as to promote donor engagement.

Donor motives. While academic institutional investment influenced student decisions on university attendance, athletic institutional investment positively impacted student retention and graduation rates (Stinson et al., 2012), and alumni contributed significantly more through university donations, academic donations, and athletic donations (Stinson & Howard, 2007). Ko et al. (2014) found athletic departments' understanding the influence of donors' needs enabled the development of relationship and connection strategies, and a university's specific understanding of growth, relatedness, and existence needs can be utilized to identify general donor motivation. Motives including belongingness, trusting, social and practical motives, and prestige appealed to potential and current donors (Tsiotsou, 2007). Athletic donors expressed

three primary motivators for donating; they desired to support and improve athletic programs, obtain ticket-oriented benefits, and help the student athletes at the universities to which they donate (Gladden, Mahony, & Apostolopoulou, 2005). Gladden at al. (2005) suggested sport marketers focus on philanthropic donor motives, such as the importance of donations in athletic achievement, university growth, and student athlete success, because feelings of force related to the desire to receive ticket benefits have the ability to harm donors' relationships with athletic departments. NCAA Division II donors were highly motivated through vicarious achievement, philanthropy, and commitment (Kim et al., 2019). Contrary to prior research, Kim et al. (2019) found donors placed low importance on tangible benefits, or transactional-centric motivation.

Athletic success. Prior research indicated athletic donations interact with athletic success (Martinez, Stinson, Kang, & Jubenville, 2010; Stinson, 2017; Stinson & Howard, 2007). Athletic success generated a stronger influence on institutional donations over independent academic or athletic donations, alumni donors over general population donors, and Division I FBS universities over Division I non-FBS institutions (Martinez et al., 2010). Athletic success had higher influence on donor giving at universities with lower levels of academic prestige (Stinson & Howard, 2007). Football success largely impacted donor giving at Division I universities (Martinez et al., 2010). Similarly, Stinson (2017) found athletic achievement, specifically football bowl game appearances, generated new athletic donors.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experience of booster club members in a NCAA Division I Power Five university in the southeastern United States for a men's tennis team. Without revenue such as concession and ticket sales, booster club membership provided an opportunity for a team to increase their budget. This study explores the

experience of joining the booster club and the experiences of continued membership. The study is driven by one primary research question with two sub questions.

1. What are the experiences of booster club members at the NCAA Division I Power Five institution in the southeastern United States?

    1. What are the expectations of belonging to the booster club?

    2. How do the expectations described align with the reality of the booster club membership?

Methodology

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experience of joining a Power Five Conference tennis booster club. Findings of qualitative research provide a detailed picture of a select group of individuals' experiences and deep understanding of the topic studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Use of phenomenology allowed the researchers to focus on an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of booster members, using participant-centric contextual and temporal influences (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). The primary researcher believes that a better understanding of this phenomenon may benefit the specific booster club under study, as well as others like it, to obtain additional membership. Understanding the experience of those who have already joined may allow the coaching staff and executive board to better recruit and serve potential new members.

Phenomenology

A phenomenological approach was used for this study, as this method best fit the research questions being asked. Researchers utilizing this method are interested in understanding the participants' subjective experience of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). While there are multiple interpretations for analysis available within phenomenological research, the researchers

agreed to utilize transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) to analyze the collected

data. Transcendental phenomenology requires a systematic analysis and requires the researcher

to abandon preconceived notions about the phenomenon being investigated (Moustakas, 1994).

The participant becomes the primary source of knowledge, and their first-person experience

exposes the details of the phenomenon. Using phenomenological reduction, the data is further

reduced to the essence, or central meaning, of the experience.

Participants

Eight individuals participated in this study. All participants were current booster club

members for the tennis team (see Table 1). All participants were between 42 and 81 years old. Of

the eight participants three identified as male, the other five identified as female. All participants

identified as Caucasian. The participants of the study indicated household incomes over

$150,000. This demographic data indicates that the sample is homogenous, and appropriate for

phenomenological methods.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Gender
Mrs. Marla	81	Female
PM	42	Male
Ken	55	Male
Tracy	55	Female
Mary Lou	59	Female
Kathryn	60	Female
Carrie	66	Female
Alan	67	Male

Researcher Reflexivity

The primary researcher grew up with tennis as an integral part of her life. She began competitive play in middle school, ultimately advancing to a top 10 ranking in the state and top 150 in the South before committing to a Division II university for a tennis scholarship. Throughout her masters, the primary researcher, worked as an intern for the university's athletic marketing department, and she is currently a certified tennis official. These personal experiences will influence how the primary researcher experienced the interviews with participants and the meaning ascribed to each transcript. In order to minimize the impact of personal biases the researcher utilized self-check through reflexive memoing, as well as peer debriefing with the research team throughout the research process. One of the members of the research team was not involved in the interview process and acted as an external auditor throughout the coding process.

Data Collection

After approval was granted by the institutional review board at a Power Five university, a network of booster club affiliated key informants was contacted to initiate participant selection. Upon meeting with participants, the researcher reviewed risks and benefits of participation, confidentiality and its limits, and the voluntary nature of the research. Each participant signed and received a copy of the informed consent document.

A semi-structured interview guide was the primary tool for data collection, as it allowed for a flexible and fluid interview process. This ensured that each interview covered the same general information while still allowing each participant to describe their experience in a conversational manner, without the rigidity of a predetermined list of questions. Semi-structured interviews are a useful tool for phenomenological inquiry, as they allow patterns and themes to

emerge naturally from the description of the lived experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interview questions were formed with the primary research question in mind.

Eight participant interviews were conducted in person. Initial interviews were audio-recorded and lasted 30 minutes to 1 hour. Interviews were transcribed and de-identified and, sent back to the participants for member checking. Brief follow-up interviews were held at the convenience of each participant to allow for any additional clarification or additions to the data.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of this study is demonstrated through thorough documentation of the data collection process. It is important to accurately portray the data without distortion. This was done though descriptive validity, peer debriefing, triangulation, and member checks to make sure the descriptions are as accurate as possible (Maxwell, 2013). Thorough documentation of data collection and analysis, descriptive accounts of the participants' experiences, and a clear framework of researcher biases and assumptions helps to ensure credibility of the data. Once the data has been accurately described, it is important to interpret the data correctly. The researchers will show this through member checks. Theoretical validity will use the theory of planned behavior as a framework for the study.

Triangulation was used by the researchers with analytical theoretical triangulation. This involves understanding the back and forth between theory and data as well as the discussions held by the research team to compare meaning-making of the data (Ravitch & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016). The researchers will show triangulation though the use of social identity theory and the data provided by participants along with discussions among the research team. The primary researcher will also engage in conversations about the data, while maintaining amenity required, with peers who are not included on the research team.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process began when the research team started organizing and thinking about the data (Ravitcha & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016). While conducting interviews, the primary researcher took notes of interesting, important, and repetitive responses. Throughout the study the primary researcher utilized journaling to document her experience. After the first interview the primary researcher decided to include an additional question about awareness in the following interviews. Upon completion of the interviews, the digital recordings were transcribed verbatim utilizing a transcription service. Next the research team began to pre-code, or read, and engage with data from the transcripts (Ravitcha & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016).

A transcendental phenomenological approach includes the assumption that there is an invariant essence to every shared experience (Patton, 2015). To uncover the essence the researcher must undertake the process of *phenomenological reduction* (Moustakas, 1994). First, the researchers bracketed personal and theoretical knowledge through the process of epoché, a Greek term which translates to "a suspension of judgment" (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). Bracketing one's own judgment allows room to view the phenomena through the lens of the participant rather than clouding the experience with the assumptions or bias of the researcher (Moustakas, 1994). Next, the researcher engaged in the process of *horizonalization,* which values every participant statement with equal importance (Moustakas, 1994). The researchers then identified invariant pieces of data across transcripts, and from these developed clusters of meaning, which later developed into themes. The researchers examined these clusters of meaning and utilized *imaginative variation* to explore all possible underlying factors that may have accounted for the structural description of an experience – that is, the meaning and context behind the textural description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, the researchers

synthesized both textural and structural experiences of all participants that were involved in the study, and arrived at an invariant essence (Moustakas, 1994).

The researchers utilized the qualitative software, Quirkos. This allowed researchers to highlight data and assign codes that can be easily accessed with all transcripts. The research team read each transcript multiple times throughout the coding process. The primary researcher comprehensively read and coded each transcript multiple times to become completely immersed in the data (Ravitch & Mittenfelner-Carl, 2016). The research team met regularly throughout the process to compare findings and important codes in the data.

Throughout the study, the primary researcher continued to journal and record memos throughout the data analysis. The purpose of journaling was to accurately document the thinking process of the primary researcher. This reflexive process can also be used to enhance the rigor and trustworthiness of the completed study.

Findings

Findings emerged into two distinct categories, likely driven by the research questions – expectations and reality. Under both categories, the themes of *investment, connection and belonging*, and *reciprocity* emerged. However, the expectations and reality of the lived experience appeared differently within each category. See Figure 1 for a visual representation of themes and their key components within each category.

Expectations

Participants described expectations of what they anticipated being a booster club member would be. They each noted that an investment of time and energy was expected to one degree or another, although some expected less than others. They also each idealized and placed expectations around situations in which the team and fanbase were connected and interacting

with each other. Finally, the expectation of reciprocity was held primarily around material benefits – the acquisition of team "swag" such as blankets or hats with the team logo.

Investment. Members shared an expectation of investment, to one degree or another. Investment may be financial or personal time and energy and, could involve investments in friendships within the club or investments toward the team. For example, PM shared, "I'd been involved in tennis my whole life, so when we moved [here], the very first thing I did was to reach out to [the coach], and ... and we developed a friendship." The investment in friends who are also in the club may be a part of what keeps individuals participating.

Tracy shared that often the idea of being involved was a passing comment, but she had never followed through. She was not aware of the existence of the booster club initially, and when she finally did join, she was unsure of what the commitment would entail. She stated,

> You know, to be honest, I don't know if I really knew there was a booster club in a sense until… You know, it never was just kind of out there. So, I don't really remember, I think someone just asked and so I did it… I find that kind of common with other friends too. Because I would ask somebody and they would say, "yeah", and they never get around to it, and then, you have to remind them. I mean it's just kind of on the back burner in terms of just doing it and making the commitment. So, I have not been a booster club member for very long.

Ken shared a different experience. His family was involved in the booster club before him, so he was somewhat aware of the commitment and investments expected. He rolled into the position as his wife became increasingly invested:

> My wife was very involved with tennis, as were my son and daughter, and they actually ... first, it was my wife that was a member of the booster club, so I was helping out. She was a member, but whenever they needed volunteers when she was a member of the booster club, I became part of that too, and then as she became more involved and became a board member, I really got involved. And as her time kind of took up with other activities, her job and everything, I kind of just rolled in and they asked if I would be on the board then, and I said yes.

Although expectations differed from member to member, it did appear that each member

expected some type of financial, emotional, and time investment to be required of them.

Connection and belonging. Club members placed a strong emphasis on the expectation

to connect with others and have a place where they feel they belong. This social aspect of the

data reflected various points of connection, such as connection the sport, connection to the team

members and coaches, and connection to the community and others within the booster

club. Carrie painted a picture of her favorite tennis experiences and the connection found within:

> An ideal tennis experience is when you go and it's standing room only. Perhaps there's
> been some sort of a get together ahead of time where you've mixed and mingled with
> people you haven't seen in a while, and you're playing a team that it's going to be a very
> competitive match and it comes down to the last court and you win, and everybody is
> screaming and hollering and it's just the perfect night, and everybody stayed. You didn't
> have people leaving maybe after the doubles point. But maybe someone who doesn't
> always win the deciding point wins and it's just the perfect night. To me, that's a good
> night.

Ken also spoke to the importance of the social interaction, publicizing the matches and creating a

sense of community at each match to facilitate connection between fans. He stated,

> I think the ideal is when there is good information out there so people will know about it.
> And there's things happening during the match, not just at ... between the doubles and
> singles, but during the match, and kind of engage people. Tennis is a long sport out there.
> Those matches can go a long time. Fans, you may lose their attention and stuff, so like
> that barbecue that's going on, people can go up, they can come down, get a barbecue, go
> back out, watch some more of it. So, it's kind of created a festive atmosphere.

Katheryn pointed out the benefits of connecting with the players and having a small enough

booster organization so that everyone knows everyone else:

> The nice thing about the tennis teams are the teams are small enough that you can get to
> know the players, whereas if it's ... And you don't have a huge booster organization. The
> basketball team has a huge booster organization. Even softball has a really big booster
> organization. So, it's harder as an individual to get to know the players, but we get to
> interact with the players in mixers and events.

Reciprocity: Material benefits. Most participants mentioned the expectation of benefits, particularly material benefits, of belonging to the booster club. Ken mentioned the team "swag" that was often given out:

> We get a free gift, if you will. A hat, or a ... you know, a ... a lot of our matches early season are very cold, so it might be a blanket, or different things like that, and that's nice. It's kind of fun to support your team that way. But to be honest, that's not why you do it. They're nice benefits, I guess, but they aren't so nice as to be, I would think, attractive to anybody who is not going to be a fan anyways to be honest.

Similarly, Mary Lou noted that she expected members of the team to deliver her gift, and that she enjoyed having the opportunity to interact with them. She stated.

> If you've joined booster club, the team brings you, you're happy or whatever every year and it's so cute. Guys are the cutest ever. They're always so polite. They come to your door then bring it, like personally bring it as busy as they are. The time or maybe two of them will, you know, they divide and conquer.

Katheryn reflected this same sentiment; "you usually get some sort of gift for being a booster. Not every year, but some years team members come to deliver it, or the coaches come deliver it, so that's always a nice touch." It was apparent that club members enjoyed receiving these tokens of appreciation, but placed additional importance on interacting with the team and coaches in some way during this time. Most stated that after belonging to the club for a while they expected some type of team interaction in return for the various investments they made toward the team.
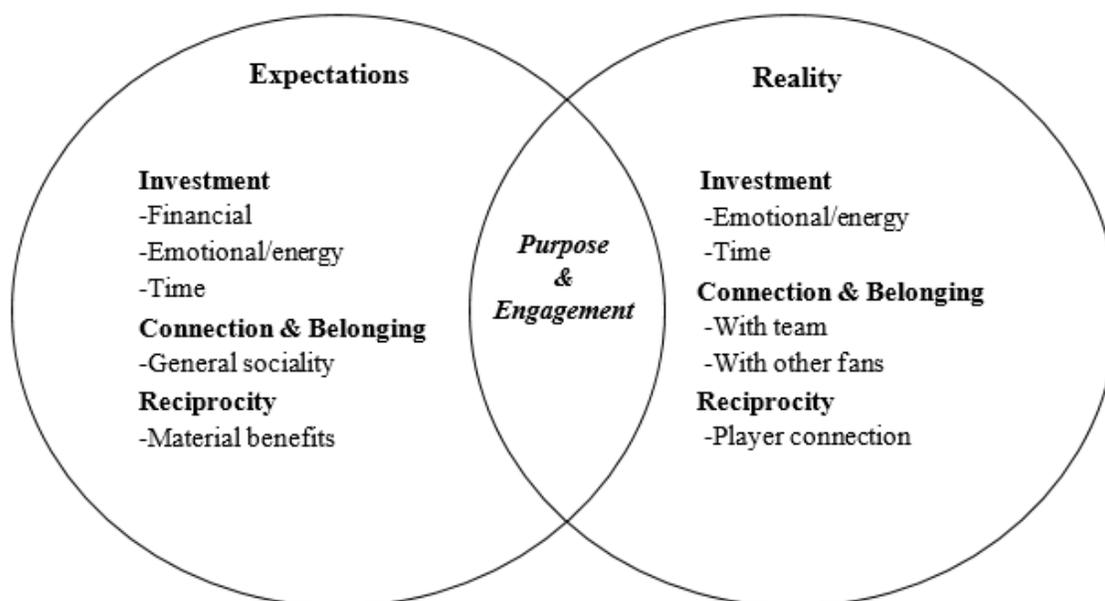

Figure 1. Emergent themes with key components for each category, and invariant essence

Reality

The reality of being a booster club member was reflected in this category. The themes continue to overlap but, are portrayed differently here than within the expectation's category. Members note that investment was not too different from the expectation, however the time and involvement necessary for success was large. The connection and belonging theme was split into two subthemes of *connection with the team* and *connection with other fans*. While connection with fans was present, participants struggled to feel genuinely connected to the team and players. Finally, the reality of reciprocity was reflected not in the material benefits but in the times that participants did feel that connection with players and former players.

Investment. All members were asked to invest in the team, much as they expected. Financial and emotional investment were both required, along with a heavy investment of personal time. Alan noted that in his time as club president he invested a great deal of time and energy into the teams:

> [Another booster] had been president I think for maybe five years before me, and then they asked me to be president, and my main purpose was to put more butts in the seats. I thought we did a good job of supporting the team, getting involved with the team, getting to know them personally and within NCAA rules, we did a great job of providing them with what they needed … Involvement, involvement, involvement. I mean, and it's something that you can't wait to be invited in, you have to be involved. You have to seek involvement. If you wait to be invited in, you probably don't belong there anyway.

Ken spoke to the importance of learning about the players and knowing the fanbase, which he saw to be an important piece of his involvement and emotional investment toward the team. He said,

> I have to take the initiative to learn about the players, where some of the more casual fans, they don't, and in tennis, nicknames are huge, so we'll have nicknames for all the players, and a lot of times, a fan will go, "Who is that?" Because they'll be yelling the nickname, and then you'll tell them, "Well, that's so-and-so over here and this is their nickname and why we're saying it." But that has to be done by the fan. They have to take that initiative versus the team kind of promoting some information out.

Connection and belonging. The booster members' reality of belonging was not always congruent with their ideals. They desired to feel connected with the team as well as the fanbase and other boosters, but some did not feel that this need was met by the team or coaching staff. This theme was broken into two subthemes: *connection with the team*, and *connection with other fans*.

Connection with the team. The participants made clear that access to and interaction with the team was important to them. PM shared awareness that there were team access events available to club members

> I think they do a lot of team access events. We've actually never attended any of, like, the booster dinners. But they do, like, events with the boosters and the team, where they get to ... where boosters get to mingle and interact with the team. They do a lot of, like, with the family and kid's stuff. I think [the coach] is accessible and open. And obviously his communications and so on.

While access events were held, some participants felt irritated that the team members still did not know them by name or by sight. Katheryn expressed her frustration:

> Quite frankly, the guys should know who I am because of [tennis academy], and I bet you none of them do… Even if they don't know my name, they should know my face… They need to make more of an effort to connect with their fan base.

The effort put forth to connect was common throughout participant interviews. Alan noted that while some teams consistently tried to interact with the fans and club members, others did not, and this inconsistency became problematic. He stated,

> I think involvement with the community is paramount, and that's something that the girls [tennis team] had tried to do on a consistent basis for so many years. So, the guys [team] do it one season, don't do it the next season. Do it one season, don't do it the next season. Consistency is what we need to have in that respect.

Connection with other fans. Connecting with the fanbase and others in the booster club was an additional piece of importance for the participants. They wanted a place to feel involved

and welcome, where their families could interact with one another. PM mentioned that by

attending these events her children became friends with families who were close to the team,

allowing them some special privilege:

> It's a fun family event. So, I mean, the kids, they love coming. Again, now they know [the coach's] kids and they play in the green room, and I mean, I guess they have special privileges that maybe not everybody who comes here has.

Carry spoke to the idea that getting to engage with new people kept the ideas fresh and energy

flowing. She emphasized that connecting with others through serving the team was an important

part for her:

> I think that people always want to help and they always want to support the coaches and support the team, and so really loyal people want to serve in that way. You get on the committee and you just try to plug in to a place where you can help out. It's always nice to see fresh faces who want to plug in because I've been on it for a long, long time, and Martha ... People have been on there for years and years and years, and it's nice to see fresh faces, not only because we get old, but because fresh faces have fresh ideas and it's always good to have new ideas and new energy.

> **Reciprocity: Player connection.** Participants placed a large importance on service to the

club, but also on what they got out of serving. The material benefits were minimal, but the

interactions with team members and the coaching staff made the experience important to the

boosters. For example, Alan stated,

> The benefit is what I see in the kids. I mean, that's the only reason I'm here. There are really no material type benefits from being a member of this club. It's all supporting the kids out there, watching them grow, not only as players, but also as individuals. Being able to advise them. I've got, probably this last week I had four ex-players call me up ... ex-players, and ask me my advice, business advice, life advice, you know, those kind of things. Getting involved with those players I think is my reward.

Similarly, Ken spoke to this same concept and the reward he takes from his interactions with and

support of the players

> Yeah, it's ... you know, the student-athletes, they're working their rear ends off on both academics and their sport, and they just ... kind of going out and giving a hand, letting them know there's people in their corner, and just ... even if it's bringing food for fans at a

match, there's more fans out there, they get feeling better about the long hours they're putting in by seeing full seats and everything, so yeah, I enjoy it a lot.

Discussion

The reality and expectations of belonging to the booster club revealed different perspectives of the same themes. Reciprocity, connection and belonging, and investment each emerged within the experienced reality and the initial expectations, creating the lived experience for the member. Each of these themes highlighted important needs and desires of the members and led to an understanding of how the participants experienced their membership in booster. The overlap between the two, as shown in Figure 1, resulted in the invariant essence of the experience. These themes and the invariant essence pave the way for future implications.

Team identity represents an individual's association and attachment to a team and can be built through the social identity theory (Heere & James, 2007). Team identity is an important concept of study as the meaning of team dynamic. Participants expressed the expectation of investment involved in booster club membership. These included financial, personal time, energy, and social investments. A person accepts a social identity when (s)he has two things: the knowledge of belonging to the group and the emotional attachment to the group (Heere & James, 2007). The financial investment in the team indicates knowledge of group membership; and the anticipation of personal time, energy, and social investments suggests an expected emotional attachment to the group.

Team identity can provide the social bonds shared by a group (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007). This concept is addressed in the literature by defining team identification as an attachment that provides fans with a sense of belonging (Delia & James, 2018; Heere & James, 2007). Team identification is imperative as the strength of one's relationship with a brand (team) is suggested to predict stronger commitment to the brand (team) itself (Carlson et al., 2008). The

connection and belonging theme showed a strong expectation and desire to connect with others and have a place where they belong. These included connections to the sport, team, coaches, community, and other booster members; however, some participants felt their desire for connection was neglected by the team or coaching staff. The feeling of neglect can lead to lower team identification, lowering team loyalty and attachment.

Strong relationships produce successful sports sponsorships and sport organizations should proactively work to maintain positive relationships with stakeholders (Nufer & Bühler, 2010). Similar to the sponsors mentioned above, club members expressed the importance of relationships with team members and coaching staff. The largest discrepancy between expectation and reality is conveyed through the reciprocity theme. Participants mentioned "swag" or physical materials as the expected benefits of membership; however, participants showed a desire for relationship development and service opportunities. The material benefits were of minimal importance; many participants found the interactions with the team members and coaching staff to be the true benefit to club membership. Utilizing relationship over transactional marketing would reveal the opportunity for team interaction. This would increase accessibility to potential new members similar to the participants in this study.

Invariant Essence

After examining the emergent themes around the lived experience, the researchers arrived at the invariant essence of the phenomenon. At the crux of investment, reciprocity, and connection and belonging appeared to be an urgent sense of purpose and engagement (see Figure 1). All participants wished to be involved, connect with other fans, and feel as though they held a purpose within the organization. At the same time, they deeply desired a genuine connection with team members and coaching staff.

Implications

There are multiple implications that stem from the findings of this study. Primarily, the marketing for the booster club likely needs to change in order to acquire more members and to market the desired components. Currently, there is not a traditional marketing foundation for booster club membership at the university. The membership application is placed in a trifold pamphlet and set out at every tennis club in town. At the matches there are pamphlets displayed on a table next to the season's booster club gift. Based on the results of this study booster club members want to invest in, connect with, and give back to the team. Booster club members first joined the club not because they saw the pamphlet at their tennis club or at the matches, but instead because someone asked them to join. This emphasizes the idea that in order to attract new booster club members, the marketing of the club may do best when it is active and includes a social connection. This social marketing builds upon the idea of social identity theory, increasing the team identity and brand equity.

Marketing the investment of the team will allow potential boosters to see the difference each person can make. The team looks to booster club members to help gain fan interest though various social events. Additionally, the booster club members watching the matches are able to individually support each player by knowing who they are and addressing them by name. As tennis is an individual, or sometimes dyadic sport, the players like to hear personalized words of encouragement to show they are recognized for their hard work and dedication. The booster club members are then able to help new fans learn about the different players and create connections of their own. This type of involvement again ties back to the importance of team identity and sociability in marketing practices. The participants in this study all mentioned the importance of investing their time, energy, and finances into the booster club so that they could also feel a part

of the team. When this happens, they are likely to continue their support and encourage others to join.

The innate investment of booster club membership drives the desire for connection with the team. As the booster club members are often the biggest fans of the team, the participants expressed a desire for interaction and access to the team. While there are some opportunities for this interaction, such as a preseason meet and greet with the players, additional opportunities would help to build a greater team identity and strengthen brand equity. These opportunities should be advertised to potential boosters as a benefit of membership.

Overall, the participants expressed that helping the college athletes and watching them grow was rewarding. Simply displaying membership pamphlets next to the free gifts does not demonstrate the true benefits of booster club membership, nor does it tap into the benefits of team identity for the potential members. Marketing of membership should show the intrinsic rewards of team identity and connection through serving the athletes, rather than the extrinsic rewards of small material gifts.

Future Research and Conclusions

This study is limited to one university, one booster club. Apart from belonging to only one booster club, the participants in the study represented boosters that were highly involved with the team. Future research should include all levels of involvement in booster club membership. Future studies should examine a larger study including tennis booster clubs from a large sample of universities in a conference. A quantitative study on booster club membership would be beneficial to allow a generalizable understanding of booster club membership. A future study should be completed on the same university to analyze if the recommended changes are successful.

There is a discrepancy in what the expectations and the reality of booster club membership. The marketing of the club towards extrinsic rewards does not work with the clubs target population. While members appreciated the gifts, many stated the gifts is not a reason to join the club. When asked about the membership gifts the participants expressed more excitement of the players delivering the gifts. The participants of this study expressed the importance of connecting with the team and helping the team grow. In the future the booster club should be marketed utilizing typical marketing practices such as social media, and the message should focus on investing in the players and giving back to the team.

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CHAPTER 4

The Forgotten Inherent Relationship: Faculty and Intercollegiate Athletics

Public four year institutions employed close to 650,000 faculty in 2016 ("Institute of Education Sciences," 2017). With a total enrollment of 8,401 and over 750 faculty employed, Wake Forest University, housed within the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), provides an example for a smaller Power Five Institution ("WFU at a glance," n.d.). Within the Southeastern Conference (SEC) the University of Arkansas, a moderately sized Power Five University, enrolled 27,778 students and employed 1,401 faculty ("Quick facts," n.d.). Ohio State University, with a 68,100 total enrollment ("Ohio State University statistical summary," n.d.) and 3,404 employed faculty ("The Ohio State University," n.d.), represents a large Power Five Institution within the Big 10 Conference. With numbers like these, why are faculty neglected in intercollegiate athletic marketing tactics?

Tsui and Ngo (2015) found faculty reported high organizational identification and the faculty perception of organizational uniqueness and prestige directly impacted their organizational identification. Identification, as defined by Trail, Anderson, and Fink (2000), is one's self orientation through objects, people, or groups resulting in feelings of attachment. Specifically, Mael and Ashforth, (1992) defined organizational identification as a "perceived oneness with an organization's success and failure" (p. 110). Social identity, including organizational identity, positively impacts brand loyalty (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007) and motivates purchase intentions (Uhlman & Trail, 2012). This implies faculty who identify with their organization, and by extension the athletic department, are predisposed to brand loyalty and purchase motivations which over time can lead to sport fandom (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Tsui & Ngo, 2015). Sport fandom encompassed an attraction to a sport,

player, or team with a social and emotional value derived from group affiliation (Toder-Alon, Icekson, & Shuv-Ami, 2018).

"Relationships are among the most important and powerful aspects of sports marketing," (Bee & Kahle, 2006, p. 110). Successful marketing plans depend upon high quality relationships between companies and stakeholders (Christopher, Payne, & Ballantyne, 1991). Marketing involves the act of managing market relationships (Grönroos, 2004). Similarly, relationship marketing employs strategies directed at establishing, enhancing, and maintaining successful relationships (Abeza, O'Reilly, & Reid, 2013; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Nufer & Buhler, 2009) as an ongoing process without a singular product (Grönroos, 2017). For relationship marketing to be considered successful, the consumer must appreciate the planned communication and interaction process (Grönroos, 2004).

Riciputi and Erdal (2017) found college athletes primed with athlete identity appeared more apathetic in the classroom and therefore provided a need to fight the reinforcement of college athlete stereotypes. One option to reduce stereotype reinforcement provided by Riciputi and Erdal (2017) included encouraging non-athlete identities, such as a student identity used in academic settings. Campus climate and identity impacted both academic and athletic outcomes of college athletes (Rankin, 2016), for example interaction between faculty and college athletes was positively correlated with academic success.

Review of Literature

Relationship Marketing

To fully understand the concept of relationship marketing it must be differentiated from discrete transaction marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Relationship marketing, as described by Gummesson (2016), is a complex and compound phenomenon; positive relationship behavioral

outcomes include retention, participation, and coproduction (Gruen, Summers, & Acito, 2000). Williams and Chinn (2010) described the primary goal of relationship marketing as to build long-term relationships with the establishment's best customers to generate business and ultimately produce a profit. Strategic customer service, from a relationship marketing context, was a technique designed to preserve a position among competing offers (Christopher et al., 1991). Discrete transactional tactics are characterized to exclude relational elements with limited communications and narrow content (Dwyer et al., 1987).

Value of Relationship Marketing. Effective relationship marketing is accomplished through directing marketing resources to the consumers that provide the greatest value toward the establishment with a goal of retaining said consumers (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). Marketers committed more effort to relationship marketing than traditional transactional marketing approaches and research found interaction and communication led to the desired outcome, value, in relationship marketing (Grönroos, 2004). Interaction is started as people exchange goods and services (Gummesson, 2016) and value can be described as the meaning a consumer places on the relationship produced between the buyer and seller (Grönroos, 2004).

Strong relationships produced customer loyalty and improved seller performance (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evans, 2006). Research found communication, along with expertise, is an effective relationship marketing strategy designed for relationship development and consumer loyalty (Ngoma, & Ntale, 2019; Palmatier et al., 2006). For relationship marketing to be considered successful, the consumer must appreciate the planned communication and interaction process (Grönroos, 2004). Raggio, Walz, Godbole, and Folse (2014) found gratitude, the positive emotion of appreciation, led to trust and produced effective relationship development.

Brand Communities. "Branded communities are characterized by high degrees of interaction among community members who appreciate their mutual relationships and the engagement of a sponsoring brand," (Popp & Woratschek, 2016, p. 191). While consumer identification and involvement with a community inspired loyalty, common interest revealed to be the foundation of a brand community (Popp & Woratschek, 2016). For example, in brands like Jeep consumption and experience of product ownership led to successful brand communities (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002). Research produced by Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould (2009) suggested consumers will build brand communities when given the opportunity.

Katz, Ward, and Heere (2018) recommended sport marketers encourage fan-to-fan connections and inspire strangers to develop relationships with neighbors in the stadium. The promotion of branded communities increased consumer loyalty through a framework designed to enhance relationships (McAlexander et al., 2002; Popp & Woratschek, 2016). Benefits from such communities included an increased potential for consumers to serve as brand missionaries who are invested, loyal, and motivated to provide feedback to the brand (McAlexander et al., 2002), and an ability to strengthen fans' team commitment while promoting their continued event attendance (Katz et al., 2018).

Commitment and Trust. High levels of trust and commitment offered an opportunity to enhance relationship marketing techniques through unity between athletes and fans (Magnusen, Kim, & Kim, 2012). Morgan and Hunt (1994) found commitment and trust were essential for successful relationship marketing strategies, as such failure to include their effects would result in inappropriate conclusions (see also Nefer & Buhler, 2009). Ndubisi and Nataraajan, (2018) found trust and commitment led to improved satisfaction and may in turn increase switching restraint.   Consumer initiated relationships, with a sport organizations, displayed a commitment

to continued support- beyond repeated purchase intentions- regardless of external competitive opportunities (Bee & Kahle, 2006). Brown, Crosno, and Tong (2018) found a positive "trust-to-commitment" relationship yet negative "commitment-to-trust" relationship (p. 166).

Berry (1995) found three ways for relationship marketers to demonstrate trustworthiness: open lines of communication, guarantee of service, and a high standard of conduct. Research found communication effectiveness conveyed concern for consumer welfare. A satisfaction guarantee on service quality revealed a commitment to produce superior service. Lastly, a high standard of conduct promoted trust through respect and fairness.

Motivation

Athletic teams generated much of their revenue through various forms of sport consumption (DeSarbo & Madrigal, 2012). Funk and James' (2001) Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) facilitated further understanding of spectator and fan interest in, and connection to, sport. The continuum began with low levels of knowledge or commitment to sport teams and ended with high levels of emotional connection and a persistent connection to a team. Funk and James (2001) defined *awareness* as knowledge of team existence, low levels of involvement, and lack of psychological connection. An individual moved to the second level, *attraction*, with the decision of a favorite team (Funk & James, 2001). For example, escape and social interaction acted as an attraction for individuals to attend sporting events (Trail, Robinson, Dick, & Gillentine, 2003).The third level, *attachment*, was characterized through an emotional connection to a team (Funk & James, 2001). One's identification led to feelings of attachment (Trail et al., 2000), and attachment motivated the purchase of season tickets (Uhlman & Trail, 2012). Specifically, team and social identification motivated fan action while sport identification motivated spectator action (Trail, Robinson, et al., 2003). The final level, *allegiance*, described

individuals who remained committed to their relationship with the team (Funk & James, 2001). For example, highly identified sport fans exhibited team support regardless of game outcome (Yim & Byon, 2018).

Spectator Motivation. Earnheardt (2010) defined spectators as individuals who uncommittedly observe a sporting event. Interest in the sport motivated attendance behavior. Spectators conveyed a desire for quality, competitive games with teams of similar abilities over team athletic domination (Trail, Robinson, et al, 2003). Spectating allowed people more than entertainment, it allowed access to social interaction and enhanced their social psychological lives (Melnick, 1993). Trail, Robinson, et al. (2003) found spectator motives include aesthetics, athletic skill, drama, and knowledge. Drama and aesthetics were associated with sport identification.

Fan Motivation. Sport fandom motivation exists from social and psychological needs (Trail, Anderson, et al., 2000). Prior literature described a fan as a consumption driven, dedicated individual (Bodet & Bernache-Asollant, 2011) with a persistent connection to a team, player, or sport (Hunt, Briston, & Brashaw, 1999). Fans identified interests in meeting the team, receiving team information, and the ability to relate to or identify with the team (Trail, Robinson, et al., 2003). Robinson et al. (2005) found sport fans were motivated through a desire to live vicariously through college athletes and increased feelings of empowerment derived from association with athletic team success. Trail, Robinson, et al. (2003) associated team identification with the primary motivation, achievement, for fans of successful sport teams.

Similar to vicarious achievement, researchers utilized the terms basking in reflected glory (BIRG) and cutting off reflected failure (CORF) to "illustrate the impression management processes of sport fans," (Spinda, 2011, p. 392). Feelings of personal success with team wins and

personal defeat with team loses indicated a strong connection with the team (Funk & James, 2001). Spinda (2011) found female BIRGing consisted of "mediated enjoyment" such as game highlights, socializing, team identification, and relaxed communication; male BIRGing "celebratory behaviors" included displaying team logos, relaxed communication, "mediated enjoyment," and online support of the team (p. 411).

Female fans demonstrated CORFing with silence, isolation, and concealment of team logos (Spinda, 2011). Males, in comparison, displayed CORFing through silence, media avoidance, online team distancing, and concealment of team logos (Spinda, 2011). High levels of team identification in sport fans escalated attendance (Katz et al., 2018), encouraged commitment (Avourdiadour & Theodorakis, 2014; Yim & Byon, 2018), increased potential BIRGing and decreased possible CORFing (Kwon, Trail, & Lee, 2008; Wann & Branscombe, 1990).

Identification. Individual motivations, achievement and aesthetics, for sport consumption correlated with identification (Trail, Fink, & Anderson, 2003). Trail et al. (2000) defined identification as one's self orientation through objects, people, or groups that results in feeling of attachment. The understanding of consumer identification allowed for effective marketing (Ratten, 2011). For example, Yim and Byon (2018) recommended sport marketers designate more time and resources to satisfaction and customer service related departments because their study results indicated sport consumers disconnect from game satisfaction after losing and use service satisfaction regarding future consumption decisions. Psychology enabled sport marketers to effectively market toward the desired target market (Chalip, 1992).

Team identity. The meaning of a team evolves as the elements of the team change, for example coaches leave and players graduate (Delia & James, 2018). Team identification "from a

social identity perspective, consumers share a common category membership with a group that - to varying extents - might consist of players, coaches, staff, and other fans" (Lock & Heere, 2017, p. 427). The term "team identity" exhibited a type of group identity (Heere & James, 2007). Fans experienced team identification though motivation of achievement (Trail, Robinson, et al., 2003; also see Robinson et al., 2005; Trail, Fink, et al., 2003).

Team identity has been associated with the social identity theory (Lock & Heere, 2017), a psychological theory which described a person on their relationships with groups they belonged to (Delia & James, 2018; Heere & James, 2007; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Heere and James (2007) defined social identity as "one's identity based upon the relationship between the individual and his/her surroundings and disregards that part of an individual's identity that comes from his or her personal attributes" (p. 67). Sociability, as defined by Melnick (1993), represented a fundamental need for group involvement and social interaction voluntarily participated in by individuals of equal status. Social identify groups were made up of fans as well as players and coaches (Lock & Heere, 2017). Boyle and Magnusson (2007) found one's social identity positively impacted their brand loyalty in college athletics. Tajfel (1982) described social identity as the self-concept derived from knowledge of and emotional value allocated to group membership.

Stereotypes of College Athletes

Prior literature documented a multitude of college athlete stereotypes. Coakley (2015) defined stereotype as a generalization that is widely shared and used to define or judge all individuals that are included in a particular social group. College athletes are stigmatized in higher education as "dumb jocks" unintelligent, unmotivated, and unable to succeed academically (Comeaux, 2011; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995; Riciputi & Erdal, 2017;

Sailes, 1993). Goffman (1963) defined a stigmatized individual as a person who possesses a discrediting characteristic (as cited in Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, & Jensen, 2007). Individual actions conforming to stigmatized behavior augmented negative stereotypes. An example of confirming behavior included Beem's (2006) finding of coaches pressuring university instructors to change college athletes' grades and attendance records to hide academic infractions. Individual characteristics including race, sport, and gender impacted intensity of stigma and stereotypes.

Race. Racial stereotypes impacted the quality of education and the experiences of Black college athletes (Comeaux, Griffin, Bachman, & Porter, 2017). Black college athletes have been, throughout history, "targets of unfair hyper-surveillance, and are too often rendered disposable" (Comeaux, 2018, p. 33). Stereotypes of this subpopulation demonstrated a compounding effect, as they were believed to be less intelligent than the White "dumb jock" college athletes (Sailes, 1993) and stereotyped as lethargic students and arrogant athletes (Moskowitz & Carter, 2019). Similarly, another common racial stereotype mentioned by Smith and Martiny (2018) included the belief of Black college athletes possess superior athletic ability and characterized White college athletes with exceptional athletic intelligence.

High Profile Sports. Football, men's basketball, and occasionally baseball often received higher media coverage than other collegiate sports and thus considered high profile athletics. Simons et al. (2007) found the "dumb jock" stereotype most often referred to football players. College athletes who participated in high profile athletics reported more negative stereotyping than those participating in lower profile sports (Simons et al., 2007). Black college athletes participating on the football team experienced the most stigmas, which led to negative treatment (Simons et al., 2007).

Gender. Coakley (2015) defined gender as the societal perception of masculine or feminine. The historically masculine culture of sport encouraged the weaker-sex stereotype (Gentile, Boca, & Giammusso, 2018). The weaker-sex stereotype represents the belief that women possess less athletic abilities compared to men. Gardiner (2004) and Plummer (2004) expressed universities, like other organizations, value dominant male culture and individuals who do not validate the cultural norm are subject to discrimination and oppression (as cited in Comeaux et al., 2017).

Female college athletes experienced less negative stereotypes about intelligence and academic abilities (Simons et al., 2007). However, Comeaux et al. (2017) found female athletes in STEM programs were stereotyped with lower academic abilities to male counterparts. Male dominance in STEM programs should be noted as a possible mediating factor of this finding. Similarly, faculty stereotyped male college athletes with lower academic intelligence than female college athletes and non-athlete peers (Simons et al., 2007).

Campus Perceptions of College Athletes

Higher education often stigmatized college athletes (Comeaux, 2011; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995; Riciputi & Erdal, 2017; Sailes, 1993). Perception has been defined "as the process of scanning, gathering, assessing, and interpreting information in the environment," (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2014, p. 70). Nanay (2018) found perceptions are not all-purpose and often depend upon the perceiver's intended actions or interactions.

Student. Tucker et al. (2016) found students viewed college athletes as assets to university image and appeal. This study showed upperclassmen believed college athletes prioritize athletics over academics. Students, including college athletes, in Tucker's et al. (2016) study agreed college athletes receive preferential treatment from faculty. Non-athlete students

perceived college athletes with lower academic abilities than those of their non-athlete peers and thus required the special treatment from professors (Sailes, 1993).

Staff. Academic advisors held negative perceptions about college athletes (Stokowski, Rode, & Hardin, 2016). If an academic advisor viewed the university's athletic department negatively, he or she was more likely to stereotype college athletes accordingly (Stokowski et al., 2016). College athletes' sense of entitlement, expressed through lack of attendance to scheduled meetings, challenged university athletic staff and resulted in poor perceptions of the subpopulation (Vaughn & Smith, 2018). University staff reinforced racial stereotypes, for example Czopp (2010) found university career counselors encouraged Black college athletes to focus on athletics and White college athletes to focus on academics over athletics.

Faculty. Faculty placed low importance, possibly annoyance, on the public recognition of athletic success above success of non-athlete student peers (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom et al., 1995). Furthermore, they adversely perceived Black college athletes' accomplishments (Comeaux, 2010), disapproved of full athletic scholarships (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom et al., 1995), and believed athlete tutoring services, unavailable to non-athlete students, undermined the university's academic integrity (Baucom & Lantz, 2001). In 2011 Comeaux expressed a need to develop methods for creating meaningful relationships among faculty and college athletes.

Reducing Campus Stereotyping of College Athletes

Riciputi and Erdal (2017) found college athletes primed with athlete identity appeared more apathetic in the classroom and therefore provided a need to fight college athlete stereotype reinforcement. One option to reduce stereotype reinforcement provided by Riciputi and Erdal (2017) included encouraging non-athlete identities, such as a student identity used in academic settings. Campus climate and identity impacted both academic and athletic outcomes

of college athletes (Rankin, 2016), for example interaction between faculty and college athletes was positively correlated with academic success.

Prior research recommended proper communication within the campus community as another option to reduce stereotype reinforcement. Campus leaders would benefit from professional development workshops focused on college athletes to allow the creation of less biased learning environments for students (Comeaux, 2010). Simons et al. (2007) suggested the university correct any misunderstandings and provide correct information about college athletes to reduce stigma.

Intergroup Contact Theory. Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory provided four situational conditions designed to reduce prejudice: (a) equal status within groups, (b) active effort toward common goals, (c) intergroup or interdependent cooperation between groups, and (d) support of authority, law or custom to establish norms of acceptance. Tajfel (1969) defined prejudice as one having negative attitudes or perceptions toward one social group. Pettigrew (1998) suggested a fifth situational condition, friendship potential, centered on positive emotion that can be crucial to prejudice reduction. Alport (1954) found the contact fostered learning, which led to knowledge, and resulted in reduced prejudice.

While the original purpose of the intergroup contact theory involved the advantaged group learning about the disadvantaged group, Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) found knowledge between groups allowed for the smallest reduction in prejudice. Instead, intergroup contact eased anxiety and allowed empathy between groups, the reduction of anxiety and increased empathy allowed for larger reductions in prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Increased involvement between two groups allowed for knowledge, trust, and understanding to build,

anxiety and prejudices to reduce, and perceptions to change (Bruening et al., 2014; Stokowski et al., 2016).

Purpose

Relationship marketing's primary goal is to assemble a committed consumer base (Adomah-Afari & Maloreh-Nyamekye, 2018). The purpose of this study is to investigate if a faculty member's team identification or relationship with, or perception of, college athletes impacts intercollegiate athletic event attendance or team loyalty. This study examines the influence of relationship marketing on potential consumers with an inherent relationship to the organization and people involved. Athletic events center around relationships and, as Grönroos (2004) mentioned, the role of the product is blurred when relationships are the foundation of marketing.

RQ1: Does faculty motivation to attend university athletic events differ by motivation type?

RQ2: Can identification with university athletic teams and/or attitudes/perceptions related

to college athletes predict the level of motivation for faculty to attend university athletic

events?

Methods

Participants

Utilizing a purposeful sampling method, this study surveyed faculty members across a Power Five Conference (i.e., ACC, Big 10, Big 12, PAC 12, SEC). The primary researcher used university websites to locate email addresses for university deans in a Power Five Conference. Emails were next sent to the deans copying the dean's administrative assistant when accessible and other faculty with an invitation to participate in the present study and a request to forward to other faculty at their university. A reminder email also including the link to the survey was sent

two weeks later. Four weeks after the original email, two weeks after the second, data was retrieved for analysis.

Measures

The survey began with descriptive information including age, gender, race, marital status, athletic division, and conference. It also included questions such as the number of college athletes they teach in a typical semester and the average number of athletic events they attend in a year. Next three measures for the three predictors' motivation, identification, and perception were adopted from existing scales.

Trail and James' (2001) Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC) was used to measure faculty motives for attending athletic events. It has 27 items, nine factors, measured on a seven-point scale ranging from one, strongly disagree, to seven, strongly agree. The internal consistency coefficient, Cronbach's alpha, for the overall scale in the original study included $\alpha = 0.87$ and ranged between $\alpha = 0.68$ to $\alpha = 0.89$ for each of the subscales (Trail & James, 2001). Similar to Trail, Robinson, et al's (2003) the current study removed the physical attraction subscale, leaving 24 total questions.

Robinson and Trail's (2005) Points of Attachment Index (PAI) was used to measure faculty identification with university athletic teams. This scale contains seven subscales, 21 items total, measured on a seven-point scale ranging from one, strongly disagree, to seven, strongly agree. The original internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha, coefficients for the seven subscales ranged from 0.69-0.85 (Robinson & Trail, 2005). The current study utilized the Team Identification subscale with slightly wording modified to better address the research questions.

The Knight Commission (2007) developed the Perceptions of Athletic Departments Questionnaire (PADQ) through research, meetings, and interviews about faculty attitudes of

athletic departments (see also Stokowski et al., 2016). The current study utilized a revised version of the subscale academics. Originally the subscale contained 24 questions; however, the authors removed seven items deemed not relevant to the current research, leaving 9 total questions. The revised academics subscale of the PADQ was used to examine faculty attitudes about athletics on their respective campuses.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted through statistical software, SPSS. First, descriptive statistics were performed including, when appropriate, means and frequencies. Second, a Pearson's correlation for the three scales was conducted to examine their relationship. Third, Cronbach's (1951) alpha for the scales or subscales was calculated to measure internal consistency reliability. Next, to address RQ1 a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to evaluate motivation of faculty to attend athletic events. The independent variable, motivation type, was a categorical grouping variable with eight levels associated with the eight different subscales: achievement, knowledge, aesthetics, drama, escape, family, physical attraction, physical skills, and social. The dependent variable was the level of motivation to attend university athletic events, measured by item responses on the MSSC subscales. Last, RQ2 was addressed using a regression model to determine the proportion of variance in athletic event motivation accounted for by faculty identification for university teams and their attitudes or perceptions related to college athletes.

Results

This study consisted of 238 faculty members at institutions with athletic departments competing within the Power Five conferences. Sample descriptive statistics showed heavily White (88.2%), married (78.6%), tenured (42.0%), Health Professions (21.0%) and Business

(20.6%) faculty from the SEC (53.4%) participated in the current study. Following the SEC, the

athletic conference breakdown included the Pac-12 (16.0%), Big Ten (10.9%), ACC (10.5%) and

Big 12 (6.7%). Participants ranged between 25 and 76 years of age with a slight female majority

(52.1%). About 70% indicated teaching one or more student athletes per semester.

Faculty Athletic Event Motivation

After data was cleaned and requirement checks were determined tenable, internal

consistency reliability scores were analyzed for the MSSC and its eight subscales. Scores ranged

between Cronbach's α = .800 and .951, suggesting adequate scale and subscale item

interrelatedness. A repeated measures one way ANOVA was used to answer the first research

question, does faculty motivation to attend university athletic events differ by motivation type?

Results revealed a significant difference in motivation scores from faculty participants (Wilks' Λ

= .281, $F_{7, 231}$ =84.281, p < .001). The large effect size indicated motivation type had a large

effect on faculty motivation scores (η^2 = .935). Means and standard deviations of faculty

motivation grouped by motivation type are located in Table 1.

Table 1

Motivation Subscales Means, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach's' Alpha for Faculty Participants

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number	Cronbach's α
Physical Skills	5.5157	1.28479	238	.913
Drama	4.7561	1.36614	238	.800
Aesthetics	4.6792	1.64836	238	.951
Family	4.5068	1.80054	238	.929
Achievement	4.3571	1.59803	238	.893
Social	4.1275	1.64700	238	.910
Escape	3.8781	1.69723	238	.881

Table 1 Cont.

Motivation Subscales Means, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach's' Alpha for Faculty Participants

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number	Cronbach's α
Knowledge	3.1190	1.66469	238	.853
Total Scale	4.3679	1.15730	238	.943

Faculty Identification and Perceptions

Internal consistency reliability scores were analyzed after the all requirement checks were determined tenable for the revised MSSC, PADQ, and team identity subscale of the PAI. Internal consistency reliability estimates suggested adequate item interrelatedness, ranging between Cronbach's α = .783 and .943. A multiple linear regression was conducted to predict faculty motivation to attend university athletic events based on faculty identification with their university athletic teams and their perceptions related to college athletes. Results indicated a significant regression equation ($F_{2, 177}$ = 157.61, p < .001), with university athletic team identification and perception of student athletes accounting for almost two thirds (R^2 = .64, p < .001) of the explained variance in athletic event motivation scores.

Higher levels of both faculty identification with university athletic teams (b = .45, p < .001) and faculty perceptions of student athletes (b = .31, p = .001) contributed to increased athletic event motivation scores. The participants' predicted motivation score equaled 1.78 + .45 (identification) + .31 (perception), where identification is measured by faculty scores on the PAI team identity subscale and perception is measured by faculty scores on the PADQ. For every one unit increase in faculty university team identification the predicted motivation score increases by .45 units, and every one unit increase in faculty perception of college athletes the predicted

motivation score increases by .31 units. Means and standard deviations of university athletic team identification and perception of student athletes located in Table 2.

Table 2

Faculty Perceptions of Athletes and Identification with University Teams Means, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach's' Alpha

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number	Cronbach's α
Perceptions of Athletes	3.2407	.53494	180	.783
University Team Identity	3.8648	1.83750	180	.938
Total Motivation Scale	4.5328	1.09912	180	.943

Discussion

This study investigated impacts of faculty member's team identification and their perception of college athletes on their motivation to attend intercollegiate athletic events. It examined the influence of relationship marketing on potential consumers with an inherent relationship to the organization and people involved. First, a repeated measure ANOVA was conducted to determine if faculty motivation to attend university athletic events differed by motivation type. Second, multiple regression analysis was utilized to examine if university team identification or their perceptions of college athletes impacted their motivation to attend university athletic events.

The repeated measures ANOVA indicated a significant difference in motivation scores from faculty participants. Descriptive statistics suggested the physical skills of athletes as Power Five faculty's strongest motivator. This is contrary to the findings of Trail, Robinson, et al. (2003) which indicated football spectators' average variance explained for physical skills was the lowest of the seven MSSC utilized in their study. This suggests faculty are motivated differently than other potential fans. As such, Power Five sport marketers should design marketing efforts

specifically for faculty members. With public four-year institutions employing close to 650,000

faculty in 2016 ("Institute of Education Sciences," 2017), this finding suggests directing physical

skill advertisements to Power Five faculty would be practical relationship marketing. Effective

relationship marketing is accomplished through directing marketing resources to the consumers

that provide the greatest value toward the establishment with a goal of retaining said consumers

(Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995).

The multiple regression analysis provided evidence to conclude higher levels of both

faculty university athletic team identification and their perceptions of student athletes contributed

to increased athletic event motivation scores. University team identity would be included in

one's social identity. Social identity positively impacts brand loyalty (Boyle & Magnusson,

2007) and motivates purchase intentions (Uhlman & Trail, 2012). As such, sport marketers

should attempt to increase faculty identification with university teams. Faculty have placed low

importance on the public recognition of athletic success (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom et

al., 1995). Results from the current study suggested utilizing marketing techniques to increase

faculty's perceptions of student athletes to increase faculty motivation to attend athletic events.

Additionally, interaction between faculty and college athletes was positively correlated with

athlete academic success (Rankin, 2016).

Theoretical Implications

Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory originally involved the advantaged group

learning about the disadvantaged group. However, Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) found that

knowledge between groups allowed for the smallest reduction in prejudice, the current study

examined if identification and perception impacted faculty motivation to attend athletic events.

Results indicated higher levels of both faculty identification with university athletic teams and faculty perceptions of student athletes contributed to increased athletic event motivation scores.

Similar to Pettigrew and Troop (2008), results from the current study suggest intergroup contact may ease anxiety and allow faculty to feel comfortable while motivating them attending athletic events. Developing faculty team identification and positive perception of student athletes may lead to increased involvement between athletes and faculty. Prior research indicated such involvement allowed for the expanding of knowledge, trust, and understanding while reducing anxiety and prejudices (Bruening et al., 2014; Stokowski et al., 2016).

Practical Implications

Similar to prior literature (Abeza, O'Reilly, & Reid, 2013; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Nufer & Buhler, 2009), the researchers recommend sport marketers employ relationship marketing efforts directed at establishing, enhancing, and maintaining successful relationships between faculty and athletics. Athletic and academic departments should have an open line of communication. With increased interaction between the departments, faculty and athletic staff will have the opportunity to bond and form relationships. Sport marketers should emphasize the physical skills of university teams when marketing toward faculty members. For example, marketers could highlight physical skills with video of past athletic events on campus monitors. Marketers could also utilize social media to display athletic success. Alternatively, athletic departments could email faculty directly to inform them of individual success of students in their class that semester. Identification is one's self orientation through objects, people, or groups that results in feeling of attachment (Trail et al., 2000). Athletic departments would benefit from increased faculty identification with university teams. For example, athletic departments can

capitalize on faculty nights or faculty sections at athletic events. This would provide faculty with a sense of belonging and encourage a sense of community.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations included within the current study. First, faculty receive an excessive amount of email and invitations to complete surveys, which resulted in a small sample size. This study only included faculty from the Power Five conferences, and respondents were primarily from SEC institutions. Research question one was analyzed using a repeated measures ANOVA. As such, researchers were unable to conduct follow up analyses and relied on descriptive statistics for further explanation. Last, the sample size decreased in for the second research questions analysis as many participants bypassed the PADQ. However, it is unknown whether this informative or non-informative drop-out.

Faculty motivation for attending university athletic events is understudied. Future studies should be conducted to investigate faculty from all athletic divisions and a variety of demographics to determine if athletic divisions or other demographic information influence motivation intentions. Qualitative analysis should be conducted to see if there an alternative motivation for faculty to attend athletic events, as faculty may not be typical consumers. Researchers should also investigate faculty motivation for different university teams, such as football, soccer, and tennis. Further research would benefit from a between groups ANOVA to allow for follow up analysis.

<div align="center">

Conclusion

</div>

This study explored the significance of relationship marketing on faculty members with an inherent relationship to their athletic department. Relationship marketing's primary goal is to construct a committed consumer base (Adomah-Afari & Maloreh-Nyamekye, 2018). This

study investigated the impact of faculty member's team identification and their perception of college athletes on university athletic event attendance. Results revealed differences in motivation type from faculty participants, and the levels of faculty identification with university athletic teams and their perceptions of student athletes impacted athletic event motivation scores.

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Chapter 5

Conclusion

Power Five athletic departments function on multimillion-dollar budgets (Ko, Rhee, Walker, & Lee, 2014); yet, the majority of Power Five institutions operate within a financial deficit (NCAA, 2017). The majority of literature on intercollegiate athletic marketing focuses on high profile sports, such as football and men's basketball. While awareness is a fundamental part of sport marketing (Funk & James, 2001), little research has investigated spectator and donor motives in low profile college sports. The three papers included in this dissertation provided several practical implications. Booster club members provide intercollegiate athletic teams with financial and emotional support. There has been little to no research conducted to understand, one, the barriers and challenges for generating awareness for low-profile intercollegiate athletics in the Power Five and, two, the level of faculty support for college athletics in the Power Five Conferences. The papers included found high importance of marketing the intrinsic rewards of team identity and connection through serving college athletes.

The first paper, Cookie Cutter Marketing Might Not Cut It: A Case Study on Men's Tennis Marketing, exposes challenges in marketing the men's team including inadequate advertising, desired social interactions, and a reliance on tangible benefits. Athletic success demands a significant fiscal commitment (Hutchinson & Berg, 2015), and intercollegiate athletic departments depend upon donor contributions (Stinson & Howard, 2004). Two theoretical frameworks, social identity theory and planned behavior theory, were utilized to better understand how university students and booster club members' social identification and event attendance perceptions. The data emerged into four distinct themes: communication, social interaction, connection, and hospitality. Findings indicated booster club members as the primary

men's tennis fans. Participants indicated a desire to help the team generate greater fan interest through events, such as a booster club barbeque.

The second paper, Not Your Typical Fan: A Phenomenological Study on Booster Club Membership for a Men's Division I College Tennis Program, provides suggestions to increase booster club membership. Booster club memberships are contingent upon a yearly financial donations, thus an increase in members generates an increase in budget and athletic success depends on adequate funds. Colleges and universities benefit from intercollegiate athletic success through increased student applications (Baumer & Zimbalist, 2019) and private contributions (Walker, 2015). These increases both justified and encouraged institutional investment in athletic departments (Walker, 2015). While faculty viewed public recognition of athletic success insignificant (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995), their salaries increased alongside athletic spending and coach's salaries (Conger, Gerstner, & Vogel, 2018). College athletes endure stereotyping and unfavorable perceptions by the campus community (Comeaux, 2011; Engstrom et al., 1995; Riciputi & Erdal, 2017; Sailes, 1993). Campus perceptions are reinforced through faculty attitudes of college athletes signifying a need to develop new techniques to promote positive and meaningful relationships between faculty and college athletes (Comeaux, 2011).

The third paper, The Forgotten Inherent Relationship: Faculty and Intercollegiate Athletics, explored the possibility of using university team identity to increase athletic event attendance and promote positive relationships between faculty and college athletes. Results indicated differences in motivation types from faculty participants. Faculty were motivated by the physical skills of the athletes. Their levels of identification with university athletic teams and perceptions of student athletes positively impacted their motivation scores to attend university

athletic events. The researchers recommend sport marketers exercise relationship marketing strategies focused on establishing, enhancing, and maintaining successful relationships between faculty and athletics. Power Five sport marketers should emphasize the exceptional physical skills of athletes on university teams when marketing toward faculty members. Athletic and academic departments should have an open line of communication. Universities might consider implementing a dining hall for only faculty and staff. This would allow for an increased interaction between the departments, faculty and athletic staff to have the opportunity to bond and form relationships. To emphasize the physical skills of university teams, sport marketers could utilize video of past athletic events on campus monitors and social media to display athletic team successes. Alternatively, athletic departments, or student athletes, could email faculty directly to inform them of individual success of their students. Athletic departments would benefit from increased faculty team identification. Sport marketers can benefit from providing faculty with a sense of belonging and encourage a sense of community through faculty nights or faculty sections at athletic events.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter for studies one and two.

UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS

To:	Alison C Fridley
From:	Douglas James Adams, Chair
	IRB Committee
Date:	06/27/2018
Action:	**Exemption Granted**
Action Date:	06/27/2018
Protocol #:	1805121412
Study Title:	Cookie Cutter Marketing Might Not Cut It: A Qualitative Analysis on Marketing in Tennis

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol that may affect the level of risk to your participants, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have any questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact the IRB Coordinator at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

cc: Charles A Bell, Investigator
        Stephen W Dittmore, Investigator

Appendix B

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter for study three.

UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS

To:	Alison C Fridley
From:	Douglas James Adams, Chair IRB Committee
Date:	10/25/2019
Action:	**Exemption Granted**
Action Date:	10/25/2019
Protocol #:	1909219440
Study Title:	The Forgotten Inherent Relationship: Faculty and Intercollegiate Athletics

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol that may affect the level of risk to your participants, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have any questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact the IRB Coordinator at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

cc: Sarah Elizabeth Stokowski, Investigator

Appendix C

Informed Consent for studies one and two.

Cookie Cutter Marketing Might Not Cut It: A Qualitative Analysis on Marketing in Tennis

Principal Researcher: Alison C. Fridley
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Stephen W. Dittmore

Invitation to Participate

You are invited to participate in a research study about the level awareness for a men's tennis program at the NCAA Division I Power Five level. As a participant you are asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire and at least one audio recorded semi-structured interview. The expected length of the interview is between 30 minutes and one hour.

The purpose of this study is to understand the awareness at an NCAA Division I Power Five university in the Southeastern Conference for a men's tennis team. There are two main goals for this study. The first goal is to effectively transform men's tennis at this level into a fan-filled event. The second is to understand how effective marketing can raise awareness and generate enthusiasm for this particular men's tennis program.

If you do not want to be in this study, you may refuse to participate. You may conclude your participation at any time. There will be no negative effects if you refuse to participate. There is no anticipated risk to participating and all information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable State and Federal law. At the conclusion of the study you will have the right to request feedback about the results and you have the right to contact the Principal Researcher as listed below for any concerns that you may have.

You may contact the Principal Researcher, Alison Fridley at acfridle@uark.edu, or the Faculty Advisor, Dr. Dittmore at dittmore@uark.edu, if you have any questions about this study. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, please feel free to contact Ro Windwalker at the University of Arkansas Research Compliance Office, 479-575-2208 or irb@uark.edu.

Alison Fridley, MA
Graduate Student
University of Arkansas
479-575-3845
acfridle@uark.edu

Appendix D

Booster Club Members Demographic Information Questionnaire for studies one and two.

Interview: _____

Demographic Information

Please answer the following demographic questions. Feel free to leave anything blank you wish to not disclose.

1. What is your age _____

2. What is your gender _____

3. Please specify your ethnicity _____

4. What is your marital status?
      a. Single, never married
      b. Married or domestic partnership
      c. Widowed
      d. Divorced
      e. Separated

5. What is your household income?
      a. Less than $20,000
      b. $20,000 to $34,999
      c. $35,000 to $49,999
      d. $50,000 to $74,999
      e. $75,000 to $99,999
      f. $100,000 to $150,000
      g. Over $150,000

Appendix E

Interview Protocol for studies one and two.

<div align="right">Interview Protocol for Club</div>

<div align="center">Tennis Marketing (1)</div>

Name of interviewee: _____

Date: _____

Preliminary Script: "This is [name of interviewer]. Today's is [day and date]. It is _____
o'clock, and I am here in [location] with [name of interviewee], the [title] of [institution or
system]. We'll be discussing [topic of interview]."

1. Tell me about your first memory from tennis? And what is your favorite memory from
   either playing or watching tennis?
   a. When did you first start playing?
   b. When did you first start watching tennis?
   _____
   _____

2. Can you remember your first University X tennis match?
   a. What made you decide to come support?
   b. How did you learn about the match?
   _____
   _____

3. What kept you coming back? Can you tell me about why you decided to be an University
   X tennis booster?
   a. When did you first join Club?
   b. Do you currently, or have you ever held a board position? I so what was it?
   c. Can you tell me about your experience in that position?
   _____
   _____

4. Can you tell me about your current experience as a Club member?
   a. What benefits do you enjoy?
   b. In your opinion, what can be done to improve the experience?
   _____
   _____

5. About how many matches do you attend throughout a season? Do you ever travel to
   support the team?
   a. How do you typically find out about the matches?
   _____
   _____

6. Where do you typically look to find out about match dates and times?
   a. Have you ever realized the men played a match and you did not know about it?
   _____
   _____

7. What would be your prefered way to know about matches?
   a. Would you like reminders on match days?

   _____

   _____

8. In your opinion, can anything be improved to influence you to attend more matches?
   a. Awareness?
   b. Marketing promotions?

   _____

   _____

9. In your opinion, does the men's tennis team connect with their fans?
   a. If yes: sense they are already connecting with fans, can you think of anything that needs to improve to raise Club membership?
   b. If no: Do you think if they were able to connect with their fans more, would that help improve the Club membership?

   _____

   _____

10. Are there any marketing promotions, like tshirt throws, food night, or international night, that impact your decision to attend the match?
    a. What promotions are your favorite?
    b. Do you feel any promotions are a waste of money?

    _____

    _____

11. Can you explain an ideal tennis experience from your perspective? This could include anything from how you find out about a match, to marketing techniques used, to the social experience?

    _____

    _____

12. Is there anything I haven't asked you yet, that would help me understand your experience as an University X tennis fan?

    _____

    _____

Appendix F

Booster Recruitment Email for studies one and two.

Recruitment Email

The introductory email to the boosters will be sent through the head coach. I will ask a line to be included expressing those who are interested in participating in the study will have his or her email forwarded to the primary researcher. I will also request my name, email, and phone number be included in the email for participants to use if they have any questions.

The secondary email will be sent by the primary researcher to propose times for audio recorded interviews. An outline of the possible email is as follows:

Good afternoon,

I wanted to take a second to thank you for your interest in participating in this study on tennis marketing. I am interested in conducting interviews throughout the week of _____. Ideally I would like to work within the hours of 7:00 am and 7:00 pm. However, if you would prefer another time please feel free to request one that is easiest for you. I am open to working with your schedule. I also wanted to remind you that you are under no obligation to participate in this interview or questionnaire. You may opt out at any time.

Thank you,

Ali Fridley

Appendix G

Student Questionnaire for study one.

Men's Tennis Marketing

Directions: Leave any questions you do not wish to answer blank.

1. Gender _____

2. Age _____

3. Have you ever been to a Men's tennis match?

_____

4. If yes, what did you enjoy, what could be improved?

_____

_____

5. If no, what would make you interested in attending one?

_____

_____

6. What promotions do you enjoy?

_____

_____

7. How do you find out about different events on campus?

_____

_____

8. If you were to attend a tennis match, describe your ideal experience.

_____

_____

_____

Appendix H

Faculty Survey for study three.

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT
The Department of Health, Human Performance, and Recreation at the University of Arkansas
supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following
information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study.
You should be aware that participation is completely voluntary and that even if you agree to
participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Your relationship with the
investigators will not be affected in any way if you refuse to participate.

We are conducting this study to better understand university faculty members' attachments,
consumption motives, and attitudes regarding intercollegiate athletics. Depending on the
applicable questions, it is expected that this survey will take between 5 and 30 minutes to
complete.

This survey includes questions about you and your attachments, consumption motivations, and
attitudes regarding intercollegiate athletics. Some questions may be uncomfortable to answer, but
we ask that you be honest. All information collected in this survey will be presented in aggregate
and individual responses will not be published. If you do not wish to answer a specific question,
you may refuse to answer it. If at any time you do not wish to continue with this survey, you can
exit the survey website.

Although participation may not benefit you directly, we believe that the information obtained
from this study will help us better understand what impacts faculty members' relationship with
intercollegiate athletics. This information may be used to develop both theoretical and practical
implications.

All efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential and the survey will not
collect identifying information about you such as your name or birthdate. However, at the end of
the survey you have the option to enter your email address, for the sole purpose of awarding gift
cards. Gift cards will be awarded and email addressed will be deleted prior to data analysis. We
cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Any personal information you provide may be
disclosed if required by law. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the
study may be published and databases in which results may be stored.

Your participation is solicited, although strictly voluntary. If you would like additional
information concerning this study before or after it is completed, please feel free to contact us by
phone or e-mail. Starting the survey indicates your willingness to participate in this project and
that you are over the age of 18. If you have any additional questions about your rights as a
research participant, you may contact any of the following:

The University of Arkansas Research Compliance:
Phone: 479-575-2208
Email: irb@uark.edu
Mail:
Ro Windwalker, CIP
Institutional Review Board Coordinator
Research Compliance

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By selecting Agree, you indicate that you are willing to participate in this study.
1. Agree
2. Disagree
    Skip To: End of Survey If Q1 = Disagree

Q2 Are you a university faculty member?
1. Yes
2. No
Skip To: End of Survey If Q2 = No

Q3 Please specify your type of your faculty appointment.
1. Renewable Contract/ Non-tenure track
2. Clinical
3. Tenure Track
4. Tenured
5. Other

Q4 Please specify the type of your faculty appointment.
1. Instructor/ Lecturer
2. Assistant Professor
3. Associate Professor
4. Full Professor
5. Other

Q5 Which of the following best describes your discipline?
1. Agricultural Sciences
2. Business
3. Humanities
4. Social Sciences
5. Natural/Applied Sciences
6. Health Professions

7. Education
8. Architecture
9. Other

Q6 Are you an alum/alumna of your current institution?

Q7 How old are you?

Q8 To which gender do you identify?

Q9 Please specify your ethnicity.
1. White
2. Hispanic or Latino
3. Black or African American
4. Native American or American Indian
5. Asian or Pacific Islander
6. Other

Q10 What is your marital status
1. Single, never married
2. Married or domestic partnership
3. Widowed
4. Divorced
5. Separated

Q11 Do you have children in the home?
1. Yes
2. No

Q12 In which athletic conference does your institution's athletic department compete?
1. Atlantic Coast
2. Big 12
3. Big Ten
4. Pac-12
5. Southeastern
6. Independent
7. Other

Q13 How many student-athletes do you teach in a typical semester?

Q14 On average, how many university athletic events do you attend each year?

Q15 Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement about your university's high profile teams (i.e. football or men's basketball) from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).
1. I feel like I have won when the team wins.
2. I feel a personal sense of achievement when the team does well.

3. I feel proud when the team plays well.
4. I regularly track the statistics of specific players.
5. I usually know the team's win/loss record.
6. I read the box scores and team statistics regularly.
7. I appreciate the beauty inherent in the game.
8. There is a certain natural beauty to the game.
9. I enjoy the gracefulness associated with the game.
10. I enjoy the drama of a "one run" game.
11. I prefer a "close" game rather than a "one-sided" game.
12. A game is more enjoyable to me when the outcome is not decided until the very end.
13. Games represent an escape for me from my day-to-day activities.
14. Games are a great change of pace from what I regularly do.
15. I look forward to the games because they are something different to do in the summer.
16. I like going to games with my family.
17. I like going to games with my spouse.
18. I like going to games with my children.
19. The physical skills of the players are something I appreciate.
20. Watching a well executed athletic performance is something I enjoy.
21. I enjoy a skillful performance by the team.
22. Interacting with other fans is a very important part of being at games.
23. I like to talk to other people sitting near me during the games.
24. Games are great opportunities to socialize with other people.

Q16 Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement about your university's high profile teams (i.e. football or men's basketball) from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).
1. I identify with the individual players on the team more than the university's athletic teams.
2. I am a big fan of specific players more than I am a fan of the university's athletic teams.
3. I consider myself a fan of certain players rather than a fan of the university's athletic teams.
4. I consider myself to be a "real" fan of my university's athletic teams.
5. I would experience a loss if I had to stop being a fan of the university's teams.
6. Being a fan of my university's athletic teams is very important to me.
7. I am a big fan of the university's coach.
8. I follow the university team because I like the coach.
9. I am a fan of the university team because they are coached by that coach.
10. One reason why I am a fan of my university's athletic teams is because it increases the status of our community.
11. I am a fan of university athletics because they enhance the community's image.
12. The reason I am a fan is because the university athletics improve the nation's perception of the state.
13. First and foremost I am a fan of a specific sport.
14. The specific sport is my favorite.
15. I am a fan of a specific sport at all levels (e.g. high school, college, professional).
16. I identify with the university rather than with any specific university team.
17. I am a fan of all the university's teams.

18. I support the university as a whole, not just its athletic teams.
19. I am a fan of college athletics regardless of who is playing.
20. I don't identify with one specific college team, but collegiate teams in general.
21. I consider myself a fan of college athletics, and not just one specific team.

Q17 Please indicate the extent to which you think the statement applies to your campus about high profile athletes (i.e. football or men's basketball players) from Not at All (1) to Very Much (4).

1. In my experience, student-athletes in my academic department are motivated to earn their degrees.
2. Student-athletes are more burdened than other students on my campus by demands of their out-of-class time.
3. Missed class time due to athletic obligations detracts from the quality of the student-athletes' learning in my class.
4. Student-athletes are not prepared academically to keep pace with other students in my classes.
5. Student-athletes represent a disproportionate number of known cheaters in my classes.
6. Individuals try to use their status as student-athletes to acquire special treatment from my teaching assistants.
7. Tutors hired by the athletic department complete assignments for some student-athletes.
8. Sanctions for academic misconduct are less severe for student-athletes than those applied to non student-athletes in my school/college.
9. In order for my university's football and basketball teams to be competitive, compromises in academic standards must be made.

Q18 Is there anything you would like to add about intercollegiate athletes or athletics?