Investigation of Stadium Performance: Case of NCAA Division I Football Stadiums as Non-Sporting Event Venues

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, sport facility performance has been overlooked in the scholarly literature. However, in recent years, as the sport industry has become more revenue-driven, non-game day sport facility performance has begun to receive increasing attention. In intercollegiate athletics in the United States, one way that university athletic departments have begun to generate revenue is through the utilization of football stadiums as non-sporting event venues (Lee, Kim, & Parrish, 2015). However, little research has examined how intercollegiate athletic departments strategically utilize football stadiums as non-sporting event venues. Using a mixed methods approach, including qualitative content analysis and open-ended questions, the present study assessed how National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I athletic departments utilize their football stadium as a non-sporting event venue. Results showed that more than half of NCAA Division I athletic departments provided information as to the availability of their football stadium as a non-sporting event venue. Specifically, almost 70% of Power Five schools provided such information versus only 35% of non-Power Five schools. Also, findings revealed that some athletic departments do not provide this information on their website because they either prefer to keep stadium rental information internal or they are in a transitional stage in which they are working toward providing information about using their football stadium as a non-sporting event venue in the near future. Additionally, the results demonstrate that a majority of the users of football stadiums as non-sporting event venues were from local businesses or organizations. A discussion of the implications of these findings as well as opportunities for future research conclude this study.

Keywords: football stadiums; usage; events; revenue

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Traditionally, the utilization of sporting arenas and stadiums as non-sporting event venues has been viewed as unique (Leask & Hood, 2001). However, in recent years, it has become progressively more important for sport organizations to construct multi-purpose facilities in order to obtain maximum usage and additional sources of revenue (Parrish, Lee, & Kim, 2014). Therefore, in order to increase revenue generation and utilize their sport facilities more frequently, professional sport administrators are providing opportunities for other organizations to rent their stadiums and arenas for a myriad of various functions such as business meetings, seminars, trade shows, and weddings (Lee, Kim, & Parrish, 2015; Parrish, 2018). For example, AT&T Stadium in Dallas is used to host numerous events including concerts, cheering camps, soccer games, indoor racing, and even collegiate football games (See AT&T Stadium, 2018).

In a similar manner to professional sport organizations, many intercollegiate athletic departments are now concentrating on revenue generation and maximization of facility usage (Parrish & Lee, 2016). Thus, renting facilities (e.g., football stadium, basketball arena, luxury suites, etc.) to outside entities is becoming an essential business practice for numerous athletic departments. For instance, TCF Bank stadium, the home of the University of Minnesota football program, offers club rooms as rental options in order to host events such as fundraisers, banquets, wedding receptions, meetings and many other functions available to outside groups (See University of Minnesota, 2018). Additionally, athletic departments also host larger events such as summer stadium concerts in order to generate additional revenue for the intercollegiate athletic department (Muret, 2015).
As utilizing a stadium as a non-sporting event venue is becoming more common, researchers have begun to investigate this trend (Parrish, 2018). In particular, recent research has begun to examine how professional sport stadiums can be used for non-sport event purposes, such as meetings and conferences (Kim, Jeon, Lee, & Parrish, 2013; Leask & Digance, 2002; Lee, Kim, & Parrish, 2012; Lee et al., 2015; Parrish, 2018; Parrish et al., 2014). However, studies examining how intercollegiate football stadiums can be utilized for non-sport purposes are quite limited (Parrish & Lee, 2018).

Understanding how intercollegiate football stadiums are used is important for two main reasons. First, in spite of the rising cost of athletic facilities in recent years (Fulk, 2015), numerous intercollegiate football stadiums do not fully maximize usage (Lee et al., 2015). Thus, limited usage challenges athletic administrators to gain further financial support from university administration. As such, underperformance of these stadiums, undoubtedly, creates a problematic financial viability issue for athletic departments. Consequently, increasing stadium usage is critically important for athletic departments. Relatively, given decreasing financial support available to athletic departments from the institution as well as the state for public institutions, athletic departments face pressure to create additional sources of revenue (Parrish & Lee, 2016).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the present study was to descriptively analyze the current state of usage of intercollegiate football stadiums as non-sporting event venues. Specifically, this study investigated how many National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I athletic departments provide information on their athletic department website about how their intercollegiate football stadium could be used as a non-sporting event venue. In addition, the current study examined why some athletic departments do not promote and market their stadium as a non-sporting event venue. Lastly, this study was interested in examining the actual usage of an intercollegiate football stadium as a non-sporting event venue. Accordingly, the following research questions were developed:

1. How many NCAA Division I athletic departments offer information as to the availability of football stadiums as non-sporting event venues on their websites?
2. What are the reasons for not offering information as to the availability of football stadiums as non-sporting event venues?
3. How does an athletic department use a football stadium as a non-sporting event venue?

Literature Review

The sport facility is an important component of a marketing mix (Westerbeek & Shilbury, 1999). For instance, a sport facility has been considered a place to provide enjoyment to fans through social interaction. As a result, there are important practical implications for sport managers to effectively market the sport facility (Westerbeek & Shilbury, 1999). In recent years, as sport facilities have received notoriety as possible destinations for the Meetings, Expositions, Events, and Convention (MEEC) industry, sport management researchers have begun to view the quality and features of a sport facility as significant (e.g., Leask & Digance, 2002; Lee et al., 2012; 2015; Parrish et al., 2015).

In fact, the MEEC industry is rapidly expanding globally and professionals in the sport industry have realized that football stadiums are possible destinations for numerous MEEC events (DiPietro, Breiter, Rompf, & Godlewksa, 2008; Parrish & Lee, 2018). As a result, sport facilities are commonly utilized as non-sporting event venues, particularly at the professional level of sport (Parrish, 2018).

Within the extant literature a few studies have specifically examined the usage of sport facilities for non-sporting event venues. One of the first studies to examine this topic was conducted by Leask and Digance (2002) who analyzed two professional soccer team’s stadiums in the U.K and Australia and the various stadium renovations that had been completed for “finding different types of non-gate income to ensure some consistency of year-long revenue generation” (Leask & Digance, 2002, p. 19). Leask and Digance (2002) concluded that facility renovations helped sport management professionals market their stadiums’ facilities and enabled them to compete with five-star hotels that usually hosted similar events. Additionally, Kim, Jeon, Lee and Parrish (2013) specifically discussed the attractiveness of a professional sport team’s facilities for social and corporate events. These authors identified several important variables necessary to satisfy key site selection criteria which include logistical infrastructure (e.g., podium, microphone, furniture, etc), parking, food and beverage, cost, services, capacity, value, layout, technology, sport team value, and the congruence between the team and the kind of event being hosted.

While an assumption can be made that most professional sport team facilities at the highest level are capable of offering these services to the MEEC industry, it was not known how sport facilities were perceived as non-sporting event venues by the MEEC industry. Lee et al. (2015) examined this issue and found that what event planners saw as drawbacks were actually highlighted as advantages noting that the uniqueness of the venue was the ultimate advantage. Lee et al. (2015) argued that more effort should be placed into the marketing of sport facilities for event hosting in order to address misconceptions regarding the viability of sport stadia among event planners.

Recently, Parrish et al. (2015) examined the usage of Minor League Baseball (MiLB) team’s stadiums as non-sporting event venues. Specifically, they examined the use of websites as a marketing tool to maximize revenue generation. This study is particularly relevant to the first research question in the present study because the use of websites as a marketing tool for an intercollegiate athletic
department is presumably the most effective way to market the availability of a football stadium as a non-sporting event venue. The findings of Parrish et al. (2015) demonstrated that approximately half of MiLB organizations properly utilized their website as a marketing tool for their stadiums as a non-sporting event venue. They also found that MiLBs could host a variety of non-sporting events such as birthday parties, business meetings, social outings, weddings, company recreational events, trade shows, and concerts. Thus, the findings of Parrish et al. (2015) suggested that more research is necessary to understand how stadiums can be constructed and promoted in order to be more marketable for non-sporting events. Therefore, this study extends the previous literature by examining the use of professional sport facilities for non-sporting event venues by investigating how university athletic departments utilize websites to provide information about the use of an intercollegiate football stadium for non-sport events.

**Method**

Broadly, the purpose of this study was to understand the current state of the usage of intercollegiate NCAA Division I FBS football stadiums as non-sporting event venues. In order to understand how athletic departments promote the availability of their football stadiums as non-sporting event venues, this study used athletic department websites as they are considered highly effective in terms of reaching potential customers and influencing purchasing intentions as well as customer satisfaction (e.g., Chen, Hsu, & Lin, 2010; Hur, Ko, & Valachich, 2007). Qualitative content analysis, a technique to analyze various types of communication (e.g., Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Patton, 2002), was conducted to derive knowledge and understanding of this particular phenomena about stadium usage (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992).

**Data Collection**

**Research question 1:** To answer research question 1, the usage of football stadiums of all NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) programs was analyzed. Specifically, the analysis includes Power Five conferences and non-Power Five conferences. Power Five conferences included the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), the Big Ten, the Big 12, the Pac-12, and Southeastern Conference (SEC). Non-Power Five conferences included the American Athletic Conference (AAC), Conference USA, Mid-American Conference (MAC), Mountain West Conference (MWC), Sun Belt Conference, and FBS Independent schools which did not have a conference affiliation.

An online search for the stadium rental information on the website of each athletic department from the NCAA Division I FBS schools was conducted by three authors independently. Typically, stadium rental information is listed under athletic facilities or game day information. However, unlike some other sport entities (e.g., Major League Baseball) where there is consistency league-wide regarding website structure and design, each athletic department has its own unique website which required a more thorough search process to find the information.

As previous research has found that sport organizations do not fully maximize the presence of websites to advertise/promote their facility as a non-sporting event venue (Lee & Parrish, 2016), we did not assume that all athletic departments provide information as to the availability of its football stadium as a non-sporting event venue. This led to research questions 2 and 3.

**Research question 2:** For research question 2, this study used open-ended questions to derive a greater meaning and holistic understanding of the situation. To do so, one single NCAA Division I mid major conference was selected to send out the open-ended questions. The conference used for this study has a total of 12 schools. This conference was selected because it is diverse in terms of stadia age and size. Also this conference is comprised of schools that have a mix of enrollment size, are both public and private, and a combination of both urban and rural campuses. See Table 1 for a list of the 12 athletic departments. Additionally, Table 1 provides information for each stadium such as capacity of the stadium, years the stadium has been in use, and dates of the last stadium renovation. This information was provided to demonstrate each athletic department’s uniqueness with respect to gaining a better understanding of stadium usage.

Emails were sent to individuals in charge of facilities and operations from the athletic departments from this specific conference that did not provide information as to the availability of its football stadium as a non-sporting event venue. Respondents included: Facilities and Event Operations Assistant, Director for Sports Facilities and Recreation Services, Associate Athletic Director for Internal Affairs, Associate Athletic Director Event/Facility Operations, Assistant Athletic Director, Facilities and Event Operations, Assistant Director of Operations and External Events, Assistant Athletic Director for Facilities and Operations, Assistant Athletic Director - Facilities and Event Operations, and Director of Operations and Events. These respondents were selected because of their expertise in the areas of facility management. The email included

| Athletic Departments | Stadium Capacity | Opening of the Stadium | Last Major Stadium Renovation |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Athletic Department A | 30,000 | 2009 | N/A |
| Athletic Department B | 22,500 | 1967 | 2007 |
| Athletic Department C | 24,000 | 1966 | 2016 |
| Athletic Department D | 29,013 | 1993 | N/A |
| Athletic Department E | 45,000 | 1972 | 2007 |
| Athletic Department F | 30,200 | 1969 | 2010 |
| Athletic Department G | 25,319 | 1969 | 2008 |
| Athletic Department H | 24,000 | 1983 | 2005 |
| Athletic Department I | 45,995 | 1965 | 2016 |
| Athletic Department J | 24,000 | 1929 | 2001 |
| Athletic Department K | 26,248 | 1937 | 2016 |
| Athletic Department L | 30,200 | 1939 | 2015 |
open-ended questions inquiring as to a) why their athletic department had not chosen to provide the information as to the availability of their stadium as a non-sporting event venue on their website and b) what barriers or obstacles may exist for them not to provide that information. After one month, a reminder email was sent to those who did not respond asking the same questions.

**Research question 3:** A separate email was sent to the employees in charge of facilities and operations from one athletic department who used their football field as a non-sporting event venue in order to request documentation of its recent usage. The athletic department provided two comprehensive lists of what groups and organizations utilized their stadium during non-game days as well as the number of people in attendance at the events for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 fiscal years. To protect the identity of the groups and organizations, only a general description of the types of groups and organizations was used.

**Data Analysis**

For research question 1, three authors as independent raters coded whether the athletic department website provided the information or not individually. Given this study is exploratory in nature, a simple yes or no coding was utilized. Yes indicates that the athletic department provides the information and no means the athletic department does not provide the information. When it is unclear if it is yes or no, authors were asked to leave a note for further discussion with other authors. They agreed on 83% of the coding. When disagreements on the differences were raised, discussion ensued and disagreements were resolved, leading to a 100% agreement. To address research question 2, two authors identified main reasons together using the answers from the open-ended questions. The main reasons were developed after the authors repeatedly read the comments to finally obtain both immersion and a sense of whole the whole (Tesch, 1990). For research question 3, the same two authors also independently reviewed the secondary data sources.

**Results**

**Frequency of Information Provided for NCAA Football Stadiums as Non-sporting Event Venues**

Four NCAA Division I schools play in stadiums where National Football League (NFL) teams play for their home games, so these four schools were excluded from data collection as these schools do not appear to control the renting of the stadium. Thus, a total of 125 athletic department websites were examined to answer research question 1.

After completing a content analysis of the athletic department websites, the results indicated that 64 athletic departments (51.2%) provided information as to the availability of their football stadium as a non-sporting event venue on their athletic department website. Specifically, close to 70% of Power Five school athletic departments (n=42; 67.7%) offered such information on their athletic department websites whereas only 22 non-Power Five school athletic departments (35%) provided such information on their official athletic department websites.

Specifically, the identified information available on websites ranged from pricing, rental guidelines information, amenities, and so forth. One Power Five school athletic department, for instance, provided information such as pricing ranging from $2,500 to $3,500, contact information, event facility location/size, services, and amenities. This athletic department had a different event rental pricing as they charge more to outside groups. Another Power Five school athletic department has a very organized and detailed website which presented the rental information. The website shows photos of rental spaces which include not only a stadium field and luxury suites but also a media room in the stadium, club seating areas, and a club house. Also each of these spaces has its own description as to pricing, capacity, and a reservation form.

One athletic department from a non-Power Five conference provided information such as an external facility rental manual, a facility rental manual form, information for football game days, driving directions to the football stadium, and the cost to rent the facility, which was $5,000. The $5,000 included access to the field and facility, and any additional costs required to rent the stadium as a non-sporting event venue which is charged based on the information completed on the facility rental form. Another athletic department from a non-Power Five conference provided a wide range of information on their athletic department website. This information included various amenities that the stadium offered to potential renters including a parking map, directions to the stadium, a seating chart, various facts about the stadium’s construction as well as the stadium itself, and a stadium event rental request form. The request form included a space for description of the event as well as asking to indicate if the event is a party, conference/seminar, or reception/banquet. While little information was available on athletic department website(s), one athletic department from a non-Power Five conference indicated that a club seating area in the football stadium could be rented. The website indicated that those interested in renting the facility should contact the athletic department for further information.

**Reasons for Not Providing Information on NCAA Football Stadiums as Non-sporting Event Venues on Athletic Department Websites**

The second research question was focused on understanding why athletic departments did not provide information about how their stadium could be utilized as a non-sporting event venue. Out of 12 athletic departments in the conference, most of the athletic departments (n = 6; 66.6%) did not offer this information on their website and, then, provided a response as to their rationale for not presenting these details. The responses were classified into two distinct categories: an internal focus and transitional stage.
Internal focus: Four athletic departments (athletic departments C, D, E, & K) indicated that they focused on internal users such as the university’s academic and non-academic unit faculty and staff as potential consumers as opposed to promoting their football stadium for potential external renters. By only offering this information internally, these athletic departments only focused on internal users from university departments or student organizations.

Interestingly, focusing on groups within the university does not necessarily mean that the athletic departments do not rent their stadium to non-university groups. These athletic departments (C, D, E, & K) do rent their football stadium out to non-university groups too; however, they do not promote or market to those groups. All of these athletic departments with an internal focus believed that potential buyers from outside of the university would contact them directly to inquire about the use of the football stadium. Athletic department D noted that they preferred to keep their rental information internal stating that they “feel posting the cost alone on the website would create confusion and possibly deter possible interested renters.”

Transitional stage: Three athletic departments B, F and G reported that they were in a transitional stage in which they were currently in the process of developing a website or document to upload to their website that provided information as to the availability of their football stadiums as a non-sporting event venue. These particular athletic departments have begun to realize the potential revenue stream from allowing their stadiums to be used as non-sporting event venues. Some of the responses noted that their athletic departments have plans to make the information available on their website within the upcoming year. For example, athletic department F responded that a need had been recognized in their department and an effort is being made to make the information public:

> We are having someone working on our website to add a rental portion. We have been doing some market research to see where our pricing lies amongst competitors. Our plan is to have it up and running by the fall after the turn of the fiscal year when we can analyze the numbers. Until last December the department did not have a specific staff person in charge of rentals. Now that I’ve been able to focus on this aspect of revenue we can put our plan into action. I guess our barrier in regards to rentals would be the lack of appointment to a specific person in the past.

Athletic department G also had mentioned that their department is currently working on a document to upload to their athletics website that would detail rental costs and information. They also noted that it was a new venture for the athletic department in an effort to maximize revenue and utilize their stadium more rather than for only a few athletic events. Athletic department B also mentioned that their department is currently in the process of redeveloping their facilities’ webpage which includes rental costs and hoped to have it finished and published by their upcoming fiscal year.

How Collegiate Athletic Departments Utilize Their Football Stadium as a non-sporting event venue

The third research question sought to answer how athletic departments used their football stadium as a non-sporting event venue. Athletic department A responded with two fiscal years of rental information that showed that the stadium was utilized by both external users and internal users who were affiliated with the university.

During the 2013-14 fiscal year, the data examined showed that the football stadium was used for home football games (n = 6 days). Aside from football games, the football stadium was used for non-sporting events (n = 101 days). Specifically, the stadium was used by internal renters such as various academic and non-academic users across the campus (n = 68 days; 67.32%) and the stadium was also utilized by external renters such as local businesses, local sport organizations, and local non-profit organizations (n = 33 days; 32.67%). The average attendance per event by the internal users (M = 115.9) was smaller than the average attendance for non-university users per event (M = 249.15).

During the 2014-15 fiscal year, the results indicated that except for home football games, the football stadium was used for non-sporting events (n = 70 days) with a higher average attendance than the previous year (M = 1,247). Specifically, the stadium was used by internal renters (n = 38 days; 54.28%; M_{attendance} = 175.92) and also utilized by external renters (n = 32 days; 45.71%; M_{attendance} = 1,195) during the 2014-2015 academic year.

As for external renters the results of the present study found that local businesses were the primary renters of stadium facilities on non-athletic event days during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 fiscal years (n = 26; M_{attendance} = 155.8). Local high school football teams (e.g., regular season games, playoffs) also used the football stadium during the same time period (n = 18; M_{attendance} = 1,704). Also local not-for-profit organizations (n=8 days) and local sport organizations (n = 4 days) used the football stadium for events such as coaching clinics. Other buyers utilized the facility for memorial services, musical groups, wedding rehearsals, and a local National Football League (NFL) team’s preseason game, which drew 20,000 people to the single event.

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**TABLE 2.—Usage of football stadium as a non-sporting event venues: A case of NCAA Division I**

| Athletic Department | How many NCAA Division I athletic departments offer information as to the availability of football stadiums as non-sporting event venues on their websites? |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Power 5 conference (N=62) | Yes: 42 (67.7%); No: 20 (32.3%) |
| Non-power 5 conference (N=63) | Yes: 22 (35%); No: 41 (65%) |
| Total (N=125) | Yes: 64 (51.2%); No: 61 (48.8%) |
The purpose of the present study was to analyze the current usage of intercollegiate football stadiums as non-sporting event venues. Specifically, this research examined how many NCAA Division I athletic departments offer information on their website as to the availability of their stadium as a non-sporting event venue. The results revealed that more than half of NCAA Division I FBS athletic departments (51.2%) offered such information on their website. However, the results from Power Five conferences and non-Power Five conferences somewhat differed, and it presents a worthwhile discussion that needs further consideration both academically and practically. Close to 70% of Power Five conference athletic departments offered information regarding the availability of their football stadium as a non-sporting event venue on their websites whereas only 35% of non-Power Five conference athletic departments provided such information on their websites. The finding that few non-Power Five conferences provided information about the availability of their football stadium as a non-sporting event venue is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Lee et al., 2012; Parrish et al., 2015) which found that sport organizations did not effectively utilize their website to market their stadium for non-sporting event usage.

Perhaps, not surprisingly, a majority of Power Five conference athletic departments are active in providing information on the use of their football stadium as a non-sporting event venue on their website, and there are a few possible explanations as to why this information is provided. First, it demonstrates that Power Five conference athletic departments may have more human (e.g., staff) as well as financial resources (e.g., budget) than non-Power Five conference counterparts. Due to the various resources Power Five conference athletic departments have, they could be more active and aggressive in terms of renting their venues than non-Power Five conferences. For instance, athletic department F specifically alluded to a lack of human resources as a barrier to not providing the information on their website. Secondly, and relatedly, it is possible that Power Five conference athletic departments are in favorable situations where they can maximize revenues from stadium rentals because they essentially have more amenities to sell. For example, due to financial resources, Power Five conference athletic departments have been able to renovate their stadia with upgraded premium seating, technology, and customer services. As a result, these stadia are becoming fine destinations for non-sporting events and are actively advertising/promoting the stadium.

Another important point of discussion that needs further attention is the number of athletic departments providing information as to the availability of stadiums as a non-sporting event venue. Three authors of the present study visited all NCAA Division I FBS athletic department websites to address research question 1. Interestingly, some universities provide information to the public on how their football stadium can be rented yet their stadium rental information is available only through the university website, and not through the athletic department website. Also, one athletic department website provided stadium rental information through an official city webpage where the school is located, and not through the official athletic department website. While these universities do provide stadium rental opportunities to the community, this study concluded that, methodologically, these athletic departments do not provide information because the information is not available through the athletic department website. Similarly, some athletic departments provide unclear rental information. For example, some athletic departments indicate on their athletics websites that athletic facilities could be rented such as a basketball court, recreation center, tennis court; yet it did not specifically indicate whether or not the football stadium could be rented out as well.

A second main objective of the current study was to evaluate why university athletic departments did not offer information related to the availability of their football stadiums as a non-sporting event venue. Results from the present study revealed that the largest portion of responders noted that it was the preference of the athletic department administration to retain rental availability information internally. The two main reasons found for keeping this information internal were because of a choice to keep the information internally focused or the athletic department was in a transitional stage. Internal focus refers to an athletic department who selected to keep this information internal and was focused on making the stadium accessible to on-campus users and only having serious inquiries contact the department directly. Some athletic departments were currently in a transitional stage where they were working on a document or a website that would detail the rental costs and other relevant information to potential buyers who were seeking to use their football stadium or luxury suites for non-sporting events. Most athletic departments who were in a transitional stage were planning to make their information public within a year suggesting that there had been serious internal dialogue within the organizations to further use their stadiums as a non-sporting event venue.

A third main purpose of the present study was to determine how athletic departments use football stadiums as non-sporting event venues. Given athletic department A

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### Table 3: Usage of football stadium as a non-sporting venue: Case of athletic department A

|            | Days Used | Attendance M (Md) |
|------------|-----------|-------------------|
| FY 2013-2014 |           |                   |
| Internal    | 68        | 115.9 (100)       |
| External    | 33        | 249.15 (125)      |
| FY 2014-2015 |           |                   |
| Internal    | 38        | 175.92 (100)      |
| External    | 32        | 1195.55 (150)     |

Note. F indicates frequency. M indicates mean score. Md indicates median value.
has the newest stadium among all the conference members, which may be characterized by modernization and amenities inside of the stadium, it is not surprising to see that they were active in terms of usage of the football stadium as a non-sporting event venue. Based on their usage patterns for two fiscal years, the largest portion of external users are local businesses. This finding suggests that this athletic department has an effective marketing strategy and has developed quality relationships with local businesses seeking a unique venue to host their events and banquets. The importance of marketing the use of the intercollegiate football stadium to local entities for smaller events is consistent with the findings of Parrish and Lee (2016) who found that intercollegiate football stadiums are viable options for hosting local affairs such as community events or business meetings.

Practical Implications

Based on the results of the present study, more athletic departments should promote and market their football stadium as a non-sporting event venue. Also, clearly from the information provided by athletic department A, a majority of external users utilizing the stadium as a non-sporting event venue are local community groups. Thus, an implication from the present study appears to be that area businesses and organizations have developed a positive relationship with athletic department A and continue to regularly return to use the stadium as a non-sporting event venue. A practical suggestion from this finding is that intercollegiate athletic departments should target local businesses and organizations in order to expand the amount of external users. In order to accomplish this task, athletic departments should create awareness as to the availability of their stadium as a non-sporting event venue. The present study suggested that websites can be a highly effective medium to reach out to potential external consumers. Although a wide range of facility information can be provided on the athletic department website, providing information as to the availability of the facility should be the first priority so that internal and external organizations are aware of days and times when the facility is available.

While this study does not specifically examine the types of the information to be included on an athletic department website, we suggest that the athletic department should consider the types of information available on their websites. For example, information regarding availability, scheduling, costs, logistics, food and beverage options, parking, and other additional information can be provided so that potential buyers are provided with enough pertinent information to guide them through their selection process (Parrish et al., 2015).

It is assumed that newer stadiums have more potential to maximize facility usage. Older stadiums, however, should develop a strategic, yet cost effective way to maximize the use of the stadium. For instance, as opposed to building a new stadium, which is not financially viable for some athletic departments, stadium renovations to satisfy the meeting industry could be an option. Specifically, renovations which could transform under-utilized space into meeting space by providing access to areas that people normally cannot access could make a sports stadium a competitive option for the MEEC industry.

Lastly, creative marketing of facilities by athletic departments can create new revenue streams. Through the maximization of facility usage, athletic departments may strategically connect with community and business partners. As the need for University financial optimization increases, innovative facility marketing can create competitive advantages.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations of the present study. The results provided in this study were drawn based on the research question of this study; yet it is very possible that more athletic departments than what was found in the present study actually provide opportunities to the public to rent the stadium. Further, this study investigated how many athletic departments provide information as to the availability of football stadiums as non-sporting event venues via their athletic department website. This study found that several schools provide athletic facility rental information through the university website, not through the athletic department website. Accordingly, it would be quite worthwhile to investigate which website (school vs athletics) is more effective in terms of advertising and promoting information as to the availability of the football stadium as a non-sporting event venue.

Also, this study only examined the utilization of the intercollegiate football stadium. Thus, future research should analyze the use of other athletic facilities such as the basketball arena, soccer field, or recreation center. It is believed that an analysis of the utilization of these facilities may provide different results. Additionally, future researchers may want to consider the effects of the size of the institution, market size of the institutions, the win and loss records of the football team, and other relevant factors which may affect facility utilization. Lastly, it is necessary to expand data collection to include a substantially larger sample of Division 1 athletic programs to better understand research question 2. While this study does not try to generalize the findings of research question 2, admittedly, it is too small to draw conclusions from 3 athletic departments.

Conclusion

Traditionally, sport facility performance as a subject matter has been somewhat overlooked in the literature. However, as the sport industry becomes more revenue-driven, sport facility usage on non-game days (i.e., event day maximization) has been receiving more attention by scholars and practitioners. As many athletic departments are under increasing pressure to maximize the usage of
their football stadium as driver of revenue, the utilization of football stadiums as non-sporting event venues provides an opportunity for athletic departments to improve their financial performance. Thus, the insights gleaned in this study provide a foundation for subsequent work examining how innovative marketing of facilities can lead to enhanced financial performance while serving as a mechanism for connecting Universities to their surrounding communities.

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