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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

AN INVESTIGATION OF OUTSOURCING
TICKET SALES IN DIVISION I
COLLEGE ATHLETICS

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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College of Natural and Health Sciences
Department of Sport and Exercise Science
Sport Administration

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This Dissertation by: Kyle John Brannigan

Entitled: *An Investigation of Outsourcing Ticket Sales in Division I College Athletics*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Natural and Health Sciences in the Department of Sport and Exercise Science, Program of Sport Administration

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ABSTRACT

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Understanding the phenomenon of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics can help athletic departments make more informed ticketing decisions. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to help create new and emerging knowledge of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics from the interactions with the study's participants. The study had 15 participants who experienced the decision-making process as well as the stakeholder impact of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics. After doing a thematic analysis of the data, eight final themes were used to help describe the phenomenon. It was clear that the importance of being able to have the resources, training, and guaranteed revenue of outsourcing companies are advantages of partnering with an outsourcing company. These resources also allow other department staff to flourish. However, loss of control, turnover, and having everyone on board was a concern for administrators. Participants described outsourcing ticket sales as something that can help a lot of institutions, especially smaller ones; however, the relationship between the organization needs to be clear and positive for it to work. This study also provides insight on who makes the final decision when it comes to outsourcing. The study will help future researchers discover more about outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics while aiding industry experts on making the most informed decisions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Ticket sales have been considered a major source of revenue for most sport organizations (Lee et al., 2017). This has been confirmed by recent reports conducted on the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) reporting that ticket sales and donations have become two of the largest sources of revenue for college athletic departments (Fulks, 2017). By examining the reports Fulks completed, one can see this has been consistent for almost 10 years (Fulks, 2017). This rise in the need for increased ticket sales and donation revenue is evident through the increased focus placed on staffing these departments (Daughtrey & Stotlar, 2000; Wells et al., 2005). In addition, outsourcing business is on the rise (Kremic et al., 2006). In fact, one of the most popular fields to adopt outsourcing is collegiate athletics (Lee & Walsh, 2010). The need for increased donations and tickets sales in collegiate athletics has also led to the increase of the number of athletic departments choosing to outsource in collegiate athletics (Popp et al., 2020).

Another reason for the increase in outsourcing is the rising cost of higher education, which leads to a need for more revenue streams; thus, outsourcing has become a more accepted practice on college campuses (Schibik & Harrington, 2004). Although, while there has been an increase in outsourcing ticket sales staffs in collegiate athletics, there remains a gap in the literature on perceptions of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics as well as its effectiveness (Popp et al., 2020). In addition, research exists on outsourcing in business literature journals (Busi & McIvor, 2008). Although literature on outsourcing in collegiate athletics does

exist, very few studies focus on ticket sales and donations in relation to outsourcing in collegiate athletics (Popp et al., 2020). Multiple studies examine outsourcing marketing, concessions, and security in collegiate athletics; but again, very few studies on outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics exists (Popp et al., 2020). The study plans to examine the perceptions of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics. Outsourcing in this study refers to the implementation of ticket sales by organizations outside of the university, such as IMG Learfield Ticket Solutions and The Aspire Group.

The universities represented by outsourcing companies range across the board in size of institution, athletic budget, location, conference, and many other functions of the organization (IMG Learfield Ticket Solutions, 2021; The Aspire Group, 2021). Outsourcing may be more effective for some universities compared to others (Popp et al., 2020). For example, the NCAA has said that one Division I athletic department lost over \$65 million in revenue while another Division I school saw a \$44 million dollar surplus (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2021). Athletic departments that can achieve revenue generation in-house may not look to outsource ticket sales (Popp et al., 2020). However, outsourcing may be more useful for the universities that have large shortfalls (Popp et al., 2020). This study may help discover the effectiveness and perceptions of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics.

The study consists of a phenomenological study designed to examine the perceptions of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics. The participants have vast experience in the realm of athletic ticketing and have insight in the outsourcing of ticket sales. Both agency theory and stakeholder theory will be used to help examine the relationship between the stakeholder and the two agencies, which will allow for a better understanding of the perceptions (Logan, 2000). The

data for this phenomenological study will be collected using semi-structured interviews. The study will be conducted within three different athletic conferences.

Statement of the Problem

Outsourcing is on the rise in collegiate athletics, including the outsourcing of ticket sales (Popp et al., 2020). For example, research shows that over half of Division I athletic departments outsource some facet of their athletics department (Burden & Li, 2003). In addition, ticket sales departments are more important to athletic department's revenue streams than in previous years (Popp et al., 2020). Ticket sales has such an influence on athletic departments because they affect sponsorship and donation numbers (Wells et al., 2005). Athletic departments often tie ticket packages in with donation and sponsorship deals (McEvoy & Popp, 2012). However, very little academic research has been conducted on outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics (Lee et al., 2017). This is an issue because ticket sales are one of the leading revenue generators for Division I college athletic departments (Fulks, 2017). Athletic departments, although similar in function, work on very different budgets and restrictions (Popp et al., 2020). Previous research has shown that outsourcing is effective in other facets of college athletics, and among other levels of sports. (Burden & Li, 2005). For example, multiple professional sport organizations such as minor league baseball and the English Premier League (EPL) have seen success in outsourcing (Burden & Li, 2009; Manoli & Hodgkinson, 2017). Furthermore, researchers have stated that outsourcing should work for certain athletic departments because they are similar to smaller sport organizations that outsource, such as minor league baseball teams (Burden & Li, 2003). To date, no researcher has investigated the perceptions of outsourcing in collegiate athletics or if it is a good fit for athletic departments. The study allows athletic departments to better understand the phenomenon of outsourcing in collegiate athletics by explaining the

phenomenon through the description of people living it (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Doing this may provide athletic departments the information necessary to make an educated decision on outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics, and thus be able to make an educated decision on outsourcing ticket sales.

Background Information

Since 2008, ticket sales have been at the top of the list for revenue generators in Division I collegiate athletics (Fulks, 2017). In modern times, donations are directly tied to ticket sales for most athletic departments. In addition, ticket sales help drive sponsorship sales (Popp et al., 2020). The top three revenue generators for college athletic departments are rights and licensing fees, donations, and ticket sales (Fulks, 2017). As mentioned, ticket sales help drive donations and sponsorships (Popp, 2014; Wells et al., 2005). Previous research indicates that ticket sales are one of the largest revenue generators for college athletic departments (Popp, 2014; Wells et al., 2005). In addition, outsourcing is used more often than not in collegiate athletics (Burden & Li, 2003). The rise in this phenomenon is under-investigated in the realm of ticket sales (Popp et al., 2020). Research does exist on outsourcing in collegiate athletics, but very little have a focus on ticket sales (Popp et al., 2020). Furthermore, no researcher has investigated the perceptions or effectiveness of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics.

Outsourcing affects the entire organization, including the internal and external stakeholders of the organization (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Morehead, 2016). Stakeholders are an integral part of an organization's success (Morehead, 2016). The relationship between the two agencies and its stakeholders is another key contributor to the success of the partnership (Logan, 2000). As of now, we have no empirical evidence on how outsourcing is perceived, how

it affects relationships with internal and external stakeholders, nor if it is effective based off the needs and wants of the outsourcing athletic departments.

Past researchers have expressed that the best way to explain phenomena is to have a complete understanding of the social world, which can only be done by gaining a complete understanding of the interaction between objects or things (Kant, 1934; Pegues, 2007).

Furthermore, the framework of epistemology has been touted as the knowledge that is embedded into the theoretical perspective (Crotty, 2003). My personal epistemology is constructionism, also known as constructivism. Constructivism explains that the interactions between environment and people are what create meanings (Crotty, 2003). The constructivism approach is one that researchers use when they are attempting to be more open-minded (Crotty, 2003).

Epistemology

Researchers have long expressed the importance of informing the reader of the researcher's epistemological framework (Crotty, 1998, 2003). Epistemological framework has been defined as the "theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology" (Crotty, 2003). As previously mentioned, my personal epistemology is constructivism. Constructivism is the theoretical lens through which I conducted the study. In using the constructivism lens, I expressed the meanings constructed by interactions between people and their environment (Crotty, 2003). The constructivism approach expects me to go about the research process with an open mind opposed to being conservative (Crotty, 2003). The study collected information with the goal of creating knowledge and describing the phenomenon of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics through the interactions with participants and their environment. Describing the experiences of the participants in the study aided me in increasing the knowledge of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics (Stake, 2005).

Furthermore, a goal of this study was to be generalizable; past researchers have expressed that generalizations can be made when using the constructivism approach if the researcher presents thick and rich data (Stake, 1995). As can be seen in Chapter III, I used multiple methods to ensure that the data in the study is thick and rich. As mentioned, it is important to know and express the researcher's epistemological framework; mine is constructivism.

Researcher Bias

Due to my extensive knowledge about the phenomenon being investigated, it is important for me to be able to set aside my opinions on the topic. Although I worked for an outsourcing company, I don't consider myself having a bias toward or against the decision to outsource. I think that the decision and effectiveness of outsourcing is something that lacks investigation, and most organizations don't know if it will work or not until after it is implemented, which of course will impact the success of the partnership. Outsourcing is not a learn as you go type of process; you need to know why you are doing it before starting. Currently, most universities lack the education on what outsourcing can do for them when implemented correctly. I feel that most athletic departments lack knowledge on outsourcing ticket sales in general, and this lack on education can impact the decision to implement. I also feel that people who do have knowledge on it are more apt to make the decision to outsource. Most athletic departments mimic each other, and since some have had such success outsourcing, others are choosing to do so even if they lack the knowledge of what a successful relationship entails. Outsourcing ticket sales has become so popular because it has worked for certain schools and it allows universities to have more employees working in the department. Outsourcing would not be successful across the board and that is why it is important to know what outsourcing brings to the table and if it can help your university; however, I think most universities don't know this before entering into a

contract. Outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics needs more research to provide clearer explanations on its impact and why it is so popular.

Purpose of the Study

The study sought to explain the phenomenon of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics. The study's purpose helped create new and emerging knowledge from the interactions with the study's participants. As mentioned, ticket sales are one of the largest revenue generators for college athletic departments (Fulks, 2008, 2016, 2017). Yet, a gap in the literature on this specific topic remains (Popp et al., 2020). The study hoped to add knowledge to this topic in the sport management field by which future researchers can expand on the topic. Also, the practical implications of this study may provide athletic departments with empirical data when making decisions regarding the outsourcing of ticket sales.

Significance of the Study

From a practical standpoint, this study may aid athletic departments in having a better understanding of the phenomenon that is outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics. The study will provide perceptions of the practice from industry experts while also providing insight on if it may work for an institution like theirs. The study may also benefit the academic side as well. The results of this investigation may provide insight for future studies. Since this topic has not been researched before, it may open the door for continued research on the topic going forward.

Agency Theory

Agency theory is used in studies that emphasize relationships between organizations based on the contracts between the two (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1992; Reade, 2010). Although agency theory involves investigations of the relationship between two

companies deciding to come together via a binding contract (e.g., outsourcing), it has not been used in any study that has been published in a sport management journal. This may be because outsourcing literature in sport management is very scarce (Li & Burden, 2002). Thus, few studies in sports have investigated the relationships between partnering organizations (Lee et al., 2017). Outsourcing is now becoming a common business tactic in intercollegiate athletics and is a very popular tactic to help aid with the sales process (Burden & Li, 2003). With this phenomenon growing in collegiate athletics, it may be beneficial to investigate the relationships between outsourcing companies and athletic departments (Lee et al., 2017). Agency theory is typically used in organizational studies seeking profit generation between organizations that partner together via a binding contract (Reade, 2010). Very few studies in the sport management field have investigated the relationship between ticketing outsourcing companies and athletic departments (Popp et al., 2020). Furthermore, outsourcing in athletics is typically done on a contract basis (Li & Burden, 2002).

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory is widely applied in outsourcing, business, and sport management literature (Indounas, 2006; Walker & Parent, 2010; Wolfe & Putler, 2002). Stakeholder theory focuses on managerial decision making, thus making it great to use when investigating outsourcing (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). In previous research conducted on athletic administrators, the participants explained that when making pricing decisions, a stakeholder's opinion is one of the most important factors (Morehead, 2016).

Research Questions

The research questions for the study were derived from phenomenology; therefore, answering these questions helped explain the phenomenon of outsourcing ticket sales in

collegiate athletics by gaining the perceptions of the people making the decision of whether to outsource. Honestly answering these questions can aid athletic departments in the best way to go about making outsourcing decisions as well as create a new topic of research in the sport field. Discovering the perceptions of outsourcing ticket sales is something that could immediately help college athletic departments around the country.

- Q1 What are the athletic administrators' perceptions of outsourcing ticket sales?
- Q2 What is the decision-making process to outsource or not?
- Q3 What are the most common reasons athletic administrators choose to outsource ticket sales in collegiate athletics?
- Q4 What is the stakeholder influence on the decision to outsource?
- Q5 How does the athletic department's relationship with the outsourcing agency impact the decision to outsource?

By discovering the answers to these research questions, I hope to learn more about the perceptions that industry experts have regarding the phenomenon that is outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics.

List of Definitions

Phenomenology – The phenomenology approach allows the researcher to best explain a phenomenon through the lens of the people truly experiencing it (Merriam, 2009). Phenomenology is about describing the phenomenon through the participants, not explaining it (Qutoshi, 2018).

Collegiate Athletics – Also known as intercollegiate sport, the definition of collegiate athletics is a sport being played at the collegiate level in which eligibility must be received based of the requirements set upon from the NCAA for the promotion or regulation of collegiate athletics (IGI Global, 2021).

Ticket Sales – Ticket sales in a crucial part of the financial success of college athletic departments (Fulks, 2017). In ticket sales, a sales team interacts and informs consumers of the product with the intent of purchasing a ticket to an event (Ross, et al., 2004).

Outsourcing – Outsourcing has been described as turning over the activities and responsibilities of an organization to a specialized organization with the hopes of organizational improvement (Sharpe, 1997).

Agency Theory – Agency theory involves investigating the relationship between two companies deciding to come together via a binding contract (Reade, 2010).

Stakeholder Theory – Stakeholder theory focuses on decision making and the outcomes of those decisions from the stakeholder's perspective (Freeman, 1984). A stakeholder is any group or person who is affected by the achievements of the organization (Freeman, 1984).

Bridling – Bridling is a method used where the researcher reflects on the phenomenon being investigated (Stutey et al., 2020). Bridling allows the researcher to listen, gather meaning, and maintain openness during the entire researcher process (Stutey et al., 2020).

Trustworthiness – Trustworthiness is known as the amount of confidence the researcher has in their data, interpretation, and methods used in the study (Connelly, 2016).

Convenience Sampling – In convenience sampling, the researcher uses participants who are easily accessible and ready to interview; typically, these are people within the research team's personal and professional network (Merriam, 2009). Convenience sampling has become the most popular approach to creating a sample size for qualitative research studies (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

Snowball Sampling – Snowball sampling is a method of sampling that aids the researcher in getting enough participants for a study (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). When using snowball sampling, the researcher asks people who have already agreed to participate if they know other people who would also participate in the study (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

Semi-Structured Interviews – Conducting semi-structured interviews is the act of asking a participant predefined questions and then investigating deeper as the participant responds. Typically, this process produces powerful data because it provides insights into the participants' opinions, experiences, and perceptions (Peters & Halcomb, 2015).

Limitations – In research studies, limitations can be defined as characteristics of design or methodology that impacted or influenced the interpretation of the findings from one's research (University of Southern California Libraries, 2021).

Summary

The first chapter of this proposal introduces the topic of the study, the theoretical framework of the study, the purpose of the study, and discusses the study's significance. In addition, the first chapter includes the research questions the study seeks to answer. Going forward, Chapter II will primarily contain a review of the literature. Chapter III will introduce the methodology used for the study. Chapter IV covers the results of the study, and Chapter V provides the practical implications and discussion.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to unravel information regarding outsourcing information and ticketing in collegiate athletics and to introduce former studies that provide useful literature for the study.

Outsourcing

Outsourcing has become a very popular and influential business strategy, if not the go-to strategy in all types of businesses (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006; Walker et al., 2009). The use and success of outsourcing has led to over 90% of Fortune 500 companies deciding to outsource some part of their business (Real-Time Technology Solutions, 2007). Managers who have used outsourcing argue that cost reduction, increase in customer service, and increase in expert analysis are all things that occurred because of the decision to outsource (Walker et al., 2009). Outsourcing has been described as turning over the activities and responsibilities of an organization to a specialized organization with the hopes of organizational improvement (Sharpe, 1997). Outsourcing is not only popular, but also powerful; it's a trend that is taking over multiple industries (Walker et al., 2009). With businesses doing everything possible to keep the competitive advantage and stay relevant in their respective fields, they have started to implement outsourcing (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006). This may be due to the fact that outsourcing has recently emerged as a top management strategy to help maintain relationships, cut cost, and increase product profit margins (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006). Outsourcing can reduce the financial risk while also providing a greater financial return than keeping the operation in-house (Walker et al.,

2009). Outsourcing companies have the ability to complete tasks in a more functional manner (Lawrence, 2013). When companies choose to outsource, they are trying to cut cost while also maintaining or increasing the service they provide (Sharpe, 1997). Outsourcing makes this possible because these outsourcing companies typically have the best technology, prime talent, and a very large network to resolve issues and create opportunities (Kremic et al., 2006).

Although little research has been conducted on outsourcing, organizations continue to outsource their sales staffs in hopes to help the organization in multiple facets of business, regardless of the possible downfalls (Rapp, 2009). Continued research on outsourcing provided evidence of the lack of research on the relationship between outsourcing companies and the organizations that employ them (Lee et al., 2016). Relationship creation as well as contractual obligations have been touted as a few parts of outsourcing that need more attention sooner rather than later (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006). Although outsourcing is increasing in all types of business, literature continues to imply that large gaps remain on multiple facets of outsourcing (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006).

Over the 20th century, outsourcing has emerged as a common practice in businesses across the world (Arnold, 2000; Burden & Li, 2003, 2009; Good & Calantone, 2019; Lee, 2010; Lee et al., 2017; Popp et al., 2020). Both non-profits as well as profit maximizing agencies have sought out the assistance of outsourcing companies (Kremic et al., 2006). Managers of all types of business, in addition to academic researchers who seek guidance and information on the topic, have experienced difficulties finding specific answers to questions in literature on the topic (Kremic et al., 2006). Previous researchers have expressed the importance of discovering the answers managers are seeking regarding outsourcing so they can complete organizational goals (Hill & Jones, 1992). Providing managers with knowledge on outsourcing may help the

organization since managers are at the center of agencies and deal with outsourcing contracts (Hill & Jones, 1992). Managers hold unique and important positions, thus it's important for organizational success to equip them with as much resource as possible (Hill & Jones, 1992). Managers have relationships with both sides of the partnership and are an integral part of the success or failure of the partnership (Hill & Jones, 1992). In addition, managers must also make most decisions before, during, and after the relationship (Hill & Jones, 1992). The literature is far scarcer in the sporting realm (Lee et al., 2016, 2017; Li & Burden, 2002, 2004).

In previous studies conducted, marketing directors have said that outsourcing is a critical part of the success of their organization, but that they still experience communication issues (Walker et al., 2009). In addition, managers expressed that outsourcing created good relationships between employees of the company and their job satisfaction levels (Walker et al., 2009). Some managers even went as far to say that outsourcing helped their employees feel happier and more committed to the organization (Walker et al., 2009). Other researchers expressed worries about how the relationships of both internal and external stakeholders would be affected (Good & Calantone, 2019).

Outsourcing is a decision which is typically going to be made on an organization by organization basis; and although this is true for athletic departments, most do operate similar to each other (Burden & Li, 2009; Ross et al., 2004). Previous researchers have estimated that outsourcing in college athletics is here to stay and will continue to grow (Burden et al., 2006). In addition, theory is lagging compared to the use of the phenomenon (Busi & McIvor, 2008).

Profit Driven Outsourcing

Researchers have expressed that in order for a company to stay competitive in their field, they need to have a plan in place that allows them to increase its productivity by approximately

twice the industry's average (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006). This is why companies are using outsourcing—to ensure they can remain productive enough to remain on top of the industry or at least competitive within it (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006). In order for organizations to maximize profitability, they want to ensure they are making intelligent decisions in regard to selling their products (Good & Calantone, 2019). Profitability has been argued as the number one criterion when evaluating the performance of an outsourcing company (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006). Typically, when a company is experiencing success, they want to increase their staff and output, and a lot of times companies choose to increase their in-house employee numbers (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006). However, research shows that companies should act differently than in the past when put in these successful positions (Quinn, 1999). Furthermore, the most well-run and successful companies use their increase in profits to outsource other facets of their business to increase the overall organization (Quinn, 1999). Outsourcing is growing quickly and does not discriminate against the type of organization, and outsourcing has benefited and created profits for both private and public companies (Kremic et al., 2006). However, with it being such a new practice, the decision maker often struggles to know the cost of it, which makes it an even tougher decision when trying to create profits or cut costs (Kremic, et al., 2006).

Cost Efficiency Outsourcing

Most research conducted on outsourcing has explained that a leading reason an organization seeks a companionship with an outsourcing company is because they want to minimize cost (Arnold, 2000; Aubert et al., 1996; Bergsman, 1994; Bienstock & Mentzer, 1999; Brandes et al., 1997; Fan, 2000). Outsourcing has risen in popularity because when the partnership is done correctly, companies can deliver their service or product at a lower cost despite adding more parts to the company (Bers, 1992; Harler, 2000). However, researchers have

contradicted these findings and explained that the amount of cost cut by outsourcing is often overestimated (Cole-Gomolski, 1998; Vining & Globerman, 1999). One of the goals of athletic departments and all types of companies outsourcing may be to create a more cost-efficient product (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006). Thus, cost efficiency continues to be one of the top reasons organizations choose to implement an outsourced sales force (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006).

Outsourcing can help organizations that have a lot of different running parts run more efficiently and effectively, and with a lower risk of cost (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006). Creating a more effective and cost-effective sales process is appealing to organizations and are often a key reason why firms choose to outsource (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006).

Companies that choose to outsource their sales forces with a goal of cost reduction may want to examine their resources and see how outsourcing can make them more competitive, and cut the cost they feel could be reduced by using experts (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006).

Relationship Outsourcing

In addition to cutting cost and increasing profits, managers have also noted that building relationships with external stakeholders is the main goal of outsourcing (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006). Previous literature suggests that for a new product to be successful, it depends on the ability of the sales team to create relationships between the product and the customers (Good & Calantone, 2019). Previous research also discovered that deciding to outsource or not should be based on the product you have and the needs of the potential customers purchasing the product (Good & Calantone, 2019). Furthermore, knowing how to implement the outsourcing sales staff is crucial (Good & Calantone, 2019). Outsourcing the sales force has strengthened the relationship between the product and its customers in the past; however, to maximize the success, the outsourcing company needs to have the necessary information on possible clients (Good &

Calantone, 2019). Furthermore, outsourcing companies that are trying to sell new products have seen that better relationships between the product and customer are more meaningful when an outsourcing company is used (Good & Calantone, 2019). Furthermore, athletic ticket products change every season—with different opponents, players, times, etc. If outsourcing companies can build better relationships with athletic department's external stakeholders, that could be a huge selling point for outsourcing companies (Covell, 2005; Friedman et al., 2004).

Researchers have explained that outsourcing can hurt the relationship the company has with the organization, which is something that organizations should consider (Greaver, 1999). Being able to implement outsourcing successfully may give organizations a growth in profits, which helps create a competitive advantage (Good & Calantone, 2019). When organizations do this, they may be setting themselves up for increased stakeholder value and longevity (Good & Calantone, 2019). Customers gravitate toward these attributes, thus increasing their stakeholder relationships (Good & Calantone, 2019). Athletic departments may want to know their fan base and what they are looking for before hiring an outsourcing company to come and sell tickets to athletic events if they want to see the most success (Lee et al., 2016).

Outsourcing in Collegiate Athletics

In sports organizations, it is very common to outsource marketing responsibilities (Lee et al., 2016, 2017; Li & Burden, 2002, 2004). This may be due to the fact that most sport organizations are small and do not have the staff nor ability to carry out tasks (Maltz, 1994). Outsourcing is a decision which is typically made on an organization-by-organization basis; and although this is true for athletic departments, most do operate similar to each other (Lee et al., 2017; Ross et al., 2004). This stands true mostly for intercollegiate athletic programs and minor league sport teams because of the small and/or unpaid staff size they typically have (Maltz,

1994). Over half of the Division I NCAA schools have used outsourcing (Li & Burden, 2002) primarily for marketing operations; however, the use of outsourcing for ticket sales is on the rise as well, especially for football and basketball (Burden & Li, 2005, 2009; Burden et al., 2006; Li & Burden, 2002; Lombardo & Smith, 2009). Even with college sports being a multibillion-dollar industry, research on ticket pricing in college sports is scarce (Morehead et al., 2017). Typically, when research is conducted, it is conducted on larger schools like the Power Five conferences, and rarely on smaller Division I schools (Popp, 2014). Furthermore, it has been examined that larger schools are more likely to outsource marketing and other facets of business to take advantage of outsourcing companies (Li & Burden, 2004). However, in regard to ticket sales in college sports, it is not only the large schools using outsourcing companies; both The Aspire Group and IMG Learfield Ticket Solutions have contracts with schools that are not in the Power Five conferences and have low enrollment and numbers and little athletic success (IMG Learfield Ticket Solutions, 2021; The Aspire Group, 2021). Researchers have explained that sports organizations with small staff numbers can benefit from outsourcing ticket sales because of the lack of ability of the small staff to do other tasks and sell tickets (Maltz, 1994). In addition, a sports organization's decision to outsource is typically based on the organization's staff size and experience (Burden & Li, 2009). Although evidence exists that small schools outsource, there is no literature on the perceptions nor effectiveness of outsourcing in smaller schools.

Many reasons for outsourcing exist. Past researchers have discovered that the most influential factors in making the decision to outsource for college athletic departments were financial returns, followed by having a better focus on the business aspects done in-house, and cost management (Lee & Walsh, 2010). On the other hand, the most notable reason for not wanting to outsource was decreased relationships with local business, which is interesting

considering that an advantage of outsourcing is the outsourcing company's network and ability to reach people they would not be able to reach in-house (Lee & Walsh, 2010). This finding contradicts that of Li and Burden (2004) who explained that the existing relationship between the local business community and the athletic department had little to no effect on the department's decision to outsource. This may be because of the outsourcing company's ability to use its existing network as well as having the necessary skills to keep the relationships with existing clients (Lee et al., 2016). Being able to focus on the core aspects of the organization is also a popular reason to outsource (Lee et al., 2016).

Another reason for wanting to outsource may be growth (Lee, 2010; Lee et al., 2016; Li & Burden, 2002; Maltz, 1994). If a school sees enrollment increasing or the athletic department growing, organizations may look to outsource ticket sales to keep up with the increased size of the institution (Lee & Walsh, 2010). Revenue generation is a large priority for athletic departments seeking to outsource (Lee, 2010; Lee et al., 2016; Li & Burden, 2002). Research shows that outsourcing generates more revenue than if the task is done in-house by an organization (Lee & Walsh, 2010). However, very few studies have examined outsourcing ticket sales in college athletics and no published study has investigated the perceptions of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics (Popp et al., 2020). It is integral for athletic departments to know if outsourcing is something that can aid them in generating more revenue (Lee, 2010; Popp et al., 2020). One of the difficulties of outsourcing is that it may be tough to align the goals and mission of an institution with the goals and mission of the outsourcing company, whether the company is big or small (Lee & Walsh, 2010). Again, knowing how outsourcing affects these aspects of an athletic department may help aid them in making better outsourcing decisions (Lee, 2010).

Athletic departments choose to outsource for a multitude of reasons, some of which are the growth of the department and increased revenue (Li & Burden, 2004). However, there may be times the outsourced company feels differently than the athletic department on how to conduct an operation to meet a similar goal (Li & Burden, 2004). This is something that should be worked out before deciding to engage in a relationship with an outsourcing company (Lee & Walsh, 2010). Again, researchers have explained that the two main motivations for outsourcing are cost-driven outcomes and performance-driven outcomes (Manoli & Hodgkinson, 2017).

In modern-day college athletic departments, the sports that garnish the most revenue are football and basketball (Popp et al., 2020). The business aspect of these sports and other types of organizations have made outsourcing a need for athletic departments across the country (Li & Burden, 2004). Whether or not a school brings in 90,000 fans every home game or is a small organization attempting to fill a 10,000-seat stadium, the importance of filling those seats is rising (Li & Burden, 2004). The increase in expenses is a main cause for the need to derive more revenue from donations and ticket sales (Li & Burden, 2004). Typically, in order to purchase tickets, fans must donate money to the athletic department (Wells et al., 2005), thus meaning that donations have a direct correlation with ticket sales. Through ticket sales and donations, outsourcing may allow an organization to tap into additional revenue streams that the in-house team was not able to access (Lee et al., 2016).

One of the advantages of outsourcing is the outsourcing team's ability to connect with clients and other businesses the in-house staff could not (Busi & McIvor, 2008). However, if the surrounding community and the athletic department already have a strong relationship, then outsourcing may hurt (Li & Burden, 2004). Researchers have investigated client relationships, the ability to connect with clients, and the connection with local businesses in other facets of

outsourcing in collegiate athletics; however, as mentioned, very few studies have been conducted to see how outsourcing ticket sales affects an athletic department (Popp et al., 2020). Now that outsourcing ticket sales is a popular choice for athletic departments, it may aid athletic departments and future research to investigate how outsourcing impacts athletic departments (Popp et al., 2020).

Typically, when an organization outsources, the outsourcing company would have one of three levels of controls: complete control by the company, partial control by the company, or complete control by the athletic department (Li & Burden, 2004). Oftentimes, if a university has a good football program and other sports are struggling, the outsourcing company will only take over selling tickets for the struggling sports like baseball, basketball, etc. (Popp, 2014). For athletic departments, to successfully monitor if the outsourcing company is making improvements, they may want to know the degree of control in which the outsourcing company has compared to when the task was done in-house (Li & Burden, 2004). The level of control may impact the success of the outsourcing organization (Li & Burden, 2004). Control impacts how the organizations interact with stakeholders both internal and external (Li & Burden, 2004). Researchers have discovered that the outsourced company will be able to conduct the same activities that are done in-house, but they do them more efficiently and at a lower cost (Butler, 2000; Greaver, 1999). However, this has yet to be examined in the realm of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics (Li & Burden, 2004; Popp et al., 2020).

To comprehend the dynamic of the relationship more thoroughly between athletic departments and outsourcing tickets, we must investigate the outsourcing ticketing companies in which these athletic departments partner with (Popp et al., 2020). In general, an outsourcing company is one that enters a contract with a certain operation management and external third

party (Busi & McIvor, 2008). Currently, more than half of the NCAA Division I athletics departments have employed outsourcing companies for their business operations (Lombardo & Smith, 2009). Because outsourcing can provide specific expertise and experience to athletics programs, the outsourcing companies are successful in certain departments (Lawrence, 2013). For example, the outsourcing companies provide strategic support and daily strategies to university fundraising (Lawrence, 2013), and they also play important roles in advertisements, sponsorship deals, and ticket-related strategies (Lee et al., 2016). Thus, the strategic partnership between athletics departments and outsourcing companies for ticket pricing can encourage athletics administrators to develop more opportunities for selling tickets in either the primary or secondary market (Lee et al., 2016). For example, The Aspire Group, a ticket outsourcing company that focuses mainly on collegiate athletics and works with nearly 50 colleges, entered a three-year contract with Georgia Tech (Sanserino, 2014). This partnership with The Aspire Group created \$4.5 million in ticket sales profits (Sanserino, 2014). This provides evidence that outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics can work; however, not enough evidence exists (Sanserino, 2014).

Although outsourcing has been successful for many athletic departments, that is not the case for all of them (Popp et al., 2020). Outsourcing ticket sales does have its downfalls; one of the largest downfalls of outsourcing is that you must share revenue (Popp, 2014). However, athletic departments typically see a good return on investment (ROI) when making the decision to outsource (Popp, 2014). Furthermore, outsourcing can provide more than just monetary value for the life of the relationship; they can also improve the development of employees and improve customer service, both which are long term benefits regardless of the length of the relationship (Popp, 2014). Athletic departments must realize, though, that success most likely will not be

achieved immediately; it typically takes a couple of years for athletic departments to see success when first implementing any type of outbound sales staff regardless of if it is done in-house or outsourced (Popp, 2014). However, outsourcing companies do provide startup knowledge as well as better long-term plans than when it is done in-house. For example, The Aspire Group and Arizona State University Athletics created a partnership that was modeled after professional sports teams and saw success (Popp, 2014). Outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics has been successful in some cases and a failure in others. A reason for this may be the lack of ticket sales knowledge managers have at the collegiate level due to the fact that outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics is vastly understudied (Popp, 2014).

Outsourcing Ticket Sales in Collegiate Athletics

Many researchers have defined outsourcing as a practice of business in which an organization contracts out one of its in-house operations that the organization does not or cannot deliver to the third party specializing in that operation (Kumar & Eickhoff, 2006). Previous research explains that since athletic departments are vastly understaffed, the number of staff members devoted to selling tickets is low (Popp, 2014). Thus, outsourcing has become a solid option for athletic departments (McEvoy & Popp, 2012). In addition, athletic departments that have participated in ticket sales have seen increases after associating with an outsourcing company (Popp, 2014). Other researchers have explained that outsourcing provides a continuous strategic relationship or resource access to the service providers (Clott, 2004; Kumar & Eickhoff, 2006; Lee, 2010; Mukherji & Ramachandran, 2007). Outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics is a topic that has been covered very little in sport management journals and is vastly under-researched (Popp, 2014). With outsourcing growing in the sports ticketing industry, it continues to be something that increases in literature (Lee, 2010).

The two most common reasons for the use of outsourcing are to improve quality while also reducing cost (Lee & Walsh, 2010). Outsourcing allows organizations to minimize cost while hopefully maximizing ticket sales and donations (Lee & Walsh, 2010). However, to be successful, contracts with outsourcing companies must have clear agreements on service levels and responsibilities despite typically taking a long time to agree on them (Sanders et al., 2007). Research has shown that it takes a lot of time, money, and effort to hone the necessary skills to do certain tasks such as creating client relationships and selling tickets (Lee et al., 2016; Popp, 2014; Popp et al., 2020). This may be a reason so many business organizations and athletic departments prefer outsourcing over doing certain operations in-house with inexperienced workers (Clott, 2004; Kumar & Eickhoff, 2006; Lee, 2010; Mukherji & Ramachandran, 2007). Although outsourcing has been successful, not all executives are satisfied with outsourcing engagements (Sanders et al., 2007). These executives worry about if the tasks are correctly understood by both parties, as well as the relationship the outsourced staff may have with stakeholders of the organization (Sanders et al., 2007).

If outsourcing decisions are made correctly, they may lead to an increase in competitive advantage and possibly lowered cost, whereas bad outsourcing decisions may lead to increased cost or failure to complete tasks (Cross, 1995). Cross (1995) also discovered that a big issue in outsourcing is managing the relationship between the two business organizations. In addition, he found that business executives feel a main reason for them not being happy with the outsourcing company is because they cannot manage the relationship between the two organizations (Cross, 1995). This concern also exists among managers in collegiate athletics (Lee et al., 2017). At times, certain managers and directors in other parts of the athletic department disagree with the decision to outsource (Lee et al., 2017).

Over the years, outsourcing has grown in a multitude of industries (Clott, 2004; Kumar & Eickhoff, 2006; Lee, 2010; Mukherji & Ramachandran, 2007). One industry that has seen substantial growth in outsourcing is collegiate athletics (Lee, 2010; Li & Burden, 2002). Not only is outsourcing going to continue to gain traction in the business realm at a rapid pace, it is here to stay, and it needs to be researched because its theory is far behind its use in the practical world (Busi & McIvor, 2008). The growth of outsourcing in collegiate athletics led to a growth of literature on the topic (McEvoy & Popp, 2012). However, only a small amount of the existing literature about outsourcing in collegiate athletics focuses on ticket sales (McEvoy & Popp, 2012). Most of the literature focuses on technology, security, and other facets of marketing (McEvoy & Popp, 2012). A gap in the literature exists on how outsourcing companies' ticket sales and donations performance is measured by NCAA athletic departments (Lee et al., 2017). Although growth in outsourcing has spiked in the sport management field, it is still relatively in its infancy stage; thus, we have little understanding of outsourcing in college sports (Lee & Walsh, 2010). This informs us that more research is needed on ticketing in collegiate athletics (Lombardo & Smith, 2009).

With the rise of ticket sales in collegiate athletics, some athletic departments are choosing to outsource, and others are trying to keep it in-house (Popp et al., 2020). Keeping ticket sales in-house remains a popular decision because as education grows on the phenomenon, athletic departments are getting better at managing their own staffs (Popp, 2014). A main reason for this is because universities started teaching sport sales in their sport management programs; however, the number of sales classes offered is still low (Eagleman & McNary, 2010). Education on the matter is growing and the industry is now headed to a more sales- and business-focused model opposed to the way things used to be run (Popp, 2014). Since education on the topic is still so

low, most athletic departments that try to implement their own sales staff often lack the knowledge on how to best set up the department (Popp, 2014).

Existing research does show that outsourcing in collegiate athletics is not only growing, but more specifically more athletic departments are outsourcing marketing and sales responsibilities (Burden & Li, 2005; Burden et al., 2006; Li & Burden, 2002, 2004). However, as mentioned, despite the rise in the use of companies like The Aspire Group and others to sell tickets and solicit donations, very little research has been conducted on the perceptions, decision making, and effectiveness of these organizations (McEvoy & Popp, 2012; Popp, 2014).

Ticket Sales

Ticket sales is a crucial part of the financial success of college athletic departments (Fulks, 2017). In all types of ticket sales, it is the sales team that interacts with customers, and they are typically the employees who come up with the best ways to contact customers and inform them of the product (Ross, et al., 2004). Companies use salespeople as a boundary between the product and the organization (Ross, et al., 2004). With sales being one of, if not the most important facets of most businesses, it is surprising to see so many companies outsource such an important part of their success (Anderson, 1985). However, research shows that many companies are still choosing to outsource their sales teams and finding that is a good way to conduct sales (Anderson, 1985; Dutta et al., 1995; Marchetti & Brewer, 1996; Taylor, 1981). However, it must be noted that getting the sales force right is extremely important to the success of the outsourcing company (Ross et al., 2004). Thus, when an athletic department is choosing to outsource, they must make sure they align with the outsourcing company and their employees; otherwise, the partnership may not flourish as anticipated (Popp et al., 2020).

Ticket sales have been one of the largest revenue generators for colleges and universities across the country for years (Fulks, 2008, 2016, 2017; Popp, 2014). Although media and sponsorship deals have risen and become a large part of revenue generation for college athletic departments, ticket sales is one of the, if not the most important, factors in an athletic department's success (Fulks, 2017; Popp et al., 2020; Sheldon, 2014). This is because a lot of times the assumption is that sponsors and media companies don't want to associate with a team or venue that cannot fill its seats (Wells et al., 2005). In addition to ticket sales, donations are a large part of athletic departments' revenue streams (Fulks, 2017; Wells et al., 2005). Typically, in collegiate athletics, donations are intertwined with ticket packages to increase revenue (Wells et al., 2005). This increases the importance of ticket sales positions because the ticket sales staff often also has a responsibility to solicit donations (Popp, 2014; Wells et al., 2005). Thus, ticket sales employees contribute to two of the largest revenue generators for all Division I college athletic departments (Fulks, 2017). Ensuring the decision to outsource is the correct decision is integral to the future success of the organization because the company is in direct contact with important clients who contribute to the athletic department (Lee et al., 2016).

Very few universities can consistently sell out any athletic event (Popp, 2014). Even the biggest programs struggle to sell out football and basketball games for an entire season (Popp, 2014). This has led athletic departments to place a bigger focus on other sports (Popp, 2014). It has been proven that revenue can be made in sports other than the major ones like basketball and football. For example, the University of Nebraska has seen success garnishing revenue from sports like volleyball (Sheldon, 2014). Another reason for this shift in focusing is because athletic departments are now aware that athletic success does not equate to an increase in ticket sales for all organizations (Popp, 2014). Researchers have proven that all types of athletic

departments have seen no increase, and in some cases a decrease, in donations and ticket sales after winning seasons (Turner et al., 2002). Athletic departments choose to outsource ticket sales to try and create consistent ticket revenue regardless of what is happening within other facets of the athletic department (Popp et al., 2020). Professional sports organizations see more success selling tickets because of the ability and willingness to train sales staff (Popp, 2014). This is one of the perks of outsourcing ticket sales for universities, and typically these outsourcing companies train their sales consultants (Good & Calantone, 2019).

The best way to increase ticket sales is to have a trained outbound ticket sales department, and the bigger the better (Popp, 2014). Most of the time, even if college athletic departments have an adequate staff size, they still struggle to sell tickets (Popp & McEvoy, 2012). This is mainly due to the fact that most people at the administration level of college athletic departments have not done sales before; however, that mold is starting to change as we see younger administrators climb the ranks (Popp, 2014). For administrators with little sales experience, the decision to outsource ticket sales is tough due to their lack of knowledge in the field (Popp, 2014).

Outbound Ticket Sales

Outbound ticket sales are the most successful way to sell tickets to athletic events (Popp, 2014). Outbound ticket sales in when a sales staff uses phone calls and meetings to develop relationships with consumers to get them to purchase tickets to athletic events (McEvoy & Popp, 2012; Popp, 2014). This tactic is used hand-in-hand with the frequency escalator tactic (Mullin et al., 2007). Sales departments in professional sports leagues as well as universities and college athletic departments across the country use outbound ticket sales in an attempt to garnish revenue (McEvoy & Popp, 2012; Popp, 2014; Sanserino, 2014). However, the major difference between

the college ranks and the professional organizations is that professional teams can employ more sales consultants, whereas in college one person is typically doing the job of multiple people (Popp, 2014). This is another reason athletic departments seek outsourcing relationships—to help alleviate some of the overworked employees and to cut cost while improving the product (Popp, 2014; Popp et al., 2020). In addition, when outsourcing ticket sales, it is easier to determine your return on investment, or ROI (Popp, 2014). Sales is one of the few facets of business where you can see how much you earned versus how much you are spending (Popp, 2014). Thus, if an organization's goal is to increase ticket sales, it is easy to discover if the outsourcing relationship is successful or not.

Previous researchers explained that the top reasons for failure in outbound ticket sales staffs are lack of experience, lack of communication, high turnover rates of employees, lack of training, and lack of commitment by the staff (Bouchet et al., 2011). These are all facets of the business outsourcing that has been proven to be able to improve a company (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006; Walker et al., 2009). Another reason for the lack of success is employees' ability to know how to correctly use current sales technology such as sales force and Customer Relationship Management software (CRM) (Popp, 2014). Outsourcing companies that oversee ticket sales like The Aspire Group not only train their employees on how to use these technologies, but they train them in other facets of sales that, in turn, creates less turnover, higher commitment levels, and better understanding of clients (Popp et al., 2020). Some of the bigger, more successful programs have up to 10 paid ticket sales employees (Popp, 2014). Unfortunately, most programs must rely on a heavy usage of undergrad volunteers, graduate students, and interns. Typically, these types of employees have very little experience, time, and commitment (Popp, 2014). One of the reasons athletic departments use these types of employees is because they do not have the funds

to pay out sales commissions or add more employees to the department (McEvoy & Popp, 2012). However, as the importance of ticket sales rises, athletic departments have started to put a greater focus on staffing a ticket sales team (Wells et al., 2005).

Typically, in-house sales teams are managed by an assistant athletic director or manager (Popp, 2014). However, as mentioned, these employees are typically undereducated for their position and thus athletic departments have looked to outsource to get expert opinions (Popp, 2014). In addition, outsourcing is cheaper than hiring and training your own sales staff, and it provides educated trainers and employees (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006). Employees at this level are likely to lack a significant amount of knowledge, which is a cause for training (Popp et al., 2020). Training is a must to improve their skills; however, training these employees is impossible for athletic departments to do in-house because they themselves lack the ability to correctly train their staff (Popp, 2014). The Aspire Group has adopted the approach professional teams implement, and they implement it at the college level. This approach places a specific level of attention on group sales and retention as well as creates new business and gets them up the frequency escalator. The formula of using the pro model as well as the frequency escalator theory has proved to be a successful tactic for The Aspire Group (Popp, 2014; Sanserino, 2014).

Professionals in the business have both expressed and stressed the importance of training sales employees (Irwin et al., 2008). Not only do they need training before starting on the phones, but success of a sales team requires continued training (Irwin et al., 2008). Typically, professional teams train their sales staff for two weeks before they start selling and have continued training (Popp, 2014). This is something that does not happen when athletic departments implement sales staffs (Popp & McEvoy, 2012). Employees must be trained before they hit the phones and should receive regular training throughout their first few years on the job

(Irwin et al., 2008). Outsourcing companies, however, are known for training their employees well (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006). Research conducted on ticket sales in collegiate athletics showed that just under 80 percent of athletic departments that implement outbound ticket sales train their staffs more than 20 hours a year (Popp, 2014). Furthermore, other departments that have outbound ticket sales teams don't train their employees at all (Popp & McEvoy, 2012). With outsourcing being more prudent and athletic departments becoming wiser, this trend is changing quickly. As mentioned, outsourcing companies like The Aspire group use extensive training, and the knowledge is now being taught more in sport management programs (Eagleman & McNary, 2010; Irwin et al., 2008).

With outbound ticket sales being the most effective way to sell tickets, athletic departments must continue to try and improve the sales team (Popp, 2014). As education on the topic rises and younger administrators climb the ranks, more of a focus may be put on outbound ticket sales (Eagleman & McNary, 2010). Ticket sales are already understudied in sport management literature, and with the rise of this tactic, it is important to know what will work best (McEvoy & Popp, 2012; Popp, 2014; Popp et al., 2020).

The Attendance Frequency Escalator

The attendance frequency escalator is a tactic employed by various successful sport organizations to help increase ticket sales year after year (Mullin et al., 2007). The Aspire Group, which is an outsourcing company that oversees ticket sales among other things for college athletic departments, trains all their staff on how to get customers up the frequency escalator. The frequency escalator tactic is a tactic that gets clients to gradually spend more money with the organization (Mullin et al., 2007). For example, a person may start off by buying a single game ticket. The frequency escalator tactic involves using certain communication skills that can get

that single game ticket buyer to increase to a mini plan in later years and then graduate to a season ticket holder (Mullin et al., 2007). The escalator tactic treats a consumer as a long-term investor rather than a one-time purchaser. Thus, instead of being a single ticket buyer worth \$250, they look at all customers as potential \$10,000 clients over the span of their lifetimes (Mullin et al., 2007).

Typically, outbound ticket sales methods go along with the escalator theory (Mullin et al., 2007). Sales consultants use phone calls and meetings to create relationships with existing clients (McEvoy & Popp, 2012). Other tactics that go along with the escalator theory is personalized messages as well as seat visits (Mullin et al., 2007). This escalator theory tactic is so often used by organizations because it is proven that in sales it is far easier to retain an existing client compared to gaining a new one (Mullin et al., 2007). Furthermore, using meetings, phone calls, messages, and special perks helps customers feel valued and part of the organization, which leads them to climb the sales escalator (McEvoy & Popp, 2012; Mullin et al., 2007). Retaining clients garnishes more revenue and is more cost- and time-effective for sales associates than trying to gain a new client (McEvoy & Popp, 2012; Mullin et al., 2007). The escalator is a proven theory used by most athletic departments as well as used by one of the most prominent and successful outsourcing companies in collegiate athletics (Mullin et al., 2007).

Agency Theory

Agency theory has been used in studies that focus on contract-based relationships between organizations (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1992; Reade, 2010). Starting around the 1970s, agency theory emerged as one of the most useful theories when investigating business relationships (Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Ross, 1973). Although originally a theory that dealt with the relationship between managers and stockholders, the literature on agency theory

shifted to having a bigger focus on the relationship between agencies and the organizations' behavior (Kosnik, 1987). Researchers in the 1980s expressed that the biggest gap in literature regarding agency theory is the investigation of contractual relationships between agencies (Eisenhardt, 1985, 1988, 1989; Kosnik, 1987). Researchers in the 1990s and 2000s then placed a bigger focus on the relationships between organizations that combine together via a contract (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1992; Reade, 2010). However, more research on this topic is needed, especially in the sports field (Popp, 2014). With outsourcing being so popular, it is very important to investigate how outsourcing impacts agencies. Another topic that lacked investigation was the relationship between agencies and their stakeholders, which is another big part of outsourcing (Hill & Jones, 1992).

Agency theory investigates contract-based relationships between organizations (Logan, 2000). In addition, the decision to outsource ticket sales in college athletics is done on a contract basis (Popp et al., 2020). In agency theory, the prominent investigation is between an organization that hires another to perform different services for the organization, typically one who specializes in the services they look to improve upon (Hill & Jones, 1992; Sharpe, 1997). In collegiate athletics, athletic departments outsource all types of services, including selling tickets to athletic events (Burden & Li, 2005; Popp, 2014). All types of outsourcing relationships exist in collegiate athletics with different levels of control (Burden & Li, 2005). It is important to investigate the level and types of control that is established in the binding contract between the two organizations (Li & Burden, 2004). All agent and stakeholder relationships have some type of contract which is drawn up to try and ensure that the interest of both sides is met (Hill & Jones, 1992). Furthermore, this contract is typically governed officially and is legally binding. This is another reason why agency theory is a good fit when investigating stakeholder-agent

relationships (Hill & Jones, 1992). Although agency theory is used to investigate outsourcing relationships (Logan, 2000), and outsourcing is commonly used by college athletic departments (Lee, 2010; Lee et al., 2016; Li & Burden, 2002, 2004; Popp et al., 2020), I was unable to find any studies published in sports management journals that have used agency theory to investigate relationships between partnering organizations in sports. With outsourcing becoming such a popular business tactic in intercollegiate athletics, it may be beneficial to investigate the relationships between outsourcing companies and athletic departments (Lee et al., 2016; Lee & Walsh, 2010; Li & Burden, 2002, 2004; Popp et al., 2020).

Agency relationships definition is similar to that of outsourcing. It's defined as one agency engaging with another agency to perform a range of tasks that typically involves giving up some decision-making powers (Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Ross, 1973). Outsourcing is when you partner with another company to take over certain operations within an organization (Sharpe, 1997). Agency theory is typically used in organizational studies seeking profit generation between organizations (Reade, 2010). Agency theory is a useful tactic when investigating the relationship between organizations seeking to partner up with the goal of revenue generation and relationship building (Reade, 2010). As mentioned, the outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics is a contract-based relationship (Li & Burden, 2002).

Past research using agency theory has continually mentioned that in order to be successful, the two joining forces must align goals and have a clear contractual understanding of what is expected by both parties in the partnership (Reade, 2010). Past research using agency theory clearly shows the importance of the relationship in the success of a partnership (Reade, 2010). The same goes for prior research in college athletic outsourcing. For example, research has shown that the most important and crucial factor of ensuring a successful partnership

between an outsourcing company and an athletic department is the relationship formed between the two entities (Burden & Li, 2003). As previously mentioned, one of the ways to ensure a good relationship between two organizations is taking stakeholders' opinions into consideration when making outsourcing decisions (Friedman et al., 2004). Other ways to create this positive relationship is creating clear expectations, drawing up a fair contract, as well as ensuring the goals of both the athletic department and the outsourcing company are the same (Logan, 2000; Reade, 2010; Walker et al., 2009). For example, if the main goal of the athletic department is to increase attendance but the outsourcing company wants to increase ticket revenue, then an issue may arise (Burden & Li, 2003). Research has shown that when an organization is aware of what is necessary to achieve the goals required by the company and a contract is made based on these goals, it creates higher chances of success (Reade, 2010). Furthermore, when the tasks and goals are clear and identifiable, it is easier to monitor the success of the outsourcing company (Reade, 2010). As previously mentioned in this study, revenue generation is one of the leading causes for athletic departments choosing to outsource ticket sales (Li & Burden, 2004; Popp et al., 2020), thus making it something worth investigating to see if outsourcing companies can create better relationships and garnish more ticket sales revenue rather than keeping the operation in-house (Popp et al., 2020). This also can aid athletic departments in choosing whom to outsource with and how to construct contracts with the outsourcing firm (Lee et al., 2016).

Stakeholder Theory

A plethora of research in business has been done using stakeholder theory, providing evidence of the importance that both internal and external stakeholders have on organizations (Freeman, 1984; Gibson, 2000; Heffernan & O'Brien, 2010). In addition, a lot of literature exists in collegiate athletics on sports organizations' decisions (Covell, 2004, 2005; Ferkins &

Shilbury, 2010; Friedman et al., 2004; Heffernan & O'Brien, 2010; Mason & Slack, 1997; Parent, 2008; Parent et al., 2009; Putler & Wolfe, 1999; Walker & Parent, 2010; Wolfe & Putler, 2002). Stakeholder theory is an important and commonly-used framework for business ethics (Gibson, 2000). Stakeholder theory focuses on decision making and the outcomes of those decisions from the stakeholder's perspective (Freeman, 1984). A stakeholder is any group or person who is affected by the achievements of the organization (Freeman, 1984). A stakeholder can also be a person who is investing money and can be affected by the decisions made by the organization (Freeman, 1984, p. 46; Freeman et al., 2007, p. 6).

Multiple types of stakeholders exist. Stakeholders hold the ability to both help and hurt the organization (Gibson, 2000). As mentioned, previous research has defined stakeholders as individuals or a group of individuals who are affected or can be affected by the organization's achievements (Freeman, 1984). Internal stakeholders are people within the organization such as administrators and managers or others who play a part in the decision making and product distribution, whereas external stakeholders are outside of the organization but still impact its decisions, such as boosters, sponsors, and customers (Morehead et al., 2017). Internal stakeholders are known as supply-sided opposed to external stakeholders who are known as demand-sided (Morehead et al., 2017). Athletic departments and colleges in general are typically stakeholder-oriented, meaning they try to use athletics to create a stronger community with students, alumni, and the general public (Morehead et al., 2017). Additional examples of stakeholders in the specific realm of collegiate athletics would be current students, prospective students, alumni, faculty and staff, parents, government officials, boosters, and the local community, among others (Putler & Wolfe, 1999).

Previous researchers have discovered that both internal and external stakeholders have an influence on athletic departments' decisions to outsource or not (Morehead et al., 2017). Thus, it is important for us to gain more knowledge on how it affects the decision to outsource tickets sales in collegiate athletics (Morehead et al., 2017). Research has demonstrated that stakeholder theory is a great way to help gain important information on not only college sports customers and other external stakeholders, but also the internal environment of the athletic department (Putler & Wolfe, 1999). For example, research has shown that some organizations will choose to go against certain individual values, yet retain legitimacy (Suchman, 1995). This may tell us that an athletic department is willing to outsource even if it goes against internal stakeholders' beliefs because it is known as a legitimate business practice that may cut cost and increase profits, although possibly adjusting how the organization is run (Morehead et al., 2017). However, it should be mentioned that stakeholder theory suggests that opinions of stakeholders in a large number should be heavily considered in order to achieve long-term organizational success (Friedman et al., 2004). So, if many employees, boosters, etc., don't want to outsource, or do want to outsource, then athletic administrators and decision makers should be considering stakeholder opinions (Friedman et al., 2004; Morehead et al., 2017).

Stakeholder theory is widely applied in outsourcing, business, and sport management literature (Indounas, 2006; Walker & Parent, 2010; Wolfe & Putler, 2002). Stakeholder theory focuses on managerial decision making, thus making it great to use when investigating outsourcing compared to keeping the operation in-house (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). In fact, research conducted on athletic administrators showed that administrators explained that when making pricing decisions, a stakeholder's opinion is one of the most important factors (Morehead, 2016). With outsourcing companies' abilities to create relationships with

stakeholders, this may be an advantage of outsourcing (Morehead, 2016). Stakeholder analysis can be utilized by both researchers and administrators in sport to develop an easily understood, replicated, strategic plan that can enhance the organization and its performance (Friedman et al., 2004). If stakeholders see outsourcing as a legitimate option in ticketing in collegiate athletics like they do in other facets of business and marketing operations, then outsourcing may become as common in ticket sales as it is in other facets of collegiate athletics, like security and marketing (Morehead, 2016). Thus, it may be very important to discover the perceptions, decision making, and how effective outsourcing ticket sales is in collegiate athletics (Morehead, 2016). If the perception is that outsourcing creates better relationships with stakeholders and creates more revenue than keeping the operation in-house, it may be a more legitimate option than keeping the operation in-house (Morehead, 2016).

Contradictions in Literature

It is obvious that a large gap in the literature exists when it comes outsourcing (Busi & McIvor, 2008; Jiang & Qureshi, 2006; Quinn, 1999). This gap is even larger when investigating outsourcing in the sporting realm (Busi & McIvor, 2008; Popp et al., 2020). One thing that previous researchers can agree on regarding outsourcing is the fact that it is understudied (Busi & McIvor, 2008; Jiang & Qureshi, 2006; Quinn, 1999). Other than that, most of the literature is contradicting. Some find that outsourcing cuts cost (Bers, 1992; Harler, 2000), while others argue that it is too tough to tell (Cole-Gomolski, 1998; Vining & Globerman, 1999). Some find outsourcing increases profits while certain companies have found it is too hard to track. In addition, certain researchers have explained that it not only increases the amount of relationships, but the strengths of relationships where some have found it to strain relationships with stakeholders (Good & Calantone, 2019). Finally, some feel it is a company by company basis,

while others feel it works for certain types of companies and not for others (Good & Calantone, 2019; Jiang & Qureshi, 2006).

Summary

Outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics is a growing phenomenon that lacks investigation (Popp et al., 2020). Although growing in the field, no study has been conducted on the perception of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics. It is a multibillion-dollar industry that is lacking in empirical evidence of its perceptions, options, and efficiency (Popp et al., 2020). Agencies and stakeholders are directly affected by the decision to outsource (Burden & Li, 2003; Morehead et al., 2017). It is important to know how outsourcing can impact an agency and its stakeholders (Logan, 2000). With the phenomenon growing in the collegiate athletics, describing the phenomenon of outsourcing ticket sales can benefit both the practical and academic fields (Popp, et al., 2020).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Institutional Review Board Process

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) team at the University of Northern Colorado. Among other paperwork, I sent the interview questions for the study as well as my recruitment email to participants for review from the IRB. Once reviewed by the IRB, it was reviewed and sent back to me with a minor suggestion. I fixed the suggestion made by IRB and resubmitted it for approval. Once I received approval, I proceeded with the study and start collecting data. The IRB process helped ensure that I was doing the research ethically.

The phenomenological study examines the meanings of the participants in the study regarding how they correlate their experiences with the phenomenon of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics. I accomplished this by exploring the lived experiences of the participants and clearly explaining the meanings they have identified with the phenomenon of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics from their own perspectives. As previously mentioned, the phenomena explored in the study is outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics. The most efficient way to grasp this phenomenon is to consider the participants' perception and opinions on outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics (Creswell, 2014; Crotty, 1998). When done correctly, this method allows the researcher to explain the phenomenon from the perspective of the individuals experiencing it, which has been explained as the most successful way to examine and explain a phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Crotty, 1998; Merriam, 2009).

Previous research has explained that the phenomenological research method allows the researcher to best understand the meanings constructed by the participants in the study (Creswell, 2014). Typically, successful qualitative studies that use the phenomenology approach are best accomplished using researchers' observations, descriptions, interpretations, and analysis (Creswell, 2014). These tactics best allow the researcher to understand and not only explain the phenomenon to the readers but allow them to immerse themselves in it (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, researchers have also explained that after understanding the meanings of the participants regarding the phenomenon being studied, they can then describe the phenomenon by using the actual definitions and meanings of the participants that experience the phenomenon themselves (Doorn, 2017).

The current chapter explains the design for the research study. Following the research questions, I explain the theoretical paradigm (constructivism), theoretical framework (agency theory and stake holder theory), and methodology (phenomenology) of the research project. In addition to this, I will provide all the procedures that are intended to be used in the recruitment of participants for the study. Lastly, the tools I plan to use to collect data, and the process to analyze the data that will be collected will all be covered in Chapter III.

Research Questions

Research studies that use the qualitative design are intending to answer a set of research questions as opposed to validating a hypothesis or setting out to meet certain objectives (Creswell, 2014). Thus, the study is guided by the following research questions:

- Q1 What are the athletic administrators' perceptions of outsourcing ticket sales?
- Q2 What is the decision-making process to outsource or not?

- Q3 What are the most common reasons athletic administrators choose to outsource ticket sales in collegiate athletics?
- Q4 What is the stakeholder influence on the decision to outsource?
- Q5 How does the athletic departments relationship with the outsourcing agency impact the decision to outsource?

Theoretical Paradigm

In 2014, Creswell explained that people want a better understanding of the world in which they live and work. Thus, throughout life, people associate different objects and things with different meaning and realities. The realities of these people are created by interactions they have in life (Creswell, 2014). Research has also explained that realities and meanings are created from an individual's everyday life, such as their interactions at work every day (Crotty, 1998). Since meaning is created from peoples' everyday engagements, open-ended questions should allow for participants to easily share the experiences they have and the perceptions they have created on a phenomenon they experience on a day-to-day basis.

As mentioned above, interactions are an important element for constructivist researchers to consider because they build the realities in which the participants live (Merriam, 2009). It is up to the researcher to extract the information from the participants and best explain these realities (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, the opinions and realities of the participants in the study are an integral part of the study being conducted. The researcher must use the correct techniques to extract these opinions and realities from the participants (Merriam, 2009). As mentioned, one of the most successful ways to do this is by asking semi-structured, open-ended interview questions because it gives the participants in the study a chance to explain their realities with the phenomenon being investigated (Seidman, 1998). Constructivism pairs well with phenomenological studies because it can deal with both an employee's understanding of a

phenomenon and their perceptions of it (Pegues, 2007). In addition, past researchers have also explained how well constructivism and phenomenology pair together (Rehman, 2018).

The study sought to collect information with the purpose of creating new knowledge from the interactions it had with the study's participants. One goal of the study is to create knowledge not previously sought or available regarding outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks are something that should be included in every study that is conducted because in every research project the researcher is seeking to answer a question (Creswell, 2014). Theoretical frameworks also encourage the researcher to have strict guidelines when conducting the study (Mertens, 1998). It is the researcher's responsibility to have done the necessary research and review of literature to know what guidelines are best to implement (Creswell, 2014). These guidelines are crucial to implementing the best ways to analyze and collect data, which is a crucial part of every study; and thus, the researcher must be confident they are conducting the study in the best way possible (Mertens, 1998).

I chose to implement agency theory and stakeholder theory as the theoretical framework because of their direct relation with outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics. In past studies, these theories have been very successful in obtaining information similar to what this study seeks to discover (Friedman et al., 2004; Hill & Jones, 1992; Logan, 2000). Furthermore, these theories align directly with the types of participants described in the study. The implementation on this theoretical framework may be the most successful in aiding in explaining the perceptions on the phenomenon that is outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics (Friedman et al., 2004; Hill & Jones, 1992; Logan, 2000).

Research Methodology

The study intended to use phenomenology as the methodology. Phenomenology has been chosen for this study for multiple reasons. First, phenomenology has a connection to constructivist thinking (Merriam, 2009; Rehman, 2018). In addition to this, it also suggests that the construction of meaning is created by the participants, not through researcher bias (Merriam, 2009). Lastly, the phenomenology approach allows the researcher to best explain a phenomenon through the lens of the people truly experiencing it (Merriam, 2009). I felt this method would be the most practical and useful way to explain the phenomenon of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics. This allowed the results to be used by industry practitioners as well as serving as a starting point for more academic research on the topic in future years.

Phenomenology

The study used a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology has been useful in academic research for decades and has roots in philosophy (Baker et al., 1992). In a phenomenological study, the perceived phenomenon is created by gaining a deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon (Qutoshi, 2018). Phenomenology is emerging as the most used method when trying to develop knowledge on a topic (Dowling, 2007). When conducting qualitative research, phenomenology is implemented to discover facts about the phenomenon being investigated (Rehman, 2018). Phenomenological researchers have a goal to supply readers with experiential meanings that provide fresh, complex, and rich descriptions of a phenomenon (Finlay, 2009). In phenomenological research, being able to have participants provide description of their experiences is an important part in getting good data because phenomenology is about describing the phenomenon through the participants, not explaining it (Qutoshi, 2018). The creator of phenomenological approach explained that it is more successful

when describing opposed to explaining the realities, beliefs, and perceptions of an individual (Husserl, 1977).

Phenomenology was created by Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher, and dates back to the twentieth century (Baker et al., 1992). Husserl's approach to phenomenological research seeks to form conclusions from lived realities of the study's participants (Crotty, 1998). Since Husserl, a multitude of researchers from multiple different countries have adopted and adjusted phenomenology (Rehman, 2018). Since phenomenology has been around for so long and adopted so many times, it is tough to pinpoint one single definition of phenomenology (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). However, one constant is that multiple researchers, including Husserl, have pegged phenomenological research as research that is intended to develop descriptions of experiences lived by individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Crotty, 1998).

Phenomenological research describes common experiences individuals have with a certain phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The phenomenological approach is productive in gaining the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own lenses (Rehman, 2018). When using participants who are involved in the phenomenon daily, it creates more meaningful research because the interpretations can be more authentic and clearer (Qutoshi, 2018). Researchers have explained that the purpose of conducting a phenomenological study is to investigate a phenomenon through the viewpoint of those living it (Qutoshi, 2018). Doing this allows for a better understanding of the phenomenon because they have a personal connection and a deeper level of understanding of the phenomenon (Qutoshi, 2018).

Using people who are deeply involved allows the researcher to make it more personal, thereby allowing for clearer understandings and better explanations (Qutoshi, 2018). Researchers have expressed how important it is to seek realities and not pursue truth in phenomenological

research, and the best way to do this is to try to explain things through participants' lived experiences (Crotty, 1998). In order to best describe a phenomenon, one must interpret lived experiences. It is important to note that for a phenomenological study to be successful, the researchers realize phenomenology is a matter of describing (Crotty, 1998). To best understand a person, the researcher must gather deep and rich information (Crotty, 1998). The information needed is typically gathered using qualitative research techniques such as interviews with participants (Lester, 1999). Phenomenology is a constructivist way to inspect peoples' lived experiences (Doorn, 2017). In this type of research, the researcher is not attempting to create a meaning, but trying to understand and describe a phenomenon as others understand it (Qutoshi, 2018). This is why phenomenology is the correct approach to use when attempting to understand a phenomenon through the people experiencing it (Qutoshi, 2018).

Phenomenology is a research tactic that has existed for decades and is still used and touted as the best method to use to describe a phenomenon through other descriptions (Rehman, 2018). People use phenomenology every day in their daily lives (Rehman, 2018). Furthermore, phenomenology was the tactic used to make up the institutions most people consider to be the most important and influential in our society today. For example, both education as well as governments were based in phenomenological ideology (Rehman, 2018). Pure phenomenological research essentially seeks to describe rather than explain (Rehman, 2018).

Phenomenological research is not authentic if the researcher's thoughts are not intertwined within the data, which is why this study will use bridling opposed to bracketing (Dowling, 2007). With bracketing, the researcher is encouraged to disregard their knowledge of the phenomenon, which is not the case with bridling (Stutey et al., 2020). Research explains that when conducting phenomenological research, being an expert on the topic being investigated is

important (Stutey et al., 2020). This is because the researcher can gain a deeper level of understanding from the participants' experiences because of their personal knowledge (Qutoshi, 2018). Since the researcher has extensive knowledge in the investigated phenomenon, using the bridling tactic should result in the most authentic results (Stutey et al., 2020). Phenomenological research encourages people to express their beliefs and be honest about things, typically leading to describing how they feel things should truly be conducted (Rehman, 2018). If done correctly, this tactic can aid the researcher in describing how athletic directors and managers feel about outsourcing ticket sales and how it truly should be conducted (Rehman, 2018).

Bridling

The study used bridling, which is a method used when studying people and phenomena (Stutey et al., 2020). Bridling is a method used where the researcher reflects on the phenomenon being investigated (Stutey et al., 2020). Bridling lets the researcher listen, gather meaning, and maintain openness during the entire researcher process (Stutey et al., 2020). Unlike bracketing, which is a popular method used in phenomenological research, bridling is not a method where researchers abandoned their preunderstanding of the phenomenon they have (Vagle, 2009). The researcher should loosen and separate themselves from opinions of the phenomenon, but not their knowledge (Vagle, 2009). In addition, the researcher should be aware of their preunderstandings of the phenomenon and not allow them to influence the description of others (Vagle, 2009). Doing these will allow the researcher to have enough distance to better understand other perceptions, while growing the overall knowledge (Stutey et al., 2020). As mentioned, the bridling method, although similar, is different than bracketing (Stutey et al., 2020). Bridling, like bracketing, does involve restraining preunderstandings of the phenomenon to not limit the researcher; however, to a much lesser degree (Stutey et al., 2020). As mentioned, bridling

encourages the researcher to include knowledge of the subject to help aid in the overall description of the phenomenon as well as to connect with the participants (Stutey et al., 2020). In addition, bridling is done in every facet of the data collection process. Since bridling is a reflective practice done before, during, and after the data is collected, it allows the researcher to have a full understanding of the phenomenon, its development, and the data itself (Stutey et al., 2020). Doing this is the most effective way to correctly describe a phenomenon and may create the most practical study (Vagle, 2009).

In the study, I was the main instrument used to extract information and describe the phenomenon of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics. Bridling aids the researcher in doing this (Vagle, 2009). Bridling helps the researcher in revealing rich information from both themselves and the research participants (Stutey et al., 2020). Furthermore, unlike bracketing, bridling encourages the researcher not to separate themselves from the knowledge they contain on the phenomenon (Hanna et al., 2017). I have extensive knowledge on the phenomenon being studied, thus using bridling should allow for me to provide a clear description of the participants' thoughts and a clear description of the phenomenon (Hanna et al., 2017). Research states that researchers using bridling must place an emphasis on personal experiences because this will help foster genuineness. (Hanna et al., 2017). Again, doing this allowed me to best describe the phenomenon being investigated.

The research study used a bridling journal as well as contained a bridling statement. The bridling statement allows me to explain everything I know about the investigated phenomenon (Vagle, 2010). This covers all preunderstandings and experiences with the phenomenon. The statement will also contain what I feel I may discover. The bridling statement and journal are techniques that work well together because I can compare the ongoing journal to the initial

statement (Vagle, 2010). This continuing review helps to clarify and ensures the correct information is being described (Vagle, 2010). Bridling journals ensure the research has a thorough understanding of the perceptions that both me and the participants have on the phenomenon (Heidegger, 1959/1966). This allows me to first separate the two and then fully understand one participant's perception before moving on to another participant to compare (Heidegger, 1959/1966).

For research journals, I will record experiences they have during the data collection process. Doing this ensures that I know similarities and differences between participants as well (Kline, 2008). Overall, the journal will help ensure I am separating perceptions to best explain the phenomenon. In the past, a lot of qualitative researchers journaled about the interactions they had with participants during the interviews they conducted (Kline, 2008). It is important for me to be honest and use the journal as an authentic way to reflect on the entire data collection process (Kline, 2008). The most common techniques used with bridling in qualitative research is for me to record and transcribe each interview, then find similar statements and place them together, or code the interviews (Vagle, 2010). This allows me to see the similarities and create significant findings (Vagle, 2010). The reader will read each transcription first and then write a brief summary in the bridling journal before moving on to the coding process. The combination of bridling with these techniques will allow me to create the most significant findings and then allow for the best description of the phenomenon (Vagle, 2010).

Bridling Statement

I decided to use bridling and follow what has been done by previous researchers (Vagle, 2010) such as writing a bridling statement before collecting data. I worked in the industry for over five years and worked for an outsourcing company for two and a half years. During the time

working for an outsourcing company, I saw things that worked and did not work for certain NCAA institutions. My personal perception is that outsourcing can be an effective strategy for certain universities. I experienced firsthand how outsourcing can help build relationships with current and prospective customers. However, I am aware of how the relationships can have a negative impact, and it's important for the departments to be able to work together and accept outsourcing. Personally, I feel outsourcing should be a school-by-school decision and that most functions outsourcing offers can be done in-house if the people and training are available. For universities who lack the numbers and training, outsourcing can be very useful if they mold well with other departments. Although I have worked for an outsourcing company, I don't lean toward believing it is either better or worse for an organization to implement; I feel outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics works, but only in the correct situations with the correct people. I feel most participants will have the perception that outsourcing ticket sales is a useful tactic, but some will be set in their ways and not feel outsourcing should be done. Overall, I feel that the participants will stress the importance of the relationships between departments as a key factor and have an overall perception that outsourcing is an effective tactic to use in terms of building external relationships as well as cut costs.

Limitations of Phenomenology

Every approach has its limitations, and phenomenology is no different. The first and main limitation is how the researcher's realities can influence their interpretations of the lived experiences explained by the participants (Mertens, 1998). As explained, I will use multiple proven techniques to ensure my previous knowledge and realities will not influence the interpretation of participants' explanations. Some of the techniques that will be used is bridling, member checking, and conducting a researcher's journal. Other researchers have defined another

limitation of this research to be that the researcher will struggle to achieve true results because a certain level of trust must be obtained before an individual will share information with another (Groenewald, 2004). I plan to use multiple techniques to build a rapport with the participants. Initial phone calls will be set up that have questions unrelated to the study. Furthermore, I have experience working in the industry and can connect with the participants because of having a similar lifestyle. As mentioned, all methods come with limitations, and phenomenology is no different; however, I will use proven techniques to ensure the study is valid.

Data Collection

I chose the data collection methods based off how well they fit with the methodology chosen for the study. The data collection methods chosen will allow me to better describe the lived experiences of the participants in the study (Qutoshi, 2018). Doing this has been stated as the best way to explain a phenomenon (Qutoshi, 2018). For phenomenological studies to be practical and garnish true results, a focus must be put on extracting the perceptions, experiences, and interoperations of participating individuals (Rehman, 2018). In addition, it is important for the data being collected to relate to the sampling methods, (Rehman, 2018), which is the case for the study. The study will use both direct and indirect data. Indirect data is data that can be accessed publicly, such as websites. Websites were used to see what universities in the study use outsourcing as well as the athletic programs they offer and the athletic conference they are in. The remainder of the data will be direct data, which is more useful in phenomenological research. Direct data is interactions that can be recorded (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). Semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions is a common direct data method because it allows the researcher to see the perceptions, interpretations, experiences, and opinions of the participants (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). Then the researcher can review and reflect on them as

much as needed since the interviews are being recorded (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). I will also keep a journal during the entire process of the data collection to be able to reflect, and to ensure the process was done correctly.

Participants

To best describe the phenomenon, I will be interviewing people who experience it every day (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003; Groenewald, 2004). In addition, these participants are internal stakeholders of the organization who are directly involved in the decision-making process on outsourcing ticket sales. These individuals are also the ones who will be affected most by outsourcing. This is because it will change their relationship and the everyday operations. The success or failure of this decision could have ramifications on the future success of the department as well as their future employment (Popp et al., 2020). Since they experience it daily, they should be able to describe and give their perceptions on the phenomenon better than others (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003; Groenewald, 2004). For the study, I will be interviewing athletic directors, associate athletic directors, directors of ticket operations, and the Director of External Affairs. Again, the reason for choosing these positions are because they are directly affected by the decision to outsource ticket sales and have a say in the decision-making process. In phenomenological research, the best way to garnish practical results is to describe the phenomenon through those who experience it (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003; Groenewald, 2004).

To ensure the participants have confidentiality, I will be using pseudonyms in place of their real names. In addition, I will not be using the names of the universities where these individuals work. Ensuring participant confidentiality is important because it can make them more comfortable in answering interview questions (Bailey, 1996). When participants feel safe and comfortable, they provide more authentic answers (Bailey, 1996). Using confidentiality

should increase the integrity of the research project because readers won't be able to discover who participated in the study. Using confidentiality is a common practice in qualitative research (Bailey, 1996).

Recruitment of Participants

In phenomenological research, a specific sample size is not known going into the study (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). Rather than having a predetermined sample size, my goal is to reach saturation once the phenomenon can be explained, which can be any number of interviews (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). Previous researchers have explained that 10 interviews should be used in phenomenological research to reach saturation (Creswell, 2014). However, the study's sample size will be based on being able to best describe the phenomenon and having every participant experience things differently (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). Thus, the number of interviews used to meet saturation for this study will not be predetermined. Once the number is determined, I will stop conducting interviews.

I plan to use convenience sampling as well as snowball sampling to acquire participants for the study. Unlike with quantitative research, in phenomenological qualitative research, it is more productive to use a non-random sample and ensure participants experience the phenomenon being studied (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

As mentioned, I will use convenient sampling as well as snowball sampling. First, I will email contacts my advisor and I have in the field. Once the participants respond with their willingness to participate, they will be sent a consent form. I will review the consent form verbally with the participants prior to conducting the interviews. I will inform all the participants about the purpose of the study, expectation of time to complete the study, description of how collected data will be stored and shared, expectation of potential risk, what type of data will be

collected, who might benefit from the study, and a statement about voluntary participation. In addition, they will be provided with my contact information and the university's contact information so if they have questions or need to contact me or university about the study, they have the ability to do so. Once the participants have acknowledged and accepted to continue, the interview will be conducted.

Both the recruitment email and the consent form can be found in the Appendix section of this document. I intend to use the University of Northern Colorado's informed consent document to ensure the study is being done ethically and the individuals involved are aware of what to expect during the interviews and member checking process. Upon the completion of the interview, I will ask the participants about any other people they feel would qualify and would be willing to participate in the study. Interviews will be semi-structured 30-45-minute interviews, and the participants will be aware of this prior to accepting participation. Also, participants will have the option to pull out of the interview or remove their interview from the study at any time if they so choose.

Sampling

My target population comprises of both universities that outsource and universities and that conduct ticket sales in-house in Division I athletic conferences in conferences in the Midwest and Mountain regions. My industry connections as well as The Aspire Group and IMG Learfield Ticket Solutions websites allowed me to discover the schools that outsource tickets sales.

Convenience and Inclusion Criteria Sampling

The study will use convenience sampling and snowball sampling. I am using this type of sampling because of the small number of universities that outsource ticket sales. In convenience

sampling, you are using participants who are easily accessible and ready to interview (Merriam, 2009). Convenience sampling has become the most popular approach to creating a sample size for qualitative research studies (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). Although outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics is on the rise, there is still a small number of universities that I can contact who outsource ticket sales. In addition, in order to reach saturation, I felt the best approach was to be able to conduct as many interviews as needed. Convenient sampling allows for this because it creates the most opportunities for me to conduct interviews on employees in the same conference that may work for a university that does or does not outsource.

Convenience sampling allows me to do this and have a larger sample size (Qutoshi, 2018). The study also used inclusion criteria sampling. Inclusion criteria sampling is used when you need participants to fit a certain criterion for the study to be practical (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). Researchers use this type of sampling to ensure the participants align with criteria created by the researcher and have proper knowledge of the subject being investigated (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). I feel this is the best way to garnish the most practical results and best describe the phenomenon being researched.

Snowball Sampling

Snowball sampling is another method of sampling that aids me in getting enough participants for a study (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). For snowball sampling, I used the participants' network to help find other people to interview for the study (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). In this study, I will ask participants if they are aware of other people in their conference that hold similar positions and would be willing to do an interview on outsourcing ticket sales.

Sampling Limitations

All sampling methods have limitations. Noted limitations of convenience sampling are that results are sometimes not generalizable and that you may be using too many people in the same population (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013; Mertens, 1998). A main goal of this study is for it to be generalizable. The study being generalizable should not be an issue despite using convenience sampling. In using phenomenology, the researcher attempts to describe the experience the study's participants have with a phenomenon and are not implying participants will view the phenomenon the same way (Qutoshi, 2018).

Like convenience sampling, snowball sampling's main limitation is that the sample may be limited because people will choose others who are similar to them and thus you will get similar answers (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This should not be an issue in the study because although I am using snowball sampling, I am interviewing individuals from three separate conferences and interviewing people who don't know other individuals who will be interviewed.

In any qualitative research, using interviews and these types of sampling methods may cause one to run into issues with finding people willing to do the interview and fully express their feelings (Seidman, 1998). In some instances, it's possible for a participant to have extremely one-sided experiences or feelings on the topic which can affect the results or change the data (Seidman, 1998). To avoid this from happening in the study, sampling protocols are implemented to ensure I receive a vast amount of information from different types of individuals. These protocols are discussed in previous sections but contain conducting semi-structured interviews as well as member checking. In addition, participants from multiple different athletic conferences will be interviewed.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are one of the best ways to get individuals to express their views on a phenomenon (Rehman, 2018). Therefore, interviews are the most popular approach to obtaining useful data when conducting qualitative research (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). The interview process has evolved; originally, interviews were done in person, but in the modern-day, virtual interviews are more common (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). This is because of the ease of access as well as the comfort levels of participants. The interviews for the study used semi-structured open-ended questions and was conducted via zoom virtual conference. The interviews will last a maximum of 60 minutes. This interview format allows me all the necessary data to describe the phenomenon through the participants' perceptions (Seidman, 1998). It allows me to ask additional questions during the interview that are not preset, and will allow the participant to further explain the phenomenon (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Conducting interviews is a proven tactic that allows the participants to share their perceptions as well as allows the researcher to continually evaluate the data and correctly extract and describe the perceptions the participants have on the phenomenon. It is the most useful way to be able to extract data in a qualitative study (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014).

Interview Structurer

The interviews for this study will be a maximum of 60 minutes and take place via video chat. Only the audio portion of the interview will be recorded, thereby giving the participants the option not to provide video of themselves, and allowing them to be more comfortable as well as decreasing the chance of a schedule conflict. In addition, virtual interviews have been pegged as a useful supplement to face-to-face interviews (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). With the location differences and the global pandemic, face-to-face interviews will not be an option. The audio

recording of the interview is so I can transcribe the interview and review it as much as needed to extract the data (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). I will conduct the interviews via Zoom video conference and record the interviews using a recording application on their personal laptop. I will also record the audio via their cell phone. Recording using multiple methods diminishes the chances of faulty audio (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Only I will have access to the password-protected laptop. I will be in a locked office conducting the interviews to avoid interruptions and to ensure others cannot influence the discussions. There are multiple benefits to using interviews for data: it allows flexibility in schedule, eliminates time zone and location differences, and allows the participant to be in a comfortable environment for them which may foster a more natural conversation (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014).

Limitations

All types of data collection have limitations, and the same goes for using interviews to collect data. One issue is that technology can always be faulty. For example, lag and microphone issues can occur during virtual interviews. Research shows, however, that in the modern day, video interviews are popular and effective ways to collect data (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Although it may not be considered a limitation, using semi-structured interviews typically leads to a long, tedious research process (Seidman, 1998). This is because interviewing and transcribing takes a long time and often needs to be done more than once (Seidman, 1998). In addition, other research has explained that it is harder to connect with participants when not conducting interviews face-to-face (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Although the process may be tedious, this is what is necessary to explain a phenomenon (Qutoshi, 2018). My goal is to conduct a practical study that can be applied to the industry, and to do this I am aware of the attention to detail I need to put in during the data collection process, and I am prepared to do so.

To address the rapport limitation when conducting virtual interviews, I will employ proven tactics previously discussed to ensure they successfully build rapport with the participants.

Data Storage

Only me and my research advisor will have access to the data. Once the interview responses are coded, the results will be stored on a password-protected laptop. This laptop will only be used by me. The subjects will be anonymous since they will not be asked their respective name, and will only be offered through each respective university. Completed consent forms will be retained by the research advisor for a period of three years.

Data Analysis

When analyzing data in phenomenological research, the researcher should have the intention of being able to best describe the phenomenon to the readers through the perceptions of the participants (Groenewald, 2004). Data explication may be a better term for phenomenological research as opposed to data analysis (Merriam, 2009). This is because the researcher is not breaking up the data but rather drawing out meaning and themes of the phenomenon based off the participants' responses (Groenewald, 2004). However, I will use data analysis as the term in this paper as it is a more commonly used term in research (Merriam, 2009).

As mentioned, when using phenomenology as the methodology in a study, the researcher is attempting to describe the phenomenon through the experiences of the participants (Qutoshi, 2018). To accomplish this, recorded semi-structured interviews will be conducted on participants who experience the phenomenon on a day-to-day basis. Past researchers have pegged this as one of the best ways to gain and analyze data in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). In addition to the interviews, I will have a bridling statement that covers the preunderstanding and perceptions

I have of the investigated phenomenon. This helps me correctly extract participants' perceptions and to ensure they are clear in their understandings (Hanna et al., 2017). Having a bridling statement allows me to continually compare and ensure participants' perceptions are being described correctly (Hanna et al., 2017).

When using phenomenology, it's standard for researchers to use interviews to obtain the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2014). The researcher then takes the multiple interviews conducted and after transcription and deep evaluation discovers similarities and develops themes derived from the participants' responses (Creswell, 2014). In phenomenological research, the researcher analyzes the data as it is being collected (Terrell, 2016). Analyzing and collecting the data congruently allows the researcher to discover saturation easier as well as freshly interpret all the facets of the investigated phenomenon (Terrell, 2016).

I plan to use thematic analysis to analyze the data collected for the study. Researchers who have specialized in thematic analysis suggest six key steps to successfully analyze and explain the data. These are (a) become familiar with the data, (b) generate initial codes, (c) search for themes, (d) review themes, (e) define themes, and (f) write-up (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

For the first part, becoming familiar with the data, I will read through the transcripts multiple times to familiarize myself with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After I am familiar with the data, initial codes will then be generated (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I will examine these codes and then come up with themes that will be derived from codes made up from the responses to the semi-structured interview questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I will use member checking to ensure that what is said is correctly being interpreted by me. After reviewing the themes, I will then define them and provide a final write-up (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During the write-up stage

of the thematic analysis, I plan to select the clearest and most compelling examples to extract from the data to best describe the phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, to ensure that I correctly understood the interviewees, I will ask the interviewees to review the themes they interpreted to ensure they are accurate and correct (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

It is important in this type of research to describe the perceptions of participants' experiences, opinions, and perceptions of a phenomenon they experience (Doorn, 2017). As mentioned, this is best done by conducting interviews and asking the people who experience the phenomenon on an everyday basis open-ended questions that will allow them to explain the phenomenon through their eyes (Creswell, 2014). The researcher must describe these experiences and not create theory, but rather explain the experiences through the eyes of others (Qutoshi, 2018). The best way to do this is to analyze the data being collected as it is being conducted (Terrell, 2016). Thus, I will transcribe the interviews after they are conducted. I will both manually transcribe the interviews as well as use a transcription program. This will ensure I am extracting the correct words and will make it a more productive process in creating themes from the interviews (Creswell, 2014).

Ensuring that codes and themes are created from the interviews is very important because the phenomenon being studied must be described through the eyes of the participants (Doorn, 2017). Once I feel saturation is met, I will then start to create themes derived from the data (Creswell, 2014). I will go through every interview after it is conducted and transcribe it, and during the review process I will pick out statements from the interviews that describe the phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These statements will be coded, thus if similar statements are made in different interviews, they will be coded similarly and turned into a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The final set of themes derived from all the interviews will be the main focus of

describing the phenomenon. I will use open coding, which encourages all potential themes from interviews to be explored (Merriam, 2009). In addition, I will use member checking to ensure what the interviewees said is being interpreted and described correctly. These tactics not only allow for the most authentic descriptions but also help eliminate researcher bias (Cope, 2014). Of course, I will be aware of their perceptions and the phenomenon and not allow it to affect the themes that are created from the data. As previously stated, these tactics also help eliminate that possibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Trustworthiness

In order for qualitative research to be valid, establishing trustworthiness is essential because trustworthiness directly affects the quality of the research (Connelly, 2016).

Trustworthiness can also be known as the amount of confidence the researcher has in their data, interpretation, and methods used in the study (Connelly, 2016). Past researchers have proposed multiple methods to assess the trustworthiness of qualitative research. (Connelly, 2016; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Some of the suggested methods are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). These tactics have been used in the past to help ensure trustworthiness in qualitative studies (Crotty, 1998). When deciding what trustworthiness procedures to use, it is important to know that in qualitative research the decision must be based on the design of the study (Merriam, 2009).

I will try to maintain credibility by accurately identifying and describing the phenomenon experienced by the participants. I will also be using member checking as well as triangulation in an attempt to validate the findings. Triangulation is the action of using multiple sources of data to draw conclusions (Casey & Murphy, 2009). In doing this, I may be able to provide a complete and understandable description of the phenomenon (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Methodological triangulation ensures that that data is rich in depth. Furthermore, data triangulation enhances the reliability of the results of the study to ensure that data saturation is met (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Credibility deals with how the design of the study will be performed and how effective it is (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Knowing your study can be credible can be done by assessing previous studies that have used a similar approach as the study being conducted (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). I have looked at other studies to ensure that the methods used in the study are credible. In addition, credibility can be strengthened when the researcher confirms that findings of the study are aligned with the thoughts and statements of the study's participants (Connelly, 2016). I will attempt to accomplish this in the study by putting together parts of the design derived from other credible studies that have taken the phenomenological approach and by using member checking effectively.

I will also be using dependability, which can be explained as ensuring the study yields results that allow for similar results despite being done at different times and under different conditions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Thus, I will attempt to use dependability to ensure results would be dependable if future studies evaluated similar variables over a different time span. In addition to dependability, I will use confirmability of results. Confirmability allows me to explain the descriptions and interpretations and correctly display the phenomenon being examined (Cope, 2014). In order for me to accomplish this, I must have detailed notes and reliable participants, which is why I will be keeping an active research journal as well as conducting member checking. In addition, I will remain objective to the results and look for congruence between two or more independent members of the study.

As mentioned, additional tactics I will use to ensure trustworthiness is member checking as well as maintaining an active research journal which will allow for the confirmability of the

study's results (Connelly, 2016). Lastly, I will use the transferability of results tactic. This tactic relies on the fact that findings can be generalized or transferred to other settings or groups (Connelly, 2016). I will attempt to provide the results with rich description and detail. If done correctly, this may allow for comparisons in similar settings or groups (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The academic rigor that will be initiated by me in addition to the active research journal that will be maintained throughout the study allows for the research methods to be scrutinized, but also easily repeated (Cope, 2014; Qutoshi, 2018).

Trustworthiness Procedures

Previous researchers have stated that differences in techniques used to test for reliability and validity in quantitative compared to qualitative differ (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). Previous research conducted has encouraged researchers to ensure they are using the correct tactics (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). Again, I am using tactics performed in previous phenomenological studies. Past researchers have advised future researchers using a phenomenological approach to use a combination of methods to best have a trustworthy study (Creswell, 2014). As mentioned, the study plans to incorporate member checking and use rich descriptions. Previous researchers have explained that rich descriptions can aid the reader of the study to understand and see the phenomenon easier (Creswell, 2014). Rich descriptions can also aid the reader in immersing them in the experience opposed to just reading and trying to understand it (Creswell, 2014). In addition to a rich description, I will use member checking to help aid the readers to understand the phenomenon of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics (Creswell, 2014). Member checking has me revisit with the interview participants with the descriptions and interpretations and asks the participants to confirm that they are accurate (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). Previous researchers have provided certain questions that researchers use to ensure trustworthiness in their

studies. These questions are meant for me to consider through the process of the study. Some of the questions used in the study are below. These questions were derived from Lewis and Ritchie (2003) to aid me in ensuring a trustworthy study.

- Is the selected sample a relevant representation of the population involved in the phenomenon and was it gathered without bias?
- Is there consistency in the application of the research procedures in the fieldwork and do those procedures allow participants to fully describe their experience within the phenomenon?
- Is the analysis of the data consistent and systematic?
- Are the interpretations of participant descriptions supported by evidence they provided?
- Is the study designed in such a way that allows for the participants to share all of their experiences with the phenomenon as opposed to being focused on one specific aspect of the situation?

I will be cognizant of the above questions during the entire duration of the study.

Summary

Chapter III contains both the structure and procedures that will be used by me for this dissertation. In Chapter III, I provided more information on the theoretical paradigm the current falls under. In addition to this, the theoretical framework that will be used, the methodology of the study, and an in-depth look at how the study will take place is all covered in Chapter III. I concluded the chapter with a discussion on the analysis of the data and considerations for trustworthiness.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to help provide new knowledge on the phenomenon of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics. The findings and discussion below help provide insight on how the findings from the study can aid organizations and employees in the sport business industry as well as provide topics for future research.

Chapter IV will explain and present the phenomenological findings for this study. As explained in Chapter III, the participants were recruited via email. Recruitment of participants was difficult at first as I could not get many to respond to emails, and snowball sampling was not working well; however, after reaching out to more participants who qualified for the study, I was able to get more than enough respondents. I did not do anything different when reaching out to the participants; I used the same email, I just emailed a larger amount of people who qualified for the study. Table 4.1 shows the participant demographic information.

Table 4.1*Demographics*

Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Identified Sex	Occupation
Cole	White	Male	Director of External Affairs
Trevor	White	Male	Director of External Relations
Eric	White	Male	Director of Ticketing
Jose	White	Male	Athletic Director
Cee	White	Male	Athletic Director of External Relations
Shawn	White	Male	Assistant Athletic Director/Director of External Affairs
Case	White	Male	Director of External Affairs
Gerald	White	Male	Director of Development
Joe	White	Male	Director of External Affairs
Brandon	African American	Male	Director of External Relations
Stella	White	Female	Director of Ticketing
Alan	White	Male	Director of Ticketing
Tony	White	Male	Director of Ticketing
Doug	White	Male	Athletic Director of Ticketing
Eddie	White	Male	Director of External Affairs

I analyzed the data using thematic analysis. The thematic analysis approach requires an examination of the answers to the interview questions and the individual sentences or phrases in the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This chapter includes the results of the analyzed data. The goal of this data analysis was to be able to successfully describe the experience of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics. More specifically, the perceptions, decision-making, and impact on stakeholders that outsourcing ticket sales has in collegiate athletics. The thematic analysis conducted resulted in code identification which then turned into themes after further investigation of the data. Specifically, several different codes were made from both first time and second time of coding, and after the third review of the data, final themes were conducted. To get these themes, I went through each interview multiple times and coded phrases that were prevalent in the interviews. The purpose of this research study is to learn about the perceptions of outsourcing ticket sales in college athletics from current athletic department employees.

The research questions were:

- Q1 What are the athletic administrators' perceptions of outsourcing ticket sales?
- Q2 What is the decision-making process to outsource or not?
- Q3 What are the most common reasons athletic administrators choose to outsource ticket sales in collegiate athletics?
- Q4 What is the stakeholder influence on the decision to outsource?
- Q5 How does the athletic department's relationship with the outsourcing agency impact the decision to outsource?

To answer the above questions, a phenomenological study was conducted. Interviews were used as the data collection method. Study participants were asked to describe their experience and to give their expert opinions as a decision maker regarding outsourcing ticket

sales in their respective athletic department. After the interviews, a thematic analysis was conducted to discover the most useful information to describe the phenomenon of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics.

The goal of a thematic analysis is to discover useful information that emerges from the experiences and descriptions of the participants—not from the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As discussed in Chapter III, I used the reflective journaling tactic to discover and eliminate my previous experiences with outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics, in addition to any biases I may have toward the phenomenon (Grove et al., 2013). As described in the previous chapter, I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method when going through the data. I first transcribed all interviews directly after they took place, and once all interviews were conducted, I reviewed each one line-by-line, coding words and phrases that occurred multiple times or had a direct connection to the phenomenon and research questions being investigated. Utilizing the thematic analysis method, I was able to derive meaning for the interviewees' responses to the questions by breaking them down word-for-word and finding words, phrases, and sentences that explain the phenomenon. This tactic also allowed me to find similarities within the responses. After going through the first round of analysis, I had 15 codes which were then condensed to nine after the second round. Table 4.2 below provides the adaption of codes from the first to second round of the analysis.

Table 4.2*Code Comparison for First Round Versus Second Round of Analysis*

Identified Categories	
First Round	Second Round
Resources	Training
Relationships	Resources
Training	Money Guarantee
Athletic Director Final Say	Experts
Shared Revenue	Experience
Money Guarantee	Turnover
President	Internally Focused
Contracts/Legal	Loss of Control
Pushback	Athletic Directors Have Final Say
Internal Hesitation	
Hiring Freezes	
Payroll	
Experts	
Turnover	
Lack of Resources	
Internal People More Focused on Tasks	
Committee of Directors	
Athletic Directors Have Final Say	
Relationship with Agency	
Executive Team	
Everyone on Board	
Loss of Control	
Experience	
Job Threatened	

When going through the data for a third round of the analysis, I did another detailed reading of each sentence and word. In this detailed reading, I attempted to discover the meaning of each sentence and word communicated by the respondents. I compared the findings after each analysis of the data, and after the final analysis, I compared, contrasted, and synthesized the data to identify themes that describe the phenomenon. Utilizing this method, I was able to read the whole experience of every participant in the study. In addition, at every level, including this one, I went back to my bridling journal as well as reflections to ensure they were the participants' own experiences. During every round, I sought out statements or phrases that seemed to be essential to explaining the phenomenon through the eyes of the participants. Doing this provides key examples and explanations of the thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and experiences provided by each participant. Again, the third level of analysis included another fully detailed reading of each sentence and word from the interview transcriptions. While performing the detailed reading, I was seeking meaning in the responses by determining what it was that each sentence was saying about the experience for the participants. Table 4.3 shows the final themes for the study after the breakdown of the final codes into themes, while Table 4.4 shows how each of the themes relate to the research questions for this study. This is followed by an explanation of each theme.

Table 4.3*Themes From Round Three of Analysis*

Themes
Theme 1: Trained Experts on the Phones
Theme 2: Guaranteed Revenue
Theme 3: Resources
Theme 4: Allowing Internal People to Focus on Their Tasks
Theme 5: Loss of Control
Theme 6: Turnover of Employees
Theme 7: Athletic Directors Have the Final Say
Theme 8: Everyone Must Be On Board Internally

As previously described, the table above displays the final themes. However, the purpose of analysis is to explain how the themes answer and explain the research questions being asked. Table 4.4 shows which themes help explain and answer the research questions for this study. Following Table 4.4 is a description of each theme along with quotes from the participants that help answer my questions and describe the phenomenon of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics.

Table 4.4

Research Questions With Corresponding Themes That Answer Each Research Question

Research Questions and Corresponding Themes	
Research Questions	Themes
Q1 What are the athletic administrators' perceptions of outsourcing ticket sales?	Trained Experts on the Phones Guaranteed Revenue Resources Loss of Control Everyone Must Be On Board Internally Athletic Directors Have the Final Say Turnover of Employees
Q2 What is the decision-making process to outsource or not?	Athletic Directors Have the Final Say
Q3 What are the most common reasons athletic administrators choose to outsource ticket sales in collegiate athletics?	Trained Experts on the Phones Guaranteed Revenue Resources
Q4 What is the stakeholder influence on the decision to outsource?	Allowing Internal People to Focus on Their Tasks Everyone Must Be On Board Internally Athletic Directors Have the Final Say
Q5 How does the athletic department's relationship with the outsourcing agency impact the decision to outsource?	Loss of Control Everyone Must Be on Board Internally

Theme 1: Trained Experts on the Phones

Participants explained that one of the biggest advantages to outsourcing ticket sales was having fully-trained experts devoted to selling every minute of every day. Most of these universities don't have the ability to do this internally. For example, Eric stated, "We don't have the expertise and training knowledge to be able to get those positions or those sellers where they would need to be." To be experts on the phone, you must be properly trained. Again, the interviews clearly showed the importance of having the necessary training in place to have these

experts on the phones. Shawn stated, “If you go with a structured company, you get that professional training aspect.” In addition, Cole said, “It’s a sales force, they're experts in it.” The importance of training is also supported by previous research conducted in the field. Training is necessary because it provides staff with the fundamentals needed to be successful in sales (Jiang & Qureshi, 2006; Popp et al., 2020). Outsourcing companies such as The Aspire Group have experts who conduct the training that these athletic departments can’t provide internally. These athletic departments do not have the staff size, nor internal resources to do so (Popp et al., 2020). This was made clear by Doug when he mentioned that they “didn't have the national resources of a larger company like when you outsource, and you can call a lot more local restaurants and local businesses.” Having consistent training is also key, and these outsourcing companies provide consistent training, which is an advantage of partnering up with them. For example, Cole also stated, “There's a level of expertise and then there's a level of focus that these folks are strictly assigned at this job duty.” It is clear that these participants felt that the training provided by outsourcing companies created more experienced sellers, which is a key advantage in choosing to partner with them and is a reason why outsourcing ticket sales has risen in popularity.

Theme 2: Guaranteed Revenue

Participants in this study mentioned the importance of maximizing revenue for collegiate athletic departments. Again, this was supported by multiple interviewees in this study. For example, Case stated that a big positive of outsourcing is the “guaranteed money positive.” This was also mentioned by Jose who said, “You can build into your budget of guaranteed money.” Outsourcing companies typically come with some type of money guarantee that makes them appealing to athletic directors and other higher-ups in the department. Universities that are worried about hitting certain marks every year can feel more comfortable knowing that they have

a certain amount of money coming in no matter what due to the partnership with the outsourcing company. Jose mentioned in our interview, “If the partnership comes with a guarantee as an athletic director...you can say, ‘look, if I make a million dollars on my ticket sales right now, and I can have a company come in and guarantee they're going to give them 1.2 million, I've just made \$200,000’.” Having the money guarantee is very comforting to these athletic directors and can influence the decision on outsourcing ticket sales.

In the current climate of collegiate sports, a revenue guarantee is even more crucial. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused athletic departments across the country to lay off employees and drastically cut staff size and resources. Some participants said that if they were outsourcing, it could have helped them with staffing and resource issues due to the revenue guarantees—something that may benefit outsourcing companies going forward because it is another reason why one should invest in their services. During the interviews, participants mentioned how revenue guarantees are certainly appealing and were positive about outsourcing ticket sales.

Although guaranteed revenue was touted as a big advantage of outsourcing ticket sales, having guarantees provides a safety net for these athletic departments. On the other hand, something some participants mentioned being a negative or a reason not to outsource ticket sales was having to share revenue. Some athletic departments are hesitant to outsource because they are concerned about having to share the amount of revenue created from ticket sales. Furthermore, experts in the field feel that if there is a chance that they can generate similar sales numbers without having to outsource, then why share the revenue? For example, Cee mentioned that when considering outsourcing, you have to consider, “Are we better off partnering with a third party and sharing revenue, or are we better off doing it on our own?” In addition, when asked about the positives and negatives to outsourcing ticket sales, another participant said, “The

revenue split.” When discussing some of the larger negatives to outsourcing ticket sales, sharing revenue was something decision makers were hesitant about and needed to be reassured that they were not going to be able to generate the same amount of money in-house. Through the interviews, it was evident that guaranteed revenue was a reason to outsource, but sharing revenue was not. Thus, it comes down to how confident these athletic departments are in their in-house abilities and resources to maximize ticket revenue, in addition to how well these outsourcing companies can convince them that they can provide more revenue than these departments can create in-house.

Theme 3: Resources

Not only are athletic departments’ staff size typically small, but they also lack resources that outsourcing companies can provide. As previously mentioned, one of those resources is the ability to provide continued training. However, training is only one of the many resources that an outsourcing company can provide that typically cannot be achieved in-house by these universities’ athletic departments. Other resources mentioned by participants in this study were the use of outsourcing companies’ technology such as sales force, CRM, and other data collection services that these schools otherwise might not be able to afford or partner with. Jose mentioned how outsourcing provides technology that universities cannot internally afford. During the interview, he stated, “You certainly would have access to great cutting-edge technology.” Trevor also talked about how one of the key reasons for choosing to outsource was the access to things they could not get internally. He stated, “We brought in a company with national and regional assets or access to those assets that we internally could not do.” Participants made it clear that their lack of resources as well as the resources provided by

outsourcing companies was a big reason with choosing to outsource ticket sales and an advantage for the schools in these conferences.

Another advantage was payroll. These universities often do not have the internal ability to get the university to approve adding another employee to the athletic department; but with outsourcing, the outsourcing company can add employees. Participants mentioned how crucial this could be in modern times because Covid-19 has caused most athletic departments to shrink staff size even more and has caused hiring freezes. Eric said that partnering with an outsourcing company can aid with being able to hire new staff during times of hiring freezes. He stated, “Our university is still on a kind of a soft hiring freeze with restrictions, and adding new positions is not an easy thing to do internally, whereas with outsourcing it may be different.” Since outsourcing companies are outside of the organization, they oftentimes can add to their staff and payroll without having to add people to the universities’ staff, thus allowing hiring and staff additions even if the university itself is on a hiring freeze as it was in the past year. Participants felt that advantages such as technological resources and the ability to adjust staffing, among others, were reasons to consider outsourcing that go beyond creating ticket sales revenue, and is something that should be considered when looking at outsourcing ticket sales.

Theme 4: Allowing Internal People to Focus on Their Tasks

Athletic department employees having to deal with small staff sizes and having multiple responsibilities were evident throughout the data analyzation process and something employees felt hinders the performance of the athletic department. Outsourcing allows these internal stakeholders to focus solely on their tasks and remove all the work that comes with ticket sales, such as out-bound phone calls, in-bound phone calls, box office operation, ticket meetings, and strategies, among others. For example, Gerald stated that outsourcing ticket sales may allow

administrators to focus more on their job. He said, “As much work that you can take off of your own desk allows you to do the real fundamentals of your job.” This was also touched on by other participants who stated how outsourcing ticket sales focuses solely on selling tickets, which becomes one less thing for the administrators to have to focus on daily. Another example of this is when Trevor mentioned, “If you can allow them to do their job, if you take something off their plate, if it's going to help improve their efficiency and help them get their jobs done, then I think it's something you should do.” As shown, some of these experts expressed how outsourcing ticket sales may not only improve the ticket revenue generation and service, but also increase productivity in other areas because it would allow people like the Director of Fundraising and athletic directors to focus on their job tasks.

However, although some people look at this as allowing them to focus more on their daily tasks, some internal employees feel that by outsourcing, their job may be threatened. They believe that if the outsourcing is working effectively, the university may look to outsource other positions. Trevor expressed how outsourcing ticket sales may be viewed: “It can go one of two ways. It's going to be viewed negatively. You're replacing my job...are you running me off? Or ...they realize that it's to help them do their jobs better or free them up to do their job.” He also mentioned that if outsourcing is going to work, people need to know it is not intended to replace them. Another participant mentioned how they have seen people lose their jobs and have witnessed a decrease in job performance based on the decision to outsource. Outsourcing ticket sales allows people to focus more on their own tasks, but internal stakeholders need to know that the outsourcing is there to aid them and the department and not replace them.

Theme 5: Loss of Control

Loss of control appears to be a big fear for experts in the field when deciding if they should outsource ticket sales. A lot of times, job duties are done the same way for a very long time in athletic departments, especially in smaller athletic departments, and they want to make sure they don't lose too much control. Alan mentioned this multiple times. For example, he said, "I think the number one concern is that when we decide to outsource, we want to know if we are giving away all of our power, all of our control over tickets. And I think that's something that as an athletic department, obviously again, depending on where you are, you always want to have some sort of control of what's going on in your department at all times." It was very important for this participant and others to ensure they still had a high level of control. Alan made this clear when stating, "I want to make sure that we still have at least a good chunk of control of what's going on and a good understanding of what's going on." The different levels of control are a reason why some athletic departments are hesitant to outsource as they are worried about losing control. Also, most feel that the current way they are doing things does not need to be changed.

Other things that go along with control concerning athletic departments when deciding to outsource or not is how much of the pricing and ticket strategy they lose control of, what happens to the data collected on ticket holders after the relationship, and the possibility of losing control of relationships with external stakeholders. These were all mentioned as concerns by participants in this study. For instance, Eric stated, "There was some concern about data, like what happens to our data when the relationship ends. So, those questions had to be answered." Gerald explained, "An advantage of outsourcing is the database you're getting as well as the expertise and knowing the best practices on what everybody's doing. Without that being provided and without being able to keep the data, it would be a hard decision to go forward

with.” It’s evident that data plays a part in the decision as to whether to outsource or not. The athletic departments believing they could do it themselves and that they have a good grasp on their external stakeholders, in addition with not wanting to lose control over their product, were big reasons for some experts not wanting to outsource.

Theme 6: Turnover of Employees

It is no surprise that turnover is a concern for most sports organizations when it comes to ticket sales (Bouchet et al., 2011). Based off of participants’ responses, this is also a major concern when it comes to making the decision to outsource or not. For example, Eric talked about it being a concern when saying, “These consultants, as they're called, have very high turnover.” This is important because these outsourcing companies, like most sports organizations, tend to suffer from a large amount of turnover of their sales consultants and representatives (Bouchet et al., 2011). Athletic directors and other higher-ups are concerned that if these outsourcing companies are going to come in and have high turnover, then that takes away from the other benefits that they provide. Thus, they feel it can be carried out internally, as opposed to dealing with a company that also won’t be able to keep people employed for long periods of time. Joe provided an example of this by saying, “Turnover has been an issue here.” Although turnover is something that is a part of sports sales, some people have the perception that it is a reason not to outsource. On the other hand, others know it is a part of sport sales, and still believe that outsourcing provides better trained and qualified employees, regardless if there is change or not. This is where some have mentioned that the training of outsourcing is good because, internally, they cannot train new staff members, whereas outsourcing companies can. Turnover is clearly something that participants felt influenced the perception of outsourcing

companies and is on the minds of athletic directors and others when deciding whether to outsource ticket sales.

Theme 7: Athletic Directors Have the Final Say

It was evident by the participants' answers that when it came to the decision to either outsource or keep ticket sales internal, the athletic director is the person who has the final say. Out of the 15 participants interviewed, 13 mentioned that the athletic director had the final say. Joe frankly stated, "The final say came down to the athletic director." Tony echoed the same by saying, "Really, the athletic director would have the final say." Although it was evident through the participants' responses that the athletic director would be the person to have the final say, it was clear that multiple people were involved in the decision-making process and had influences on the decision. Over half of the participants mentioned that although the athletic director typically makes the final decision, it was influenced by other internal stakeholders.

Multiple participants explained that it is usually a team consisting of higher-ups who present their decision to the athletic director, and then the athletic director makes the final decision. Typically, this team consisted of the executive staff, which is typically the associate athletic director, the director of ticketing, the director of development, the director of operations, the director of external relations, and the senior women sports administrator. Multiple participants explained that these teams usually consist of the aforementioned positions. It is important to note that the participants also expressed that it is not as simple as just deciding to outsource because you need to receive approval from the universities' internal stakeholders, in addition to the athletic department stakeholders such as the school president, legal department, contracts department, and the finance department, among others, depending on the institutions. Tony explained this clearly when he said that the athletic director and the president work on it

together. Although sometimes school presidents will have a say in the decision, it is typically just getting the approval from the departments mentioned above. So, although they do not have an influence on the decision-making process to outsource ticket sales or not, they can certainly affect the process, the relationships, and the final contract. Overall, the most glaring theme derived from the data was that athletic directors get the final say in choosing to outsource or not; but, after investigating deeper, it is clear that although they have the final say, many others influence the athletic director's decision.

Theme 8: Everyone Must Be On Board Internally

For the relationship to work between a university and an outsourcing company, they must be accessible to each other as well as on board with each other. This was made clear in the interviews in that the success of the relationship was very much based on if everyone internally within the athletic department was on board. As touched on earlier, Trevor discussed that in order for outsourcing ticket sales to work, "You have to show people that this isn't in lieu of their job; it's to supplement their job." In addition, participants mentioned that they must have constant accessibility to higher-ups of the outsourcing companies. This is to alleviate any confusion or issues in a rapid manner. This was expressed by Alan when he said, "It has got to be something to where it's, you know, I want to have that relationship to where, when we have an issue, when somebody has questions, I want to be able to talk to you immediately." Other participants mentioned how important it was to be able to communicate with the outsourcing company as well.

The responses from these participants go along with what previous research and theories have provided us, which is more evidence on how the relationship with the stakeholders influence the success of the relationship. The success of two organizations partnering together

truly depends on the relationship created between the two. This was again made clear by multiple participants in the study. It is very important to these experts that everyone internally is on board and that solid relationships exist. If they did not feel confident in this, they would not want to go forward with outsourcing and feel that this is a concern with a lot of athletic departments when deciding to outsource ticket sales.

Methodological Review

A methodological review is an assessment focusing solely on the research methods opposed to the research outcomes. Methodological reviews have been used in a multitude of fields and aim to improve the research practice as well as confirm the study was carried out correctly (Randolph et al., 2013). It was done in this study to confirm by an expert that my methods were indeed correctly done. I wanted to ensure that I was explaining the phenomenon through the eyes of the participants and conducting the research the correct way, and having Dr. Larkins' approval concludes that I conducted the study the correct way in hopes to obtain the most practical results. Dr. Randy Larkins is an Assistant Professor of Applied Statistics and Research Methods at the University of Northern Colorado. Dr. Larkins specializes in qualitative research and has multiple publications in research journals. Dr. Larkins' expertise in qualitative research made him a proper fit to examine my methods and procedures. Below is a statement by the reviewer confirming their thoughts on Chapters III and IV.

To the Dissertation Committee:

I have reviewed Mr. Kyle Brannigan's method of analysis in Chapter III of his dissertation and the resultant findings in Chapter IV. For his method of analysis, he is using a well-known and respected source of information written by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke in 2006, in which the process and application of thematic analysis is described and examined thoroughly.

Chapter IV of Mr. Brannigan's dissertation describes the process he undertook to reach his final themes, which is in alignment with the recommendations by Braun and Clarke. With each theme, Mr. Brannigan uses the voices of his participants to create themes that answer his stated research questions. In my opinion as a research methodologist in the field of Applied Statistics and Research Methods, the process that is described and the resulting themes and supporting evidence are appropriate and correct.

The methodological review was to confirm that the study was conducted properly and that I followed the correct procedures to obtain the most practical results based off how the study was designed

Conclusion

Outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics is something that now impacts both the universities who choose to do it and those who do not. Participants in this study made it clear in what influences the decision to outsource or not. They have also pointed out clear reasons why outsourcing is so popular as well as what influences it has on the athletic departments. The above themes help describe the impact and decision-making process of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics. Being able to have the resources, training, and guaranteed revenue of outsourcing companies are advantages of outsourcing ticket sales. These resources also allow other department staff to flourish. As participants described outsourcing ticket sales as something that can help a lot of institutions, especially smaller ones, the relationship between the organization needs to be clear and positive for it to work, among other facets. The following chapter will expand on this, as well as discuss the practical implications and future research opportunities.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Phenomenon of Outsourcing

The phenomenon of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics is continuing to grow and is something that, if implemented correctly at the correct schools, can aid both internal and external stakeholders. However, if not implemented correctly, it can have a negative impact on both internal and external stakeholders. The current chapter will discuss how the phenomenon of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics impacts these athletic departments and their stakeholders. In addition, it will cover the practical implications and how this study can aid practitioners in the field, as well as future researchers to be done on this topic. Lastly, I will conclude the study with a general overview and final statement.

When conducting phenomenological analysis in qualitative research, the researcher is not intending to generalize concepts but rather explaining the phenomenon through the people who experience it every day (Creswell, 2014; Crotty, 1998; Merriam, 2009). In addition, it is important not to predetermine or create any preunderstanding of individuals' perceptions or adapt how they experience and describe the phenomenon (Merriam, 1995). Thus, this study did not intend to create assumptions about the perceptions or effectiveness of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics. Instead, the goal of this study was to explain the decision making process and effects of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics as well to explain how it impacts the internal and external stakeholders of the organization through the descriptions of the participants

who experience it every day and are decision makers in their respective departments in regard to outsourcing ticket sales.

For this study, I employed the constructivist approach, using constructivism as a foundation, ensuring to keep an open mind, and attempting to explain the phenomenon through the interactions the participants have within their environment. I employed the methods and tactics to best explain the phenomenon of outsourcing ticket sales through the descriptions and experiences of the participants who currently work in the field. In an attempt to do so, the research questions posed were:

- Q1 What are the athletic administrators' perceptions of outsourcing ticket sales?
- Q2 What is the decision-making process to outsource or not?
- Q3 What are the most common reasons athletic administrators choose to outsource ticket sales in collegiate athletics?
- Q4 What is the stakeholder influence on the decision to outsource?
- Q5 How does the athletic department's relationship with the outsourcing agency impact the decision to outsource?

During the process of addressing the posed research questions, eight main themes emerged from the collected data. These eight themes were: Trained Experts on the Phone, Guaranteed Revenue, Resources, Allowing Internal Employees to Focus on their Own Tasks, Loss of Control, Turnover of Employees, Athletic Directors Have Final Say, and Everyone Must be Onboard Internally. These themes and their explanations can aid athletic departments as well as future researchers in how the decision-making process to outsource ticket sales is made, as well as the impact outsourcing has on an athletic department's internal and external stakeholder.

The results align with previous research, showing the importance of training for success as well as the lack of training that exists in collegiate athletics. In addition, it went along with

previous research done on partnering organizations as well as the impact partnerships have on internal and external stakeholders. The two organizations must have constant contact and promote a good relationship. They also must both understand the contract they are entering and how to best accomplish the goals of both organizations. It is important for athletic departments to make educated decisions when choosing to outsource ticket sales, and this study can act as a guide for them in making more informed decisions. Using this study, they can see the impact, advantages, and disadvantages of outsourcing ticket sales.

Trained Experts on the Phone

Training is key to the success of any sales team, and collegiate athletic departments desperately need more consistent training. Training is something that most outsourcing companies excel at, and something athletic departments barely perform internally. Outsourcing can certainly provide a more trained sales staff. Outsourcing allows you to have a properly-trained sales staff selling tickets—people who know how to create relationships, upsell, and have their entire workday devoted to selling (Popp et al., 2020). One concern with the training outsourcing companies provide is that they don't always have their employees on campus at the university, so when the internal employees are getting trained or if the partnership ends, the internal employees don't always see the benefit to the training. The data shows that having trained experts on the phone was a large perk of outsourcing. It allowed universities to generate more revenue and know that professionals were taking care of their external stakeholders. When you outsource, you have an entire team of trained professionals who know how to build relationships with new and existing clients, which is something most athletic departments are seeking to accomplish. The participants in this study did not go into detail on the level of training they provided; most simply did not comment or said they did not provide internal sales training.

Furthermore, the participants did not speak much on the level of training they felt outsourcing provided, but it was clear that they felt they provided more and better training than what was done internally. In addition, it was obvious they felt outsourcing provided employees who could generate more revenue and build better external relationships. It has been proven that training is an important component of having success in sales (Popp, 2014). The fact that outsourcing companies can provide training that universities can't provide internally helps them contribute another benefit to partnering with them aside from generated revenue. The training works best when they have people on ground at the university because than the other employees get to experience that training firsthand and they also feel like they get to keep that education. Athletic directors and their staff know how important it is to have consistent training and experts on the phone. They typically just don't provide the training themselves due to lack of resources, which is why it is such an advantage for outsourcing companies and a large reason why schools choose to outsource their ticket sales.

Guaranteed Revenue

“Revenue is king in college athletics.” This quote from the data collected in this study clearly expresses the importance put on revenue generation in collegiate athletics. However, universities across the country continue to struggle to generate consistent ticket revenue. Since so many universities struggle to create ticket revenue, outsourcing has grown at a rapid pace in collegiate athletics. Typically, when creating a relationship with an outsourcing company, guaranteed revenue generated is often part of the contract between the outsourcing company and athletic department. This is something that really makes athletic directors and ticketing managers comfortable with outsourcing—knowing that no matter what, they are going to make a certain amount of ticket revenue every season, and if not, the outsourcing company has to pay off the

amount in ticket revenue that was not met based on the negotiated contract. This allows athletic departments to spend certain money elsewhere, like on facilities, which then betters the overall department and institution.

The guaranteed revenue aspect of partnering with an outsourcing company is very useful and appealing to athletic departments, but both athletic departments and outsourcing companies need to be sure to come up with the correct number of guaranteed revenues. If this is not done correctly, the relationship will most likely come to a premature end because an outsourcing company will not continue to lose money by having to pay for revenue not generated. Thus, if the number is too high, the relationship will end because neither party will be happy, the athletic department will not be making more money, and the outsourcing company will lose money. If the number is too low, then athletic departments will be upset with the amount of revenue being shared and not kept. This was shown throughout the data collection process. Multiple participants expressed that a reason to avoid outsourcing was, in general, having to share revenue; thus both the athletic department and the outsourcing company must agree on a revenue number which will make both parties money. The best way to go about this is to reevaluate this number every year instead of it remaining the same as it typically does in a set contract. Coming up with the correct revenue number is a very important part in the long-term success of the relationship between the outsourcing company and the athletic department.

Resources

Resources provided from outsourcing companies is another reason for the rapid growth of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics. Most athletic departments are understaffed and have people doing multiple jobs (Popp, 2014; Popp et al., 2020). Outsourcing provides these athletic departments with resources they don't have internally, which is a perk that does not show

up number-wise but certainly helps the department operate smoother. These resources such as manpower and knowledge help athletic departments make more informed decisions as well as allow internal employees to gain more experience. In collegiate athletics, it is well known that staff sizes are very small and staff members are performing the jobs of multiple people (Popp, 2014). Outsourcing helps provide more employees that are not on the university's payroll, yet they help them achieve the departments goals. In addition, outsourcing comes with technology that helps athletic departments create better relationships and obtain and organize way more data than what can typically be done internally.

Having more data and creating better relationships with external stakeholders has been a goal for athletic departments in the last decade. However, a fear athletic department have is what happens to the data when the relationship ends. The same goes for training and technological resources. An outsourcing company does not want to come in and provide all the training, data collection, relationship building, and time just for the university to end the relationship after they feel they can do everything internally. However, athletic departments do not want to get into a partnership where they can lose everything if it ends. Again, this emphasizes the importance of creating a good contract and having a good relationship between the two organizations. If done correctly, both sides can be confident that each are working in the best interest for the other; but if not, it can be a relationship that, even if it works financially, ends because the relationship between the two organizations is not trustful.

Allowing Internal People to Focus on Their Tasks

Another advantage of outsourcing your ticket sales that does not show up in the numbers but certainly helps the athletic department overall is the fact that outsourcing ticket sales allows internally employees to focus more on their individual tasks. This advantage does not come with

many downsides other than if the relationship between the two organizations creates more work for the internal employees. An example of this would be having to “watch over” or make sure the outsourcing company is doing the right thing. The best way for this advantage to flourish is having a trusting relationship between the two organizations. If the internal directors can fully trust that the outsourcing company is doing everything correctly and they don’t have to check in on them often, it then allows them to focus on their task and not “wear multiple hats” as mentioned in interviews. Outsourcing takes meetings and operational tasks off the plate of other directors. The more these employees can focus on their individual tasks the smoother the entire department will run. Again, this is something that won’t be seen on paper; only the internal employees will truly see the benefit by the amount of work they can get done. It is important that the athletic department employees can trust the outsourcing company as well as have consistent contact with them. When this is done correctly, athletic departments run smoother. This is something that internally must be dealt with to ensure that relationships stay positive. If an outsourcing company can come in and have a good working relationship with the current internal stakeholders, it will typically allow the employees to focus more on their tasks, thereby improving the department as a whole and going beyond just generating ticket revenue and building relationships with external stakeholders.

Loss of Control

No organization wants to lose control of how they do things, and that is a fear that comes with outsourcing. A lot of times directors feel that they know how to correctly do things and even if they do not, they do not want to lost control over decision making because ultimately it’s them who will be reprimanded for poor performance. However, outsourcing companies have proven to be able to have success when the relationship created is strong. Both agency theory

and stakeholder theory have pointed to the fact that for a partnership between two organizations to flourish, they must have a good relationship between stakeholders (Logan, 2000; Reade, 2010; Walker et al., 2009). This is when the outsourcing company and the athletic department can work together and create a relationship where the athletic department does not feel like they are losing control over decision making such as ticket packages, pitches, donation structure, and data. These athletic departments need to know that they will still have control but still allow the outsourcing company enough influence to have an impact. When a trustworthy relationship is created, this can happen and the department can flourish.

Turnover of Employees

Sport business has always seen a lot of turnover, and minor league and collegiate athletics are the two areas in sport where the highest amount of turnover exists. Although high turnover exists regardless of if universities outsource or not, it is a concern for athletic departments when choosing to outsource. A reason for this is they are paying for the service and feel that most of the time outsourcing employees are not part of the team, and athletic departments don't want consistent turnover of outsourcing employees. It will be difficult for outsourcing companies to be able to stop high turnover rates as it is something that is very common in sales, especially sports sales. Outsourcing companies should focus on having less turnover to help better the relationship with these athletic departments, but as mentioned, preventing high turnover in this field remains difficult.

Athletic Directors Have the Final Say

As mentioned in Chapter III, it was clear that athletic directors have the final say, which for most people in the industry is not surprising. The question remains if this is the most practical way for athletic departments to make decisions, which according to experts it is. Although a few

participants did mention that the athletic director would have a team of employees that would weigh in on the decision, but ultimately it is the athletic director's decision whether the university should outsource ticket sales or not. However, even if the athletic department does want to outsource, it has to be approved by the university's president, legal team, and contracts team before the deal can be finalized. Typically, the university president puts their faith in the athletic director to make the decision, but it still needs to be approved by the legal and contracts teams to make sure it aligns with the university's policies.

Although it is clear and obvious that if it is approved by the school that the athletic director has the final say on the decision to outsource or not, schools may want to evaluate their methods of decision making on outsourcing. Athletic directors are not always experts in sales and fundraising, and it would benefit athletic departments to have multiple people weighing in on the decision. As mentioned, the relationship created between the athletic department and outsourcing company is key, thus everyone in the department should know why they should or should not outsource and have the people impacted by that decision have more of an impact on it. Although some participants mentioned that they do form a team to help present the idea to the athletic director, every participant mentioned that the athletic director has the final say and then it goes through the university. Outsourcing may see more success if the schools the employees will be working with had more of an impact on the initial relationship.

Everyone Must Be On Board Internally

If internal employees are not on board with outsourcing, than it most likely won't work. The relationship between the employees of both organizations needs to be positive. If internal workers disagree with the decision to outsource, they most likely will not work well with the outsourcing company and may be fearing for their own position. Workers who fear for their job

or are not feeling valued will bring down the overall performance of the department. Making a decision that goes against what internal workers believe will make them feel as if their opinion is not valued. Having workers who are not properly motivated is always a recipe for disaster. It is integral that internal employees are on board with the decision to outsource; otherwise, the department will not function the way it needs and the relationship with the outsourcing company will not flourish as needed. It is important for the internal employees to know why outsourcing is needed and how it is going to help the department. Employees need to know that outsourcing is to aid them and not replace them. Of course, choosing to outsource ticket sales may come with replacing some jobs, but that is part of making the decision to better the department. For outsourcing to work, the members of the organization need to be a part of the internal team and that specific athletic department; otherwise, the partnership won't work. Thus, it's important for the internal employees to treat the outsourced employees as their co-workers, because they are. If the internal employees are on-board with the decision to outsource and work with those employees as a team, then the department can truly function better because you have more people doing the tasks they are supposed to be doing with one common goal to accomplish.

Practical Implications

Practical implications are important to have in any study that hopes to contribute to the field in which the research is being done. In this study, I strived to get results that would be useful for both industry practitioners as well as future researchers. A lot of the descriptions above help explain some of the practical implications of this study and how the results can help and relate to the industry. In addition, through this chapter, I have gone through each theme and discussed how they relate to collegiate athletic departments and their internal and external stakeholders. One of the major practical results that can be seen for the results is the importance

of the contract and having a strong relationship between the sourcing company and the athletic department. These are two factors that are key to the success of the relationship.

The contract and relationship are important for multiple reasons, some of which are the difficulties that come with selling tickets in collegiate athletics. Both turnover and training are major issues in collegiate athletics, and in sales in general. If a collegiate athletic department has a sales team, they most likely have high turnover. Even when you choose to outsource, turnover is an issue; it is just the nature of the game. However, this is another time where the hiring and training aspect of outsourcing is a perk. Outsourcing companies have employees all over the country that can transfer and already have the proper training. In addition, the athletic department does not have to worry much about the hiring process or any training that may be necessary. This is an advantage of outsourcing, but it must be properly explained by the outsourcing company to the athletic department. The department needs to know that although they are outsourcing, turnover is still going to happen; they will just be able to handle it better and go on without as many hiccups as they may have if it were done in-house.

Internally, these athletic departments cannot afford to continue to hire new employees because of high turnover, nor can they afford to bring in expert trainers. Furthermore, they do not have the internal resources to train these sales employees themselves. This is part of the reason a lot of collegiate ticketing departments do not maximize ticket revenue. They spend too much time, money, and resources on hiring, and don't have the ability to provide start up and continued training. Outsourcing companies can certainly help athletic departments have better trained staffs, although turnover may still exist but will not impact the athletic department nearly as much.

Turnover and training are a few things that show how outsourcing can impact an athletic department. In addition to explaining how outsourcing can impact turnover and training, the results of this study can also truly help athletic departments and their internal stakeholders in multiple ways. Outsourcing ticket sales allows employees to focus more on their tasks as opposed to wearing multiple hats and only working effectively if internal employees are on board. Thus, the athletic director needs to know how these employees can use this extra time most efficiently and how employees feel about outsourcing. If they are only against it because of lack of knowledge, then educating them on outsourcing can greatly help the department. However, if they don't work well with the outsourcing employees or the outsourcing employees can't function within the department, then it can hurt employee efficiency, which is why you must educate and listen to your internal stakeholders when choosing to outsource. Your employees need to know why you are outsourcing and it needs to be explained to them; although simple, this is something most athletic departments have not been doing. This study helps show them why they need to.

Internal stakeholders are integral to the success of an athletic department, and so are external stakeholders. The results of this study aid administrators in seeing the impact outsourcing has on internal and external stakeholders. This can help aid them in making the decision to outsource or not or can impact how they go about making the decision. For example, if an athletic director feels that outsourcing will not generate more revenue, but the director of ticketing explains how it will grow their external stakeholders and grow the department's resources to generate more revenue, the athletic director can look at this study as well as other institutes that outsource their ticket sales and can identify how it may work with their external stakeholders.

Athletic directors and athletic departments are typically hesitant to change and are set in their ways, but reading the results of this study can help explain why changing how you go about selling tickets can aid your department. It explains why outsourcing does not work and why it does as far as ticket sales go in collegiate athletics. One of the biggest takeaways for this study should be that athletic departments can examine these results, then look straight at their department and be able to have a better idea of whether outsourcing can help their department make more money and run more efficiently. This is key, as all athletic departments are looking to maximize revenue and minimize cost. The results of this study can help aid them to see if outsourcing can help them achieve their goals. It also shows how outsourcing companies and athletic departments what they must do and must avoid to have a successful relationship that accomplishes both organizations' goals.

In addition to explaining how to have a better relationship between the two organizations, the results of this study also allows administrators to have a look at the decision-making process and evaluate if it is the best way to make the decision on outsourcing. Athletic directors can look at this study and help self-evaluate if they are making the correct decisions regarding outsourcing; or maybe they need to consider the other directors in the department before having such a strong opinion on it. Overall, the results of this study can help athletic departments see why outsourcing is so popular and the advantages and disadvantages of outsourcing ticket sales. This study can act as a guide on how to make the decision to outsourcing ticket sales and, more importantly, how it can impact your athletic department if you do choose to outsource. Athletic directors can look at this study to determine if outsourcing is something they feel could help their department. In addition, this study helps explain the importance of the relationship and the contract agreement between the two organizations. It allows both outsourcing companies and

athletic departments to recognize that for true success they must create a good relationship in which they understand each other's goals and work as one unit instead of two separate organizations. It is important for the outsourced employees to be accepted and be a part of the team for the relationship to flourish. A lot of times when the employees are not on ground at the university, the relationship does not work because they are not treated as part of the team. It is integral for the success of the relationship that the outsourced employees are informed of what is going on in the athletic department and treated as an employee of the athletic department rather than the outsourcing company. Anything that can be done to increase the understanding of the goal of the two organizations and create a better relationship should be done. If athletic departments and outsourcing companies can figure out how to create better relationships between the employees and have a full understanding of the contract, then we would see a lot more successful relationships between outsourcing companies and athletic departments. Although more research needs to be done to aid athletic departments on understanding outsourcing, this study provides clear examples on how to better understand outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics.

Future Research

As mentioned in the previous chapters, research on this topic is lacking, and with very few publications focusing on outsourcing ticket sales, this study hopes to add to the field. However, as with most research topics, a lot of research can and should be conducted on outsourcing ticket sales. One opportunity for future research is to differentiate the success levels of outsourcing between the different outsourcing companies. Being able to tell what outsourcing companies are more successful in what situations could aid athletic departments in choosing the best company for them. Some companies might be better than others at revenue generation, relationship building,

and training; therefore, knowing which companies are best at what could help create the best relationship, which has been proven in this study and past studies is an integral part of having success when outsourcing. With training being so important to the success of a sales team as well as dealing with turnover, it would be beneficial for athletic departments to see how better trained their staff can be if they choose to outsource. Also, if a study can identify if outsourcing handles turnover better, this can also aid athletic departments in making the best decision.

Another opportunity for future research is expanding the sample to both larger division one schools as well as investigating division two schools. This would allow researchers to discover if outsourcing ticket sales can be done at schools with different levels of competition, different regulations, different staff sizes, and more. With outsourcing still being so new, researchers and practitioners have yet to discover how large its reach of success can be. However, it's clear that it has helped schools that fit the sample of the conducted study; but more investigations can and should be done on this topic in the future.

More opportunities for future research can come on the revenue gained or attendance gained. Now that more data exists and outsourcing ticket sales has been around long enough, the researcher should be able to garnish enough data and see if after partnering with an outsourcing firm if their attendance at athletic events has increased since the partnership and or if revenue was increased. One of the biggest avenues for future research is the impact of the relationship and the contract to the success of the relationship. This study clearly shows how important the relationship and the contract are to the overall success of the partnership. Future studies can investigate more in depth what harnesses a good relationship and contracts that have worked best compared to ones that have not. Knowing how to start off with a strong contract and a good

relationship and how to withstand these would lead to more successful partnerships and can show departments what has and has not worked, and why.

Although a lot of research can and should be done on outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics, these topics are the ones mentioned in the data collection process as well as some of the most prevalent issues to be researched. Another topic that needs to be researched thoroughly is the relationship, contracts, and post relationship effects of outsourcing ticket sales. The relationship and agreement between the two organizations is very important to the success of the partnership but it is something that has never been investigated before. Figuring out these issues can aid athletic departments as well as outsourcing companies in the best way to go about creating a successful and good relationship as well as a contract that benefits both parties equally. If this is done correctly, athletic departments can run better and maximize revenue. All these topics are areas that need to be investigated in the future for us to truly understand outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics.

Conclusion

This study provides a view into the phenomenon of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics. The phenomenon is explained through the descriptions of administrators who impact and are impacted by the decision to outsource or not. The provided information concurs with previous literature done in the sport management field as well as research performed on agency and stakeholder theory. Furthermore, the study used strict qualitative methodological practices that have been proven to provide practical results.

The study provides examples supporting why to outsource ticket sales in collegiate athletics as well as the impact it has. The advantages that come with outsourcing, like training, resources, revenue, and a more focused staff, are reasons why outsourcing is so popular.

However, some administrators are weary to outsource due to fear of loss of control, sharing revenue, loss of data, and employee turnover. This study also provides insight on the decision-making process explaining how athletic directors ultimately make the final decision whether the athletic department should outsource ticket sales or not. Furthermore, the study provides examples of how important the relationship and the contract are between the athletic department and the outsourcing company. Clearly more research must be done on the topic, but it is evident that the success of outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics is dependent on the relationship between the two partnering organizations.

Overall, this study provides useful information for future researchers as well as industry practitioners. It provides examples that the impact outsourcing has on internal and external stakeholders as well as insight to the decision-making process. In addition, it also provides examples of where future research is needed and how it can help academia in its current climate. Lastly, the study acts as a starting point for outsourcing ticket sales in collegiate athletics and can aid athletic directors on the impact of outsourcing tickets sales and a better way to conduct the decision-making process.

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APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Institutional Review Board

Date: 01/27/2021

Principal Investigator: Kyle John Brannigan

Committee Action: **IRB EXEMPT DETERMINATION – New Protocol**

Action Date: 01/27/2021

Protocol Number: [2012018455](#)

Protocol Title: An Investigation of outsourcing ticket sales in division I intercollegiate athletics

Expiration Date:

The University of Northern Colorado Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol and determined your project to be exempt under 45 CFR 46.104(d)(702) for research involving

Category 2 (2018): EDUCATIONAL TESTS, SURVEYS, INTERVIEWS, OR OBSERVATIONS OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR. Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; (ii) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or (iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by 45 CFR 46.111(a)(7).

You may begin conducting your research as outlined in your protocol. Your study does not require further review from the IRB, unless changes need to be made to your approved protocol.

As the Principal Investigator (PI), you are still responsible for contacting the UNC IRB office if and when:

- You wish to deviate from the described protocol and would like to formally submit a modification request. Prior IRB approval must be obtained before any changes can be implemented (except to eliminate an immediate hazard to research participants).
- You make changes to the research personnel working on this study (add or drop research staff on this

protocol).

- At the end of the study or before you leave The University of Northern Colorado and are no longer a student or employee, to request your protocol be closed. *You cannot continue to reference UNC on any documents (including the informed consent form) or conduct the study under the auspices of UNC if you are no longer a student/employee of this university.
- You have received or have been made aware of any complaints, problems, or adverse events that are related or possibly related to participation in the research.

If you have any questions, please contact the Research Compliance Manager, Nicole Morse, at 970-351-1910 or via e-mail at nicole.morse@unco.edu. Additional information concerning the requirements for the protection of human subjects may be found at the Office of Human Research Protection website - <http://hhs.gov/ohrp/> and <https://www.unco.edu/research/research-integrity-and-compliance/institutional-review-board/>.

Sincerely,

Nicole Morse
Research Compliance Manager

University of Northern Colorado: FWA00000784

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT



Informed Consent Form for Participation in Research

Title of Research Study: Role Identity and Engagement Behaviors of Student-Athlete Alumni

Researcher(s): Kyle John Brannigan, College of Natural Health and Sciences, Doctoral Student

Phone Number: (845) 216-0965 email: bran7453@bears.unco.edu

Research Advisor: Dr. Alan Morse, College of Natural Health and Sciences, Faculty

Phone Number: (970) 351-1722 email: alan.morse@unco.edu

The purpose of this research study is to learn about the perceptions of outsourcing ticket sales in college athletics from current athletic department employees. If you chose to participate in this study, you will be interviewed via Zoom about your perceptions. The interview should last for no longer than one hour. With your permission, the interview will be video recorded to allow the researcher the opportunity to fully engage in the conversation and not be focused on capturing everything that is said in his notes. Data collected and analyzed for this study will be kept in a secure location accessible only to the researcher and the research advisor.

To ensure your confidentiality the researcher will ensure your responses are kept confidential. The researcher will not be exposing the universities names and will also use pseudonyms for participants and not provide their real names.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact Kyle Brannigan at bran7453@bears.unco.edu. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, Research Compliance Manager, University of Northern Colorado at nicole.morse@unco.edu or 970-351-1910.

Please understand that your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.

If you decide to participate, your completion of the research procedures indicates your consent. A copy of this form can be sent to you for your records.

APPENDIX C

EMAIL TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

Hello, (Participant's Name):

I hope all is well with you and your family.

My name is Kyle Brannigan, and I am currently a Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Northern Colorado, and Dr. Alan Morse is my advisor. I am reaching out because I am working on a research study which focuses on outsourcing ticket sales in college athletics. I was wondering if you would be willing to be a participant in the study. I am hoping to do a 30-60-minute Zoom interview with you about the study. I am interested in conducting the study within the Big Sky Conference, Southland Conference, and Missouri Valley Conference, and would really appreciate your thoughts on the perceptions of outsourcing ticket sales in college athletics.

I have attached a copy of the informed consent to provide you with more details about my research. After reading the informed consent, if you would be willing to participate, please reply and let me know of some times that would work best for you.

Thank you very much and I hope to speak with you soon.

Best regards,

Kyle John Brannigan
Sport Administration Ph.D. Student
GTA-Instructor
School of Sport & Exercise Science
Butler-Hancock 261H

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do you feel about outsourcing ticket sales in college athletics? Can you please discuss the positives and the negatives?
2. How does the decision to outsource, or not, influence the relationships within the athletic department?
3. What effects, positive and/or negative, could partnering with an agency bring to an athletic department?
4. What influence does the relationship with external stakeholders have on the decision to outsource or not?
5. How may internal stakeholders opinions influence the decision to outsource ticket sales?
6. How do you feel outsourcing affects the revenue generation of the athletic department?
7. Why do you feel athletic departments outsource ticket sales, and what is the most important reason?
8. What type of impact do you feel outsourcing ticket sales have, both negative and positive?
9. What is your decision-making process when it comes to outsourcing, not deciding not to?
10. When it comes to outsourcing ticket sales, who is involved in making the final decision?
11. What do you feel are the factors that makes outsourcing ticket sales so popular in college athletics?
12. Who do you feel are the top outsourcing companies in ticket sales in college athletics? Will you please you rank them?
13. Is there anything about outsourcing ticket sales I have not asked you that you feel should be mentioned?

Follow up questions if they outsource:

14. What went into your decision to outsource ticket sales?
15. If given the choice again, what would you choose and why?

Follow up questions if they do not outsource:

16. Why are you choosing to keep ticket sales in-house?