Professional Sport Security and Marketing Interface: A Delphi Study

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Sport security has taken on a greater emphasis among facility and event management personnel since the September 11th attacks in the United States. This emphasis has resulted in enhanced, game day security measures, such as increased personnel and use of new technology. These increases in sport security measures may have an influence on spectators’ decisions to attend sporting events or stay longer at them if they are already present. Understanding this influence is important, as research has demonstrated the value of sport facility infrastructure to the marketing mission of the sport organization (Bitter, 1992; Lambrecht, Kaefer, & Ramenofsky, 2009; Lin & Worthley, 2011; Wakefield, Blodgett, & Sloan, 1996). At this time, however, there is a dearth of academic literature on the consequences of these increased security measures and related technologies on the spectator experience and its resultant impact on revenue generation.

The research on sport security has focused almost exclusively on informing industry practitioners of best practices generally (Hall, 2006; Hall, Cieslak, Marciani, Cooper, & McGee, 2010; Hall, Fos, Marciani, & Zhang, 2011; Hall, Marciani, Cooper, & Phillips, 2010; Hall, Marciani, Cooper, & Rolen, 2007; Hall, Ward, Cunningham, & Marciani, 2008; Pantera, Accorsi, Winter, Gobielle, Griveas, Queen, Insalaco, & Domanski, 2003), often through reviews of recommended security protocols from the Department of Homeland Security and related government agencies (Baker, Connaughton, Zhang, & Spengler, 2007; Hall, Cooper, Marciani, & McGee, 2012; Hall, Marciani, & Cooper, 2008a; Hall, Marciani, & Cooper, 2008b). Very little research has touched upon the influence of the threat of terrorism on enhanced security measures and corresponding spectator attendance.

For example, Taylor & Toohey (2007) determined that “risk management of terrorism has relevance for planning sport events, not only for safety but also for positive economic outcomes . . .” (Taylor & Toohey, 2007, p. 100). Hall, Marciani, Phillips, and Cunningham (2009) also asserted that the overwhelming presence of security measures may pose negative economic consequences for the sport organization. The results of both of these studies generated implications that were born out of spectator-centered research. While an obviously important party to the economic success of sport event execution, these projects did not involve industry practitioners, nor provide industry practitioners with insight as to how to balance sport security measures more effectively with a positive, patron-centered experience. The proposed project, however, aims to be an important first step in this direction.

The purpose of this research was to bring together a panel of subject matter experts with applied experience in sport security to better understand the influence of sport security on the marketing emphases inherent to sport event management. To examine this issue, the current study utilized the Delphi method (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963), which has been done previously in research on sport security (Hall, 2006). Established in 1953 by Dalkey and Helmer (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963), the Delphi method is “a group process that utilizes individual written responses” (Ludwig, 1994, p. 50) of several subject matter experts as a means to gain consensus on a topic. Generally speaking, the Delphi technique “assist(s) an investigator in assessing the what is and what should be with regard to organizational conditions, goals and objective” (Sutphin, 1981, p. 41). Thus, as the goal of the present study was to examine a previously unexplored aspect of event security and its effect on marketing, the Delphi technique provided an avenue for experts to express what they perceived to be the current organizational conditions and establish goals and objectives for the field moving forward.

Consequently, the responses yielded from this study will be used to create a research instrument investigating the link between stadium security and marketing. Such an instrument will be employed in a follow up study measuring perceptions of various stakeholders (i.e., stadium employees and fans)with the hope of “identify[ing] ways to implement effective security initiatives that do not impact negatively on” the spectator experience (Taylor & Toohey, 2007, p. 105).
In conclusion, the Delphi technique was used in this project to effectively gauge how stadium and team security personnel currently working for a franchise in one of the United States’ four, major, professional sport leagues perceive security issues and the potential effects of such issues on fans’ enjoyment of sport events. The data collection process is underway, as the research team is currently coding data that has been yielded from the first round of the three rounds of the study. The proposed presentation will involve discussion of the final results of this study, its application(s) to practitioners, and the subsequent step(s) in the trajectory of the research, including the presentation of the newly created instrument to be used in the follow-up study.