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## Assessing the Influence of Sport Security Operations on the Guest Experience: Using the Delphi Method to Understand Practitioner Perspectives

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## **Cover Page Footnote**

The authors are grateful for the feedback on an earlier version of this manuscript from anonymous, peer reviewers.

## INTRODUCTION

Sport security has taken on a greater emphasis among facility and event management personnel since the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks in the United States. This emphasis has resulted in increased game day security measures and related technologies, which 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 (Bitner, 1992; Lambrecht, Kaefer, & Ramenofsky, 2009; Lin & Worthley, 2011; Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2014; 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 current project attempts to address this lack of knowledge and contribute to the literature on the broader topic of sport security. To accomplish this, the literature related to sport security was reviewed and a Delphi technique was applied. The goal of this technique was to reach a consensus amongst practitioners regarding contemporary venue security operations and related issues with the intent of establishing a foundation for future research on the connection between sport security and revenue generation. Consequently, this paper begins with a review of the literature regarding sport security and is followed by an explanation of the method used in the current study. The study's results will be provided along with an analysis of the findings' implications. The limitations of the current study and suggestions for future research will be offered in conclusion.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Sport Security*

The academic research on sport security has primarily focused on informing industry practitioners of best practices (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, & Domanoski, 2003). This research is often performed as reviews of recommended security protocols from the Department of Homeland Security and related government agencies in the United States (Baker, Connaughton, Zhang, & Spengler, 2007; Hall, Cooper, Marciani, & McGee, 2012; Hall, Marciani, & Cooper, 2008a; Hall, Marciani, & Cooper, 2008b). Very little research, however, has examined the impact of these enhanced security measures on spectator attendance and their resultant influence on revenue generation.

The work of Hall et al. (2009) and Taylor & Toohey (2007) appear to be the only studies to address this potential influence. Hall et al. (2009), for example, examined the perceptions of attendees at a NASCAR event to ascertain those attendees' understanding of emergency protocol, as well as their perceptions of the general threat of terrorism at the facility. The implications of their research led them to assert that the overwhelming presence of security measures may pose negative economic consequences for the sport organization (Hall et al., 2009). Taylor and Toohey (2007) investigated the influence of

the general threat of terrorism on spectators' decisions to attend a mega-event, the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens. Similar to Hall et al. (2009), they 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). Their work, though, focused solely on those spectators in attendance and did not account for those individuals who chose not to attend out of concern for the general threat of terrorism and/or other concerns related to venue security.

The results of both of these studies generated implications that were borne 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 with a positive, patron-centered experience more effectively.

### *Delphi Technique*

The Delphi technique was established in 1953 by Dalkey and Helmer (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963) and consists of "a group process that utilizes individual written responses" (Ludwig, 1994, p. 50) of subject matter experts (SMEs) as a means to gain consensus on a topic. It "assist[s] an investigator in assessing the what is and what should be with regard to organizational conditions, goals and objectives" (Sutphin, 1981, p. 41). Moreover, Campbell (1966) and Sutphin (1981) stated that the Delphi technique is useful as it provides a group of experts a means to discuss and provide feedback on organizational conditions while remaining anonymous.

Within sport, the Delphi technique has been used a few times to gain a greater understanding of organizational conditions, goals, and objectives. For example, Costa (2005) performed a Delphi study to determine the status and future of the field of sport management. Gauging feedback of seventeen panelists, Costa (2005) found agreement regarding the need for stronger research and improved doctoral training, and disagreement about where sport management programs should be housed and the value of traditional versus applied research, amongst other factors. Within sport security, Hall (2006) used a Delphi panel that consisted of twenty-seven people to study security in intercollegiate athletics with the goal of establishing standards and protocols for operation. The study resulted in the panel identifying eleven categories of concern (i.e., "Perimeter Control, Access Control, Credentialing, Physical Protection Systems, Risk Management, Emergency Management, Recovery Procedures, Communications, Security Personnel, Training, Modeling, and Simulation, and WMD--Toxic Materials Protection" (p. 1).

### *Research Questions*

The purpose of the current study was to assemble a panel of SMEs with applied experience in sport security to better understand the influence of sport security on the spectator experience. This project is the first academic attempt to cultivate feedback from industry practitioners to better understand this potential influence. The data yielded from this study is expected to aid in the creation of a future research instrument that will be used to investigate this matter further in future studies, 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).

Accordingly the following research questions were posed:

RQ1: How do security staff and security operations enhance and detract from the guests' experience?

RQ2: What are common security issues that affect guests' experiences?

RQ3: How are venue staff used during an event?

RQ4: How do guests perceive venue staff?

The Delphi method was used in the current project to effectively gauge how venue and team security personnel perceive security issues and the potential effects of such issues on guests' enjoyment of sport events. This was done in an attempt to better understand the potential consequences of these issues on spectator attendance and their corresponding influence on revenue generation. While other sport security research has utilized the Delphi approach with industry practitioners who were deemed to be SMEs (Hall, 2006), that work focused on producing and prioritizing game day security measures for recommendations to industry practitioners.

## METHOD

### *Procedures and Participants*

To address the research questions, a Delphi panel of SMEs was utilized through the use of an online survey tool, SurveyMonkey. The Delphi method was deemed appropriate for the current study because the purpose of the present study is to establish the current condition of venue security in an attempt to generate future research questions that have valuable application for practitioners. In order to meet this objective, the Delphi technique was used to gauge how venue and team personnel perceive security issues and the corresponding potential effects of such issues on revenue generation.

In accordance with Jones and Twiss' (1978) recommendation, prospective panelists were nominated by an SME, in this case one who is a member of the research team with more than twenty years of applied security experience. After the nominations were received, the research team reviewed the qualifications of each individual before arriving at a sample of twenty participants. The selected participants were personnel who were working in sport security or guest relations at venues whose anchor tenants compete within one of the four, major, professional sport leagues in the United States (i.e. MLB, NBA, NFL, NHL) at the time of the survey. Eighteen of the prospective panelists were male, while two were female. Professional titles for these prospective panelists contained varying emphases on security or guest relations. This titular variance appears to reflect a non-standard approach to the placement of security within a venue's organizational structure as well as its corresponding nomenclature within the industry.

After the selection process, potential panelists were solicited through the online, professional networking platform, LinkedIn, by way of an e-mail invitation to participate in the study. Those who elected to participate in the study confirmed their participation by clicking on the hyperlink that was embedded within an invitation email, which directed them to the online survey. Study participants did not receive any compensation for their participation in the project. Seven of the original twenty, prospective panelists elected to participate in the study's first round. Five panelists chose to participate in the

second round of the study and three panelists chose to participate in the study's third round.

While Hsu and Sanford (2007) note the literature is varied on the appropriate sample size for Delphi studies, the selected sample size met Cuneen and Tobar's (2015) recommendation to have at least three experts with considerable knowledge contribute to the constructs of interest. Furthermore, the sample met Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson's (1975) recommendation regarding the minimal number of subjects possible for the Delphi approach. All procedures were conducted in compliance with institutional review board standards.

### *Instrumentation*

Following the prescribed Delphi technique (Delbecq et al., 1975), the first round of the study consisted of generating basic demographic information [i.e., job title, job description, type(s) of events/team(s) hosted at the participant's venue, and years of experience), as well as qualitative responses to open-ended questions from the panelists. The open-ended questions enabled participants to address each of the prescribed research questions and express their thoughts and opinions on how security enhances and detracts from the guest experience, the most common security issues during events, how venue staff is used during events, and guests' perceptions of security.

As a consequence of the responses and analysis from the first round, an instrument for the second round was created and sent to participants. More specifically, following Hall's (2006) Delphi technique, a Likert-type survey was used in conjunction with short answer questions to establish consensus among the panelists. Accordingly, panelists were asked during this second stage to review the proposed Likert-type scale items and state their level of agreement as a means to establish both agreement and the preliminary priorities of items. Additionally, open-ended questions were used as a means of allowing participants to elaborate on responses to first round questions if they wished to provide further clarification.

Finally, areas in which the participants were not able to reach agreement in the second round were converted into open-ended items and sent back to the panelists. These items consisted of a statement followed by direct quotes from the previous rounds. Participants were asked how they felt about the statement and invited to explain their reasoning for agreeing or disagreeing with the quoted content.

### *Data Analysis*

Two researchers analyzed the open-ended responses from the first round in order to establish the interaction of venue security personnel and guests. Following Lincoln and Gupta's (1985) recommendation, each researcher sought to identify trends within the responses through coding. More specifically, all data acquired from the first round of the Delphi study was coded according to descriptive thematic categories (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006). After the data was assessed by each researcher, the research team reviewed, discussed, and challenged the other's thematic coding until an accord was reached. This process helped ensure greater dependability and credibility of the results (Lincoln & Gupta, 1985) and resulted in inter-coder reliability (Creswell, 2009).

After the themes were established, and the responses anonymized, a second round instrument was sent to participants for completion. Analysis of the Likert-scale items

consisted of calculating the summated averages for the participants to determine the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the identified theme. As in the first round, the open-ended responses were evaluated by two researchers independently then discussed by the research team until a consensus was reached. In this manner, the data from the second round was used to further refine the panel's opinions on the subject, particularly through the use of *in vivo* coding (Bernard, 2011), where key terms that the panelists used in the first round were incorporated into the instrument for the survey's second and third rounds.

Following the completion of the second round, the researchers reviewed the opinions of the panelists and identified areas of agreement and disagreement (Miller, 2008). Agreement was considered to be had if 80% of the respondents were within two categories on the Likert-scale (Miller, 2008). The responses were condensed once more and included in the short answer instrument for the third round of review. Within the third round, participants were "asked to review the prior responses and express individual judgment as to the importance of each item" (Miller, 2008, p. 54) with a particular emphasis on clarifying those matters that had not yet been agreed upon by the panelists in the previous two rounds.

## RESULTS

### *Delphi Round 1*

The five, open-ended questions that were issued to panelists yielded multiple themes. When asked how security enhances the guest experience, the primary theme to emerge was 'security as environment'. SMEs believed that guests view security as an integral element of the venue. This theme emerged in the data as both 'manifest' and 'latent' content (Berg, 2007); manifest in that this theme was explicitly stated by many panelists and latent in that it could also be interpreted from panelists' other comments. This demonstrates the strong degree to which this theme was prevalent in panelists' responses.

A quote that illustrates the manifest nature of this theme is Panelist 2's assertion that, "security ensures a safe and comfortable environment". In contrast, an example of the latent nature of this theme is Panelist 1's explanation that, "[Security personnel] help maintain a safe atmosphere throughout the facility, by constant observation of our extensive security camera feeds... and fulfill an appropriate response to observed issues."

The second theme to emerge in the responses to the first question was 'security as education'. Panelists asserted that members of their security/guest relations teams at their respective venues enhance the guest experience in two ways. The first way is by educating guests as to the various security-related policies at the venue. Panelist 1 stated, for example, that security personnel "are service ambassadors" to guests. The second way that personnel enhances the guest experience is through their presence, which deters guests from engaging in "unruly" (Panelist 7) or inappropriate behavior.

The primary theme to emerge in responses to the question about how security detracts from the guest experience was 'time as key to guest expectations'. This theme was also both manifest and latent, which demonstrates the degree to which it was prevalent among panelists. Panelists perceived that while guests view security as embedded within the venue, the screening process must be expeditious or guests will

develop a negative view of the venue. In accordance with this perception, panelists stated that the presence of security is “a balancing act” (Panelist 6) where security protocol must be balanced with time to ensure a positive guest experience. Otherwise, guests might feel as if they are in “a military environment” where there is “too much security” (Panelist 4), which can be seen as “limiting one’s freedoms” (Panelist 6). Consequently, panelists asserted the need for security to demonstrate ‘respect’ and ‘courtesy’ to guests to compensate for the inconvenience associated with the security process.

When asked what the most common security issues are that affect spectators at events, ‘alcohol’ was the most common theme. Or, as Panelist 3 asserted succinctly, “too much alcohol.” Excessive use of alcohol/intoxication and its resultant behavior was of greater concern for the panelists than guests’ possession of excessive amounts of alcohol or underage alcohol consumption. The second most common security issue to emerge was ‘guest non-compliance’. This may or may not be a consequence of alcohol consumption, but appeared to often be a result of code of conduct violations, guests attempts to bring in prohibited items into the venue, or foul language, with the result being guest dismissal.

‘Policy and practice regarding guests’ bags’ was the third most prevalent theme. While panelists noted that these policies and practices have reduced attempts to bring prohibited items into the venue, they also explained that they must continually educate their guests regarding these policies as some guests are not aware of them and do not wish to comply with them. Panelist 6 referred specifically to the NFL’s Clear Bag Policy and its success in lowering the number of prohibited items that guests attempt to bring into the venue, but explained, “However, it still remains an issue which we need to address and provide a consistent message to our fans”.

The primary theme that emerged from panelists’ responses to the question about the use of venue staff during events was ‘personnel distribution’. Venue personnel are dispersed throughout the facility to “act as a force multiplier” (Panelist 2). The most successful tactic of this dispersment, as expressed in the responses, appears to involve the placement of staff members outside the venue as well as inside, in order to respond to guest needs and protect athlete interests as effectively as possible. Panelist 6’s detailed response is particularly illustrative of this tactic. “We use our venue staff as an extension of our security staff during events . . . [they are] deployed outside the stadium and throughout the seating bowl, etc. They are a major component of a successful event.” Panelists did not articulate, though, who constitutes ‘venue staff’ specifically. Presumably, ‘venue staff’ could include members of the security and/or guest relations teams as well as staff members who are not direct members of those teams, such as ushers.

‘Guest assistance’ was the secondary theme to emerge regarding the use of venue staff during events. Staff members assist guests with wayfinding, provide safety messages, and participate in promotions to some degree as ‘a welcoming face’ to the facility. Since they are often the “first people fans will encounter” (Panelist 6), it is important that these staff members are “an extension of the security staff” (Panelist 6) by serving as “the eyes and ears of the organization” (Panelist 6). Panelist 5 stated that, in addition to security functions, venue staff also assist with marketing messages. “We use them in many different ways, from providing services and directional messages, safety and security messages, promotions, and overall a welcoming face to the building.” The

tertiary theme to emerge in panelists' responses to this question was 'administrative tasks'. This involves venue staff members documenting information, presumably that which is relevant to incidents during the event, including "report writing" (Panelist 7).

Finally, panelists were asked about their beliefs regarding guests' perceptions of security and guest services staff members prior to entering the venue and what the panelists and their colleagues do to try to influence this perception. Two themes emerged from panelists' responses to this question. The most common theme was 'security as necessary evil'. Venue staff members stated that they engage in a variety of tactics to allay guest preconceptions of security, including efforts to have security dress and act similarly to other staff members, most notably by emphasizing 'customer service' by being 'welcoming'.

Panelist 3 encapsulated each of these points by stating that, "Sometimes people think security in general is very serious and heavy handed. We focus on customer service and making people feel welcome while maintaining a safe environment". Tactics to be perceived as 'welcoming' include "being intentional in [security personnel's] presentation and paying close attention to details that the guests would notice" (Panelist 4), as well as "taking pride in your work" (Panelist 6). The secondary theme that emerged was 'customer service', which was often referenced as a response to the perception that security is viewed as a 'necessary evil' (see Panelist 3's response above). While this term was manifest in the data—the phrase 'customer service' was used by multiple panelists—the term itself was not defined nor supported with specific examples.

### *Delphi Round 2*

Based on the results of the Delphi study's first round, twenty-four, Likert-type, scale items and three, open-ended items were developed and presented to participants to gauge the level of agreement. The items were staged in four sections. Section one included five, Likert-type, scale items evaluating the agreement of participants on general themes found throughout the responses from the first round. Sections two, three and four had six, four, and four, Likert-type, scale items gauging the ways in which security enhances the guest experience, the way in which security detracts from the guest experience, and the most common security issues during events respectfully. All items were set on a standardized, six-point scale anchored at 1 (strongly disagree) and 6 (strongly agree). Finally, sections two, three and four each contained one, short answer, response item in which the panelists were given a statement and asked to discuss with which aspects of that statement they agreed or disagreed.

Results from Round 2 demonstrated that the panelists agreed that security enhances the guest experience through providing a safe environment, informing guests, removing unruly guests, and enforcing policies. Furthermore, panelists established that the most common security issues are alcohol, guests bringing prohibited items into the venue, and unruly/intoxicated guests. Finally, the panelists came to an agreement on the general use of venue staff. They each specifically noted that venue staff is used to perform various security duties, assist guests, and document issues. They do all of this while being placed throughout the venue.

Not all items were agreed upon, however, as the respondents disagreed with how security detracts from the guest experience. More specifically, within the Likert-type scale, two of the four panelists stated that they strongly disagree and moderately disagree

that security detracts from the guest experience, while the remaining two stated that they moderately agreed. Demonstrating disagreement, Panelist 3 stated, "I do think that security screening is a vital component of our security plan and represents only a small detraction from our guest's [sic] game day experience." In contrast, Panelist 4 agreed that security might detract from the game day experience stating specifically that security screening is viewed as "a necessary evil". Panelist 2 illustrated this further by asserting guests' expectations' "to see a heightened level of security at major" sport events.

Additionally, the experts were in disagreement over the notion that venue staff is a necessary evil, as the Likert-type scale revealed that two panelists strongly disagreed, one moderately disagreed, and one agreed. Panelist 4 stated, "I don't know if the term 'necessary evil' is appropriate. I think most guests perceive security as guest services and being necessary and a vital component of the game day experience." In contradiction, Panelist 5 claimed that, "Security is definitely a necessary evil."

### *Delphi Round 3*

To gain a greater understanding of the items on which the panelists disagreed in Round 2, two, open-ended items were posed to participants. The items stated the two areas where disagreement was found in Round 2 and cited specific quotes from participants to demonstrate the disagreements. Panelists were then asked directly if they agreed with the comments and to justify their responses accordingly.

Panelists were able to clarify and agree on the perceived expectations that guests have of security personnel at the venue through this line of questioning. More specifically, they agreed that guests expect security to be present at the venue. Thus, if security is managed properly throughout the course of the event, panelists believed that guests felt that security does not detract from the overall experience.

They were not, however, able to reach agreement on the idea of security as a 'necessary evil'. In this regard, the term 'evil' seems to be the controversial point. Panelist 2 noted that guests perceive security to be an "advocate and a resource" while Panelist 3 stated that s/he agrees with the term 'necessary evil'.

## **DISCUSSION**

### *Overview*

The goal of this study was to expand upon the limited research on sport security through an examination of SMEs' perceptions, with a specific emphasis on SMEs who are currently employed at venues whose anchor tenant is in one of the four, major, professional, sport leagues in the United States. This study sought to identify how security enhances and/or detracts from the guest experience, common security issues, the way in which venue staff is used, and security personnel's perceptions of guests' views of the security process and corresponding personnel. Employing the Delphi method, SMEs were identified and asked to participate in three rounds of research. Throughout the study, SMEs acknowledged numerous themes and were able to agree with the majority of items.

SMEs agreed with the sentiment that security enhances the guest experience by providing a safe environment, keeping guests informed of relevant wayfinding information and venue policies, and enforcing such policies, often through the removal of unruly guests. Furthermore, SMEs stated that time is key to managing guests'

expectations in these venues. Consequently, the effectiveness of security practices, such as security screening, appears to have a dramatic impact as to whether or not guests enjoy their overall experience at the venue. The study also found that the most common security issues with which venue security personnel are forced to deal involve alcohol, guests' attempts to bring prohibited items into the venue, and unruly/intoxicated guests. Venue staff was noted as being used to help document and alleviate these issues through performing various security duties and related administrative tasks. To accomplish this, SMEs asserted that security is placed within the venue's interior and exterior.

### *Application*

These results establish elements that professionals within the sport security and guest relations fields identify as valuable in ensuring a positive guest experience at their respective venue. Namely, participating SMEs believed that venue security has become integral to the guest experience. To be effective, though, the security process must minimize the impact on guests' time and security personnel must serve as useful contacts for guests with skills across a wide range of customer service matters to engage them accordingly.

Understanding guest perceptions and interactions with venue security—its process and personnel—allows practitioners to better address barriers that may keep guests from attending events at the venue. This understanding is particularly important given the value of the venue to the marketing mission of the entire sport organization (Bitner, 1992; Lambrecht, Kaefer, & Ramenofsky, 2009; Lin & Worthley, 2011; Wakefield, Blodgett, & Sloan, 1996). This is a point that SMEs reinforced, as they argued that the venue/organization should look to market the role and function of security and corresponding personnel to guests. This may be accomplished in different ways. One example might involve overtly advertising that security personnel are stationed throughout the venue to serve guests by informing them of policies and procedures at the venue and/or online through various social media platforms prior to guests' arrival. Proactive measures such as this may aid in attracting guests to attend future events at the venue.

While the need to balance effective security protocol with demands on guests' time was a clear concern among practitioners, less clear is the notion of 'customer service' as it relates to the job function of security personnel and their corresponding performance metrics. Panelists discussed the importance of 'customer service' repeatedly throughout the study, though they never operationalized the term. Defining 'customer service' to ensure proper training and assessment outcomes for security personnel seems paramount.

Operationalizing 'customer service' for security personnel is particularly important given the ubiquitousness of security at major sporting venues, which has important implications for the value of security as it relates to the 'sportscape' (Wakefield, Blodgett, & Sloan, 1996). The sportscape is the aggregate of physical elements that correspond to the venue, such as access to the venue, facility aesthetics, wayfinding signage, and spaciousness that influence guests' desire to stay at the venue throughout an entire sporting contest, as well as return to the venue in the future. Consequently, achieving a definitional consensus for the term 'customer service' is crucial given the apparent need for security personnel to make guests feel welcome and

comfortable to ensure that they stay throughout the entire contest and re-patronize the venue. Both of these outcomes directly influence the revenue generated from concession and ticket sales, respectively.

Among other important findings, Wakefield, Blodgett, and Sloan (1996) found that guests' perceptions of crowding or feeling cramped in both their access to and space within the venue affected spectators' pleasure, which influenced their desire to stay for the entire contest or choice to return the venue in the future. It is fair to presume, though, that when Wakefield et al. (1996) adapted Bitner's (1992) 'servicescape' construct to sport venues, security personnel were not nearly as ubiquitous, nor the security process as invasive, as they are now. Consequently, including venue security—in terms of both process and personnel—as an additional element in the sportscape construct might be a useful heuristic device for venue managers who wish to integrate venue security into the overall marketing mission of their sport organization. For example, guests may indeed view security as a 'necessary evil' and thus a potential detractor from the sportscape experience. Security personnel's ability, however, to assist with other sportscape factors, such as wayfinding, through effective training and corresponding assessment may mitigate potential sportscape detractors and thus positively influence guests' desire to stay and return to the venue for future events.

An additional research application of the present study for scholars is the value of including both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data yielded through the Delphi method for the purpose of data triangulation. While the Delphi method prescribes a specific framework for generating iterative, respondent feedback, it otherwise allows for researcher innovation (Ludwig, 1994). Correspondingly, the presence of both quantitative and qualitative researchers involved in this Delphi study aided in data triangulation, as primarily exemplified through the *in vivo* coding (Bernard, 2011) used to create the instrument for the study's second round.

### **LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The results and corresponding interpretations of the current study are an attempt to fill an important gap in the expanding body of literature that examines sport security's influence on a sport venue's ability to generate revenue through its impact on the guest experience. Despite this study's promising implications for practitioners and future researchers, though, it did contain some limitations. The most notable of these is the small sample size. While twenty, potential panelists were sent the invitation to participate in the study, the initial number of participants for the first round were low and continued to dwindle in subsequent rounds. In contrast, the ideal Delphi panel consists of approximately fifteen SMEs through the entire research process (Delbecq et al., 1975). Presumably, the low numbers were a consequence of the participants' anchor tenants either competing in-season or in preparations for their respective seasons. Conflicts such as these may have imposed professional demands on our SMEs, which limited their time to contribute to this study. Accordingly, future researchers should seek to increase their response rates through identifying a more apt time to gather data.

The gender breakdown of the panelists was also a limitation of the current study, as the vast majority of panelists were men. In fact, of the twenty, prospective panelists who received the initial invitation to participate in the study, only two of them were

women. Scholars should attempt to incorporate a more balanced, gender perspective in future work. Examples include future studies that have the same number of men and women participants, as well as research that seeks to examine why there appears to be such a heavy presence of males in managerial and/or supervisory positions within the sport security field.

Future research might examine a few compelling implications of this study more deeply. For example, scholars could explore guests' perceptions of venue security protocol and corresponding personnel to contrast them with the perceptions that were yielded from the security personnel in the present study. In this manner, scholars could establish if a gap exists between how practitioners view sport security and how consumers view sport security. If a gap is found, scholars could examine what the gap is and how sport security personnel might mitigate its effects to more effectively balance guests' safety with an enjoyable, patron-centered experience.

To accomplish such goals, researchers may look to the current findings and use them to establish research instruments that adequately measure the noted constructs. Such a process follows one prescribed method of developing Likert-type scales, in that it uses the personal opinions of SMEs gathered through interviews (Miller, 2008). The development and use of Likert-type scales to further study stakeholders' perceptions of venue security would allow for researchers to solicit feedback from a wider range of participants in various populations.

Such data gathered from Likert-type scales may enable practitioners to better address any barriers that might keep guests from staying at sport contests longer and/or attending future events. Additional research might scrutinize how the term 'customer service' is operationalized throughout the sport security and guest relations fields more broadly. Establishing an industry-wide definition may promote effective training methods and assessment outcomes for practitioners that can positively impact the sportscape experience for guests with a resultant increase in venue-generated revenue.

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