

5-2019

The Economic Impact of the 2018 Conference USA Baseball Tournament on the Mississippi Gulf Coast

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The University of Southern Mississippi

The Economic Impact of the 2018 Conference USA Baseball Tournament on the
Mississippi Gulf Coast

By

Jonathan Brent

A Thesis
Submitted to the Honors College of
The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Bachelor of Science of Business Administration
in the School of Accountancy

May 2019

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Abstract

This study aims to measure the economic impact of the 2018 Conference USA Baseball Tournament on the Mississippi Gulf Coast compared to holding the college sporting event at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Visitor spending and demographic data was collected through random intercept surveys outside MGM Park in Biloxi, Mississippi. The Economic Modeling LLC (EMSI) Input-Output model was used to determine the economic and fiscal impact of visitor spending during the sporting event. The impact to the six-county coastal region and the state of Mississippi as a whole was analyzed. The EMSI model projected an increase of \$2.1 million in earnings for the Mississippi Gulf Coast, 94 supported jobs and a \$638,487 increase in state and local taxes from the five-day event with nearly 10,000 visitors to the region. More specifically, the event brought a \$955,537 change in earnings, 40 supported jobs and increase in state taxes by \$280,457 on the state of Mississippi as a whole. These results demonstrated a significantly higher impact than an analysis of the 2015 Conference USA Baseball Tournament held in Hattiesburg. This supports the contention that hosting college sporting events in tourist destinations increases attendance and the economic impact to the hosting community.

Key words: economic impact, sports tourism, collegiate athletics, Conference USA, baseball tournament, Biloxi, Mississippi Gulf Coast, MGM Park

Dedication

This study is dedicated to Dr. Charles Cartee, my grandfather. Your 30 years of service and commitment here at Southern Miss as a professor in the College of Business have helped shape the rest of our Southern Miss stories to what they are today. I am reminded constantly from Mom and Bee how proud I am making you in my time here. I am glad that I get to leave even a small literary and educational impact on the noble institution we cherish so highly just like you did for so long.

Acknowledgments

The completion of this project would not have been possible without the help of three main people: Dr. Chad Miller, Mr. Timothy Bennett, and Kyle Stoner.

Dr. Miller, I appreciate your continued guidance and calming presence no matter how many questions I had, how behind I thought I was. Being in Dallas, Texas for ten weeks while interning only complicated this process, but you led me to finish where I am today even during my long absence from this project and stressful times before and after my internship.

Mr. Bennett, thank you so much for all of your help in arranging and organizing this project and rolling out the red carpet for me to conduct my research in Biloxi. Every meeting, question, detail and even rain delay led to a successful project and even more successful event. I am certain that I could not have written this many pages a subject that did not involve sports or Southern Miss, that I am certain. Thank you.

Kyle, thank you for inspiring me to further the research you began as an undergraduate honors student here and the help of running the research table in Biloxi as well as answering all of my million questions. I am thankful for our friendship and know that I wouldn't be where I am in my career without it.

To Mom, Dad, and Ansley, thank you for believing in, encouraging me and listening to every complaint I have had about this the last four years. I love you more than you know.

To my current and past fellow honors scholars and friends, thank you for your encouragement and help as we continued on this journey together. I am eager and excited

to see where all of our careers and lives lead us to as we continue to take Southern Miss to the top.

To the few students that may actually end up reading this project, know that if I can complete a project of this size and demand, you can too. Do not give up. It will seem difficult and nearly impossible at times but the reward and satisfaction in the end are more than worth it. I will use this experience for years to come as a reminder that hard work and determination pay off, and for that I am thankful.

To the Southern Miss Honors College and Dr. Weinauer, thank you for taking a chance on a hometown kid from Oak Grove High School four years ago. The opportunity of representing my favorite campus in this honor has been more than a privilege. I cannot wait to see the new heights the Honors College soars to in the coming years.

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Chapter One: Introduction

College athletics are growing exponentially throughout the United States. Both in terms of revenue and in terms of television ratings, collegiate sports account for a large part of culture in many communities throughout the United States. Nine-digit athletic budgets, six digits for winning various postseason games and the ability to watch just about every event that takes place are small glimpses of the increased growth in collegiate athletics nationally (Fram and Frampton, 2012). While college sports have certainly always been used to boost morale, pride, school spirit and exposure on college campuses, their impact has now grown to shaping communities and universities significantly from a financial and national perspectives (Chung, 2013). With this large growth, college athletics are coming more and more vital to universities and their communities.

With attendance figures higher than most professional sports, and a revenue greater than that of the largest ski resort in Colorado (Holmberg, 2016), college athletics is certainly getting more and more attention. Because of the similarity in large coaching contracts, large audiences and large budgets to professional sporting numbers, this increased popularity should also result in increased research on the topic. At its current state, cities, communities, and universities are all uncertain about just how much of financial impact these sporting events have. Increased research in the area of college baseball specifically would benefit communities by translating wins and losses in a record book to gains and losses on a financial statement. That is what this study aims to do.

Statement of the Problem

While there is certainly a lack of research done on smaller-scaled sporting events worldwide, this study aims to solve a problem more focused specifically on the Conference USA (CUSA) Baseball Tournament. Stoner (2016) took an in-depth look at the 2015 Conference USA Baseball Tournament held on the campus of the University of Southern Mississippi. He found the economic impact to the Hattiesburg community totaled over \$2 million. While this may sound like a successful event for Hattiesburg and CUSA, the results of this study will help put that number into perspective.

When this study was conducted in 2015, MGM Park was still not built. The next location of the Conference USA Baseball Tournament made after Hattiesburg was none other than MGM Park in Biloxi. This selection was a part of a three-year agreement that the tournament will take place at MGM Park until 2019. Therefore, there will be either an extension or agreement to give the tournament a new location and host this year. This study aims to discover whether or not Biloxi is the most ideal place for the tournament to be held in the future, based on the results and findings on this study of the 2018 Tournament. The information found from this study can be used to decide what is beneficial for not only Conference USA but also the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community and leaders and officials at the other institutions in Conference USA. This information will be vital for the selection of the destination of where the Conference USA Baseball Tournament will be held in 2020 and beyond.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of economic impact studies is to determine the economic and fiscal contribution specific events bring to the community. These studies are conducted to give feasibility, justification and direction regarding past, current and future tourism events. The purpose of this specific study is to see how much of an economic impact the 2018 Conference USA Baseball tournament had on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The Mississippi Gulf Coast is the region in South Mississippi consisted of Hancock, Harrison, Stone, Pearl River, George and Jackson County. Cities such as Gulfport, Biloxi, Ocean Springs and Pascagoula are encompassed in this area. This was the area of the state that was hit the hardest by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Fast forward to 2017, the Mississippi Gulf Coast is home to about 394,232 citizens over its 1,770 square miles. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median age in this area is 37.7 years with a median household income of \$47,099. According to Zippia, the largest employers in the Mississippi Gulf Coast include Island View Casino Resort, Tenix Holdings, Beau Rivage Casino and The Regional Cancer Center. Tourism is vital to the economy of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

With this large population and attractive industries located in it, the Mississippi Gulf Coast is a top tourism spot for the Gulf South. A 2018 study showed that the Mississippi Gulf Coast had 13.5 million person trips in 2017, up 6 percent from 2015 (Longwoods 2017). These trips resulted in over \$1.17 billion in spending. Over three-quarters of these visitors stayed overnight were very satisfied with their experience. The top five activities during an overnight trip to the Mississippi Gulf Coast included casino visits, shopping, going to the beach, swimming and fine dining. A recent 2018 study

(Miller et.al 2018) shows that the Mississippi Gulf Coast is comparable to and as advantageous as large surrounding regions in the southeast such as Nashville, Huntsville, Hattiesburg and more. Recommendations from this study include focusing on activities that fuel economic growth and take advantage of the local research universities. This study combines both of those recommendations (Miller 2018).

With this attractive tourism location, the Mississippi Gulf Coast decided to open up a premiere sporting venue for a minor league baseball team. As a result, MGM Park was built in 2015. As previously mentioned, MGM Park was elected to host the Conference USA tournament for the years 2017, 2018 and 2019 as a neutral site location. This selection was made from a competitive bid from MGM Park and Overtime Sports, its partner. The bids are selected based on competitive factors such as tourism industry, hotel availability and overall attractiveness of the venue. In the past, the tournament has been held at other universities such as The University of Southern Mississippi, Rice University and Tulane University. Other hosts have been neutral sites such as Trustmark Park in Pearl, Mississippi. However, there has been no research done to help determine both where the tournament should be held in its next contract decision. Also, no research has been done to determine whether a neutral site or a home site on a university's campus is more successful.

The research can be summarized by the following objectives:

Research Objective 1: Conduct intercept surveys at left field entrance gate throughout the entirety of the tournament.

Research Objective 2: Determine characteristics of the population

Research Objective 3. Input data to EMSI software.

Research Objective 4: Compare the economic impact of this tournament to the 2015 Conference USA Baseball Tournament in Hattiesburg.

Research Objective 5: Develop a conclusion regarding the benefits of hosting the Conference USA Baseball Tournament for Biloxi, Mississippi. From this conclusion, determine the best route for the future for both the Mississippi Gulf Coast and Conference USA.

More specifically, this study will give MGM Park a depiction of how much draw it has as a city to outside areas that are represented in the conference. At the same time, it will reveal how much of an audience is a local audience as well.

Research Questions

This study is aimed to calculate the economic impact of a mid-major, regional NCAA Baseball event that is held at a neutral site. Specifically, this study will answer the following questions.

1. Is it beneficial for Conference USA to host its conference tournament in a neutral site?
2. It is beneficial for Biloxi to bid to host the tournament beyond 2019?
3. Is Biloxi a more successful site for the tournament's location than Hattiesburg?
4. Is Biloxi a desirous location for Conference USA to hold its annual conference baseball tournament in the future?

The City of Biloxi and the Mississippi Gulf Coast as a whole are equipped to host the Conference USA Baseball Tournament. There are over 12,000 hotel rooms available

to visitors in the region (Hairston, 2019). Its destination as a city on the beach as well as the gambling industry will serve as additional factors that will draw visitors to the event in a way that prior cities did not. Furthermore, this event will draw in revenue resulting in a significant economic and fiscal impact on the Mississippi Gulf Coast that will result in positive tax implications for the entire State of Mississippi. This study also takes place during May which is a peak month for tourism on the Mississippi Gulf Coast which falls between March and August (Hairston 2019).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Economic Impact

Economic impact is defined as the net change in the host community's economy from the spending attributed to an event or service held in the specified area (Howard and Crompton, 2003). A positive economic impact can occur by outside dollars not normally spent in the community when the event was not taking place. Thus, if all spending is by city residents and considered normal, there would be no increase or benefit to the host community (Crompton and Howard, 2003).

Furthermore, the host communities of these events anticipate that these outside dollars have a compound increase and continue to circulate and boost the local economy for years to come (Behunin, 2010). These new dollars give the community an opportunity to build, improve, update or reinvest for the future. It is not merely an increase of tax dollars but rather the change in incomes of residents in the host area from spending attributed to the event in the long run. This return is what is most vital to the overall economy of the community (Howard and Crompton, 2003). The results of these events serve as a multiplication or compounding of new revenue dollars to be used in the community's economy for years to come. The easiest way to measure economic growth in a local economy is by the increase in the number of jobs and an increase in total worker earnings (Fruth 2018). These are the two most common ways to pinpoint current economic growth as a positive for long term consistent growth known as economic strength (Fruth 2018).

As for calculating these dollars, an economic impact analysis is used to measure the positives and potential negatives from the event to assess its benefit or detriment. In situations like these, a multiplier is formed from studies and analyses of many different factors surrounding the event and area to determine the total economic impact for the local community (Crompton & Lee, 2000). In regards to interpreting these results, communities use these increases from events to add support to the income statements to promote themselves as host communities.

Economic impact studies must be carefully conducted in order to show accurate results. In fact, these studies are mostly inexact and subject to both inaccurate measurement and variable error (Crompton, 2006). With concessions, tickets, hotels, restaurants and convenience stores, the many potential areas for impact must be calculated closely and examined for if they are normal or derived from the event. To the reader, the output of these sorts of studies should be described as a best guess of economic impact when used to predict the outcome.

If events show a high economic impact for their respective communities, it will give community leaders and citizens both justification and desire for the event to occur again. Moreover, civic leaders anticipate that successful events like these will attract visitors from outside their jurisdiction to visit the community for reasons other than the event (Howard and Crompton, 2004). In this case, a visitor from Miami watching Florida International University play might be drawn back to Biloxi as a particular vacation destination in the future after attending the 2018 Conference USA Baseball Tournament.

The calculation of economic impact is never an easy one. In fact, B. H. Archer once stated, “There is perhaps more misunderstanding about multiplies analysis than

almost any other aspect of tourism research,” (Archer 1982). With the leeway that these studies have to be directed, there is reason to think that temptation exists to mischievously practice or conclude these sorts of studies done to help convince the audience or community to feel a certain way (Crompton 2006). Crompton also goes on to state that there has to be an increased use of economic impact to support the subsidies in sporting events and shows 11 major areas where the calculation of economic impact is misapplied. Included in these areas are using sales instead of household income multipliers, misrepresenting employment multipliers, and omitting opportunity costs.

Measurable and Immeasurable Benefits

Not to mention, there are also immeasurable benefits to sport tourism related events such as “putting a city on the map” that make calculations like these very difficult (Howard & Crompton 2004). These immeasurable benefits combatted with both direct event and indirect event spending make inaccuracy a common trend. Indirect spending can impact the event from outside dollars spent in the area on items such as fuel, lodging, restaurants, entertainment and gambling (Dwyer 2005).

In the tourism field, there are three different types of models used to estimate secondary expenditures: input-output, social accounting matrices and computable general equilibrium models (Crompton, Jeong and Dudensung 2016). This study is an input-output model. This input-output model is one that takes data from a survey conducted at the event to EMSI software to examine the results. The results from the survey are inputted based on a change in sales for the specific category of spending. The results are then broken down both by category and total based on three main output categories:

Aggregate Change in Earnings, Aggregate Change in Jobs and Aggregate Change in Taxes on Production and Imports.

Sports Tourism

Different events held can have influence the economic impact in an area. Hotels, resorts, museums, conferences and concerts all can have the distinct intention to travel to and spend money in an area. Sporting events can also produce this same motivation. When one analyzes a sporting event for economic impact, it is known as a study on sports tourism (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2005). More specifically, this sporting event must be the specific primary motivating factor for travel to the destination, as opposed to finding a game once a person is already on a vacation.

Sport tourism can be defined in quite a few ways. Gibson (2012) defines sport tourism as “leisure-based travel that takes individuals temporarily out of their home communities to participate in physical activities, to watch physical activities or to venerate attractions associated with physical activities.” However, Weed and Bull (2004) define sport tourism as “A social, economic and cultural phenomenon, arising from the unique interaction of activity, people and place.”

Sport tourism is considered to act as a catalyst for economic development in urban areas. (Gibson, Kaplanidou & Kang, 2012). Whether a study is done on a youth baseball tournament in Arkansas or the World Cup, sport tourism can affect a community drastically (Coates and Depken 2010). It has also been proven that a smaller event can have a much larger impact on a small community than that of the Olympics (Gibson 1998). Each year there are thousands of other sporting events held in communities big and small across the world. However, it has been shown that numerous studies have been

done on hallmark events. These hallmark events are the ones such as the Olympics or the World Cup that countries and viewers from all over the world both participate in and/or travel to (Cheung, Mak and Dixon, 2016).

While this data is great for the events that millions will watch from countries all over, there is certainly a lack of research done on smaller-scaled economic impact studies, specifically those on collegiate sports. Small-scale sport tourism is a sustainable method for tourism as suggested by Gibson, Kaplanidou and Kang (2012). There are several benefits associated with small-scale tourism. Communities can accommodate fans with a smaller financial investment, and crowd sizes are more manageable. Also, existing infrastructures can be used (Fredline 2005). This allows for more of a likelihood to yield a positive economic impact for the community.

Whether the Olympics or a small collegiate tournament, many events require cities to participate in submitting bids to host these events in an effort to increase tourism throughout the area via sport tourism (Getz, 2008). The desire behind this is that these visitors may be attracted to revisit the area again for reasons unrelated to the current event which brings yet another increase of outside dollars to the area. Typically, the successful bidder is announced years in advance to give the host city time to adequately prepare, promote and execute a successful event.

Communities invest into the infrastructure used to host the event with hopes that this enticement of recurring visits will occur (Jones, 2013). While Stoner calculated a \$2.73 million effect on the Conference USA Baseball Tournament held in Hattiesburg in 2015, he still suggests that comparisons and contrasts of similar events are necessary to

contribute to the field of sport tourism on the collegiate side (Stoner 2016). These investments also make communities more appealing for possible bids for future events.

Collegiate Sporting Events (Baseball)

Collegiate sports are vitally important to many universities throughout the United States in that they are one of the largest sources of revenue for the school. According to Business Insider (2016), Texas A&M's athletic budget in 2016 totaled \$192.6 million. Twenty-four schools' athletic budgets were tallied at \$100 million or more. Ticket sales, concessions, parking passes and more lead to a direct inflow of these dollars right back into the Universities' pockets. Whether fans are current students, alumni, residents in the area, or traveling from border-to-border to see a team play, there are always opportunities to see a school play. According to the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA), there are twenty-four different varsity college sports competed in every year. These sports are primarily held in the fall, winter, and spring seasons due to the lack of full-time students at universities in the summer.

Although football and basketball get most of the attention for being the biggest money making sports, college baseball has increased dramatically in recent years due to increased television coverage (Dixon, Henry and Martinez, 2013). There are 299 NCAA baseball teams across the country, but not all programs are fully funded. According to NCAA, 19 schools eclipsed 100,000 fans in total attendance for 2016 with 23 of them passing the 90,000 mark. Typically, teams play in a 50-55 game regular season before gearing up for postseason play. The postseason consists of two parts: the team's conference tournament and the NCAA Tournament. The winner of each conference

tournament receives an automatic bid to play in the NCAA tournament which consists of 64 teams. Each team will play in anywhere from 2 to 15 games in the postseason in up to 3 different locations to determine the National Champion in late June in Omaha, Nebraska.

Because there are many more games played in a baseball season than that in a football season, consistent high attendance throughout a season can be very beneficial to a campus and a community. More specifically, these postseason conference tournament games are even bigger opportunities for two reasons. These reasons are because of the opportunity for nationwide exposure nationwide and the improved quality of product on the field with only successful teams competing.

Conference USA Baseball Tournament

In collegiate baseball, the majority of teams are split into conferences. These conferences almost always consist of schools in the same region of the country. For example, the Pacific 12 Conference has teams on the West Coast. The SEC (Southeastern Conference) consists of teams from Texas to Florida, etc. Each of these conferences plays a postseason baseball tournament after regular season play towards the end of May with the winner of the tournament clinching an automatic bid to the previously mentioned NCAA Tournament in June.

Conference USA was founded in 1995 and currently consists of 14 teams located west of El Paso, Texas and south of Huntington, West Virginia. Each year the top 8 teams in Conference USA compete in the Conference USA Baseball Tournament. These top 8 teams play a double elimination tournament from Wednesday to Sunday of the

given week starting with basic seeding matchup (1-seed vs. 8-seed, 2-seed vs. 7-seed, etc.)

However, the location has not been consistent in years past. Some years, the tournament was held at universities within the conference such as Tulane University, Rice University and the University of Southern Mississippi. Other years, the tournament has been held in neutral sites such as Trustmark Park in Pearl, Mississippi where the Mississippi Braves play (Conference USA Tournament Notes, 2018). Each year the universities and communities submit bids to host the tournament. Each university's Athletic Director help votes and oversees the process of selecting the bid to host the tournament each year.

MGM Park was built in June 2015 after being unanimously approved by the Biloxi City Council in January of 2014 (Stephenson 2014). The bid was made for the 2016 Tournament to be its first year of hosting. Throughout the summers, MGM Park is home to the Biloxi Shuckers. The Shuckers are a minor league baseball team that acts as the Double-A affiliate to the Milwaukee Brewers organization.

MGM Park was elected to host the Conference USA Tournament in the years 2017, 2018, and 2019. While the tournament will be held in Biloxi in May of 2019, this will be the last year of the original three-year agreement (Conference USA Tournament Notes, 2018.) This study will take that into effect in regard to if this is the most desirable and logical place for the tournament to be held for years to come.

Visitor Impact – The Multiplier Impact

As previously mentioned, economic impact is attained by reaching an accurate amount of outside dollars the event has brought into a community. Another term for this is visitor spending. Visitor spending can also be described as visitors' expenses to a certain outside place due to the occurrence of an event or attraction (Frechtling & Horvath, 1999). This burst of revenue can be utilized to help a community reinvest in its current resources and workers, bring in new ones or just grow its economic strength as a whole (Fruth 2018). This increase in economic strength can help improve the amount of jobs, current average wages and opportunity to construct new infrastructure from the growth of businesses (Fruth 2018). This reinvestment into the area is an end goal for all communities in events where they hope to draw significant visitor spending. One goal of economic impact studies like these is to provide local governments with the numbers of attendees and their spending patterns to provide a better understanding of the role the event played and will play in the community in the future (Crompton, Lee and Shuster 2001). This futuristic impact is what we refer to as the "multiplier effect" which comes from the circulation of new money into the local economy (Angelou, Bean, Mellor & Saltzman, 2015).

This multiplier effect consists of three different impacts: direct impact, indirect impact and induced or inherent impact. The first, and perhaps easiest impact to calculate and understand is direct impact. Direct impact can be calculated strictly off of questions from an intercept survey such as the amount of time visitors spend both in the area, at the event or in the community throughout their stay. This can include spending at hotels, restaurants, retail stores, entertainment, fuel, and (in this particular case) gambling (Behunin 2010). The more money spent in these categories while in the area, the higher

the direct impact. The less an area has to offer in regards to these categories of expenditures, the fewer opportunities a community will have to bolster the direct impact from an event.

As previously mentioned, this direct impact number is turned into a specific multiplier number to estimate the compounding of how long the money will remain in the area. This compounding is known as indirect economic impact, which is to be considered a ripple effect (Crompton & Howard, 2003). Lastly, this induced or inherent impact is the most complex to pinpoint. It is calculated by multiplying the direct and indirect impacts throughout the economy after the event has occurred. This further circulation is how businesses get the benefits gained by the events, from the ripple effect (Frechtling and Horvath, 1999). To summarize, the event is held and money is spent at the event. Then this money in the local economy is re-spent, and then multiplied throughout the economy. These different impacts are utilized to calculate the total economic impact of the event.

In conclusion, this study will contribute to closing the gap between economic impact and collegiate athletics. More specifically, this study focuses both on mid-major universities competing on a neutral site. This combination will serve as a foundation for studies to come in regards to fiscal and economic impact on host cities and communities for tourism and economic impact.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Methods

The goal of this study is to determine the economic impact of the 2018 Conference USA Baseball tournament on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. This study's impact was calculated using the (EMSI) software provided by the College of Business and Economic Development at the University of Southern Mississippi. The inputs to the software were produced from two separate surveys. One survey was completed via paper and pen at MGM Park during the duration of the 2018 Conference USA Baseball Tournament and the other was sent via electronic mail to representatives from each participating team.

Survey Development

This economic impact study aimed to determine the impact of the 2018 Conference USA Baseball Tournament on the Mississippi Gulf Coast through a survey method. During the data collection, two separate surveys were utilized (*Appendix A* and *Appendix B*). The first survey was an intercept survey used to determine the impact of the tourists and spectators in Biloxi for the event. The second survey was used to determine the impact of the participants of the event at each university competing in the tournament. This involves players, coaches, media members and administrators. Prior to the conduction of the research, this was approved by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Southern Mississippi and can be found in IRB number 18030601 located in *Appendix C*.

While each survey was filled out independently, the data collected remained consistent in each one. For the two different surveys, one was completed by electronic mail, while the other was filled out by hand. However, the data collected remained consistent in both in efforts to the same purpose. The basis for data collection in each survey was derived primarily from the survey used by Stoner (2016) in The Economic Impact of the 2015 Conference USA Baseball Tournament in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. The methods specified by Crompton (1999) as well as variations of surveys created by Assamah (2013) and Jones (2014) were utilized for the development of this study's surveys. Both surveys included questions regarding financial and residential data to help determine the location of visitors to the event. Dollars spent on lodging, amenities, food, drink, admission, entertainment, laundry, sports equipment, souvenirs and fuel were all requested in the survey to help grasp an understanding of outside dollars entering the area because of the event. For the Mississippi Gulf Coast purposes, additional questions regarding casino attendance and spending patterns while gambling were requested for those who participated in gambling during their stay on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. These two questions were asked to gather more information on the overall economic impact of the event.

The methods specified by Crompton (1999) were adopted in this research to determine the difference between local and non-local survey participants. For one blank on this survey, it asked participants for their home zip code as an indicator of residence. All surveys with zip codes located in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson Counties were separated from others. These counties were the ones considered the Mississippi Gulf

Coast region for this study. Therefore, these surveys contained data that was considered to be from local residents.

The survey was broken into different sections to most effectively determine the amount of spending brought into the community. The first 5 questions asked about the participants' trip to the event. Questions included how many were in a group (quantitative), who that group consisted of (qualitative) and how many hours and days the participants planned on staying for the event. Other qualitative questions such as intentions on attending the event in the same or different location and primary method of transportation may not contribute to the research on spending numbers and dollar signs, but these questions are valuable to Conference USA, the city of Biloxi and MGM Park in terms of the event's future. Household income and spending patterns on the categories previously mentioned are the next item on the survey, followed by questions on gambling.

The participant's zip code is the first item requested on the back of the survey, which then affects how the rest of the sections are filled out. Because the study is aimed to accurately track the amount of outside dollars entering the community because of the event, separate sections are divided by local and non-local spectators. The first section is for Mississippi Gulf Coast residents. These questions ask about total estimated spending for the weekend both if the event had and had not occurred during the weekend. This gives an accurate number of the financial effectiveness of the weekend.

For the non-local spectators, the survey begins by asking the length and location of their stay, specifically if a hotel was involved, for financial understanding. Later, the survey asks if the spectator is visiting the area for the first time, if they have attended the

tournament in years past and how important of a role the tournament played in their decision to visit the area. This information is valuable to Conference USA and MGM Park officials to get an understanding of the audience and an understanding of a sense of loyalty, consistency and diversity in the audience.

The aim of this research was to reach as many attendees as possible through the intercept survey developed. This survey was offered and passed out approximately 75 feet from the left field entrance gate at MGM Park. During the entirety of the five-day tournament, the table was set up with representatives there to help administer the survey. This location of the tent was convenient in that attendees could both watch the event and fill out the survey at the same time. Therefore, the survey did not take away from the spectator's experience. However, a large portion of the surveys collected were during warmups between games and the thirteen rain delays from Wednesday to Sunday.

The survey was only given to adults age eighteen or older. The adults were asked to factor in all spending made for the group as a whole. Groups include the impact of potential younger attendees like children. Because of this effort, attendees were asked to only complete one survey per group. These subjects were asked to survey during all hours of the tournament with attendees from all over the country participating. No information was given to connect the specific survey to the participating patron. Thus the survey was considered anonymous. Upon completion of data input, all surveys were shredded. Randomly surveyed guests were provided with 32-ounce tumbler cups provided by specific sponsors of the event. These tumblers were given by Mr. Timothy Bennett, President of Overtime Sports, in an effort to encourage attendee participation in the survey.

As previously mentioned, the Conference USA Baseball Tournament is consisted of teams from eight universities predominately from the southeastern United States. Each university accounts for most, if not all, expenses of the athletes, coaches and administrators of each team. These expenses included travel to and from the tournament as well as during the tournament. In order to capture this data, the survey was electronically mailed, filled out, and then returned. These contacts were provided by both the University of Southern Mississippi's Athletic Department and Conference USA website.

Sample Size

In a best effort to accurately account for all citizens attending the event, participants were asked to both account for everyone in their group and only fill out one survey per group. As previously mentioned, this is designed to account for, yet not double count for each attendee both above and below the age of 18.

The Conference USA Baseball Tournament was divided into a guaranteed 7 ticketed sessions, with one potential ticketed session. The eighth additional session is added because of two possible "if necessary" games. These if necessary games may occur because the tournament is a double elimination format. This eighth session was, in fact, needed for the 2018 edition of the tournament and it was held before the championship session on Sunday afternoon (Conference USA Notes, 2018).

The attendance number from Stoner (2016) was used as an estimate to achieve a desired sample size. Stoner's study of the 2015 Conference USA Tournament took place in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, less than 75 miles from MGM Park. While this number does account for individuals attending multiple games of the sport, it gives a base number on

how just how much the event makes on ticket sales for each game. The attendance figure for the 2015 tournament totaled 12,508. This number was used as the population number for a study to determine a confidence level of 95%. With this data, it was determined that 310 surveys were needed to be appropriate for this study (Sample Size Calculator, 2018).

Because true attendance could not be predicted before this event, it was determined that Stoner's (2016) number was the best possible judgment due to the study being less than three years old and in close proximity to the host site in Mississippi. In addition, the 12,508 in attendance does not account for any players, coaches, administrators or media members of all participating universities. While this is more of a rough estimate for predicting attendance for the 2018 edition of the tournament, it is as good of an estimate as can be. With the tournament in a new, neutral site, it would be difficult to predict a true attendance number prior to the 2018 tournament.

In retrospect, the 2018 Conference USA Baseball Tournament drew 12,000 in total attendance over the five days. Even with a new location, new year, different teams and very unpredictable weather, the prediction of 310 surveys was more than enough to achieve the 95% confidence level needed to perform the study accurately and confidently for the population present. This attendance number was pulled from Mr. Timothy Bennett, President of Overtime Sports.

Data Collection

As previously mentioned, an intercept survey was the source of all patron data collected throughout the five days of the tournament. The tent was setup before, during, after and between each game to be filled out by spectators. In total, 334 surveys were collected. A copy of the intercept survey is provided in *Appendix A*. This 334 number

amounted to be 24 more than the predicted number of 310 surveys needed to achieve the 95% confidence interval.

For the team data, a separate form with spending, travel, lodging and any other event-related spending was sent to representatives for each team. In total, three surveys were collected from participating teams. The University of Southern Mississippi was included in this collection because, even though the tournament was held in Mississippi, the site is still considered neutral and not in Hattiesburg. Therefore, all participating teams would contribute and classify as outside spending to the event. A screenshot of the survey sent out to the teams is provided in *Appendix B*.

Each participant of the survey was asked to provide their home zip code, size of their group, and amount spent in the Mississippi Gulf Coast region as a result of their trip, as previously stated. Gender and level of education were other qualitative factors requested to be provided to help get an understanding of the sample size and audience as a whole for future events. While all of these pieces of information are not necessarily essential to the financial results of the study, this qualitative information will prove to be valuable to the next potential host for marketing, promotion and advertising their prospective audiences derived from the information of this study.

Regional Purchasing Coefficient

To stay in line with Stoner's (2016) study, mirroring his Regional Purchasing Coefficient (RPC) is necessary. The RPC is used as a multiplier for input-output data models to account for the money that actually stays within the local economy. These RPC's are necessary due to raw survey data not being able to take into account the

amount of dollars that may be dedicated to vacation as a whole, but do not stay within the local economy. To mirror Stoner, the RPC used for the purposes of this study was .65 or 65%. This means that out of every dollar spent, we believe that 65 cents of that dollar will remain in the local economy to circulate and therefore have an economic impact.

EMSI Software

For economic impact studies, a special software is needed to calculate the financial impact an event has on an area. For this particular study, the surveys spending patterns were separated by industry code given by the Economic Modeling Specialists Analysts (EMSI Analyst) software provided by The University of Southern Mississippi. EMSI allows for calculated insights of local, national and international labor markets. These insights include labor growth projections, wages and demographics just to name a few. Additionally, EMSI gives the projections for the future Change in Earnings, Change in Jobs and Change in Taxes on Production and Imports (TPI). Each input from the spending pattern of the survey is tied to a code that is specified by the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS). The NAICS codes and their corresponding expenditures from the survey can be seen on the table below.

Table 1.0: NAICS Category Classifications

Survey Category	NAICS Code	NAICS Category
Air Transportation*	481111	Scheduled Passenger Air Transportation
Ground Transportation*	447110	Gasoline Stations with Convenience Stores
Sports Equipment	451110	Sporting Goods Stores
Souvenirs	453220	Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores

Other/Miscellaneous Spending	453998	All Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers (Except Tobacco Stores)
Recreation	713990	All Other Amusement and Recreation Industries
Lodging	721110	Casino Hotels
Food and Drink	722513	Limited-Service Restaurants
Laundry	812310	Coin-Operated Laundries and Drycleaners
Admission and Parking	711310	Promoters of Performing Arts, Sports and Similar Events with Facilities
Gambling	713210	Casinos (except Casino Hotels)

The EMSI Analyst software determines a multiplier for each code provided for the categories above to determine economic impact. These codes were implemented for the Mississippi Gulf Coast by using all of the zip codes from Harrison County, Hancock County, George County, Pearl River County, Stone County and Jackson County. For purposes of this study residents attending the event from any of these six counties are considered local citizens to the area and not visitors outside of the region. Because of the Mississippi Gulf Coast’s large population across all six counties, it is likely that the inclusion of all six counties for this study give a more accurate impact on the Gulf Coast Region as a whole as opposed to solely looking at the city of Biloxi or the 39530 zip code. This is used to account for meals, lodging, or any other spending that will take place outside of the events taking place outside of MGM Park, but still on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. All in all, the inclusion of these counties provides a much more accurate reflection on the impact of the region as a whole.

Data Analysis Summary

As previously stated, the financial data collected and analyzed was in accordance with Stoner (2016) which was derived from Jones (2014) in his study of the Dixie Youth Softball World Series. The number of ticketed attendees was received from Timothy Bennett and an average expenditure per attendee was determined for each spending category. This average expenditure was calculated for both attendees of the event and participants and correspondents to each participating team. These expenditures were split up in two different surveys as well as two different tables and reports in EMSI Analyst. This average expenditure was taken by getting the total number of spending for each category and dividing it by the corresponding number of responses. Because not every participating team responded to the survey, this same extrapolation method was used to determine the average expenditure per team then multiplied by eight (total number of participating teams) to determine the total amount of spending by all teams.

With part of the data requested being the participant's zip code, the region of the attendee was easy to determine. From this information, it was recorded that of the 334 surveys recorded that 267 of 334 (or just under 80%) of the surveys were from attendees outside of the Mississippi Gulf Coast study region. Of these 267 out of region surveys, 107 (or just over 40%) of these out of region surveys were from outside the State of Mississippi.

To begin, the spending per patron was multiplied by the percentage of total attendance determined from outside of the region. With 12,000 tickets to the event being sold, this means that just under 80% or 9,588 tickets came from out of the region. So,

each expenditure was multiplied by 9,588 for each outside ticket purchased. Additionally, the ticket spending per patron was also multiplied by the percentage of total attendance determined to attend the event from outside of the state of Mississippi. This correlated to 3,842 or just over 40% of all tickets sold to the event.

With these numbers, the amount for each NAICS category was then multiplied by the Regional Purchasing Coefficient estimate of 65% to get an accurate depiction of money that will actually stay within the local economy and circulate. These regional purchasing coefficient figures were then input into the EMSI Analyst Input-Output model in a six-county basis for Harrison County, Hancock County, Stone County, George County, Pearl River County and Jackson County to act as the Mississippi Gulf Coast Region. The input to this model of three counties gives us a resulting economic impact of the tournament on the region of study. As previously mentioned, these potential economic impact figures calculated by the software reflect the monetary impact on the area, estimated jobs created and estimated change in tax on production and imports. This was all taken into account with an estimated multiplier effect on the economy as well.

Air and Transportation Multipliers

For three of the eleven consumer categories, a multiplier was used to most accurately calculate the amount of spending that was able to stay within the local economy. Along with the Regional Purchasing Coefficient of 65%, these numbers were certainly not an accurate representation of raw money completely residing in an economy. Examples of raw money residing in an economy are tickets to tournament sessions or a souvenir. The three categories that a multiplier was applied to were air transportation, ground transportation and gambling.

For air transportation, while it may be the most expensive means of travel to the tournament, only a fraction of the money would reside in the Mississippi Gulf Coast region from a plane ticket. In fact, only about 17.8% of a flight goes to airport costs (Plush 2016). This 17.8 percent was the number attached to the total spending of all air travelers. Therefore, the calculation of a more accurate amount of regional spending was achieved.

For ground transportation, there are so many factors to take into effect. Food is already calculated, but it is tough to estimate how much fuel and other transportation costs are attributed directly to the destination area. For the purposes of this study, the multiplier for ground transportation was calculated to be 37.4 percent of all spending prior to taking the RPC into effect (Value 2016). This number was derived from adding local transportation, taxi or car service, parking, tolls and one third of all gas purchased and dividing that number by the average \$2,100 per vacation spent (Value 2016).

Gambling is probably the biggest difference to account for in terms of studying the 2015 Conference USA Tournament in Hattiesburg and the 2018 Conference USA Tournament in the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, there are 12 casinos open 24 hours a day. The additional questions on the 2018 version of intercept surveys ask if an attendee of the event would be participating in gambling on the trip and, if so, how much they would be spending/risking during their time across the street from the stadium at the casinos. With all this money taken into account, some participants were bound to win money, some were bound to lose money, some were bound to break even or close to even. Because of this, a 60% multiplier to all consumer spending/risking at the

casinos was applied because the casinos have to make money to stay in business. Anything less than 50% would not allow them to do so.

These data from surveys developed was all inputted into one central location where the multipliers were applied for the appropriate listed above. From here, the final numbers from the survey data were processed and final results were given on both a state and region level from the EMSI input-output analysis. The results are shown in Table 2.0 and Table 2.1.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study is to calculate the amount of economic impact the 2018 Conference USA Baseball Tournament had on the Mississippi Gulf Coast Region. Because this study was solely dependent on the attendees, participants and university officials to participate, their willingness to provide data was essential. As previously mentioned, the survey was asked to include how many people were included in the group traveling to the tournament. This allowed for no double counting of people as well as included tickets and such for any attendee 18 years or younger. Those could not fill out the survey. Each survey also asked to provide a home zip code. If the survey was filled out with a zip code from Harrison, Hancock, Pearl River, Stone, George or Jackson County, the attendee was considered from the region. These local surveys were discarded for the purposes of this study.

Of the 334 surveys collected, it was determined that 267 (80%) of the surveys were from outside of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Of these 267 out of region surveys, it was determined that 107 (40%) of them were from outside the state of Mississippi. These figures and percentages were multiplied by spending patterns and both out of region and out of state attendees of the event to determine a total spending estimate. These total spending estimates were then put into an EMSI input-output analysis, listed in the methods section above. These results can be found in both Table 2.0 and Table 2.1

Table 2.0: Expenditures of Visitors NAICS Category

Survey Category	Average Expenditure per Attendee	Total Number of Ticketed Sales	Total Expenditures of All Persons
Air Transportation	\$127.46	524	\$66,789
Ground Transportation	\$55.60	9,064	\$503,958
Admission and Parking	\$27.32	9,588	\$261,944
Food and Drink	\$79.16	9,588	\$758,027
Lodging	\$110.27	9,588	\$1,057,269
Laundry	\$3.43	9,588	\$32,887
Sports Equipment	\$5.31	9,588	\$50,912
Recreation	\$32.52	9,588	\$311,802
Souvenirs	\$14.22	9,588	\$136,341
Other	\$40.00	9,588	\$383,520
Gambling	\$163.26	9,588	\$939,202
TOTAL			\$4,502,652

Table 2.1: Expenditures of Teams by NAICS Category

Survey Category	Average Expenditure	Number of Teams	Total Expenditures of All Teams
Air Transportation	\$2,670	8	\$10,680
Ground Transportation	\$559	8	\$2,236
Admission and Parking	\$1,000	8	\$8,000
Food and Drink	\$4,000	8	\$32,000
Lodging	\$12,667	8	\$101,336
Laundry	\$300	8	\$2,400
Sports Equipment	\$333	8	\$2,264
Other	\$667	8	\$5,336
TOTAL			\$164,652

The total out of region spending at the 2018 Conference USA Baseball Tournament by attendees was \$4,502,652, as shown above in Table 2.1. The total spending by participating teams in the event was \$164,652. This puts total spending in the event at a total of \$4,667,304. Similar to Table 2.0, each category was averaged and multiplied by 8, the number of teams in the tournament. There were three categories of the survey that had zero recorded spending by the teams which were gambling, recreation and souvenirs. For this reason, those categories were not included in Table 2.1. It is of note that this survey was distributed to the University of Southern Mississippi because the tournament was not held in Hattiesburg, thus lodging and transportation needed to be accounted for.

As one would reasonably expect, the highest spending patterns for all visitors included lodging, food and drink and gambling. Those three categories alone accounted for \$2.75 million in spending. Also notable, each average expenditure per team was exponentially higher than the average expenditure per attendee. This is so because each team travels with around 40 people. Other large increases from individual to team comparisons include sports equipment and laundry. These are two categories that are almost guaranteed throughout the entirety of the event, especially if a team stays alive in the tournament all five days.

Again, Table 2.0 and Table 2.1 represent the amount of total spending for the event as collected by the surveys. For the next step, the data above was multiplied by the 65% Regional Purchasing Coefficient. This is to more accurately estimate the amount of financial influx to the Mississippi Gulf Coast region that will stay in it long term. This accounts for spending out of the area that may have occurred on the trip, taxes, other fees,

etc. These calculated figures can be seen below in Table 2.2 with the expenditure numbers from Table 2.0 and Table 2.1 multiplied by the RPC of 65%.

Table 2.2: Visitor/Team Expenditures after Regional Purchasing Coefficient at 65%

EMSI Classification Code	EMSI Classification Description	Out of Town Attendee at 65%	Out of Town Team at 65%
481111	Scheduled Passenger Air Transportation	\$43,413	\$6,942
451110	Gasoline Stations with Convenience Stores	\$327,573	\$1,453
711310	Promoters of Performing Arts, Sports and Similar Events with Facilities	\$170,264	\$5,200
722513	Limited Service Restaurants	\$492,718	\$20,800
721110	Casino Hotels	\$687,225	\$65,868
812310	Coin Operated Laundries and Dry Cleaners	\$21,377	\$1,560
453998	Sporting Goods Stores	\$33,092	\$1,732
713990	All Other Amusement and Recreation Industries	\$202,672	\$3,468
453220	Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores	\$88,622	N/A
453998	All other Miscellaneous Store Retailers (except Tobacco Stores)	\$249,288	N/A
713210	Casinos (except Casino Hotels)	\$610,481	N/A

Because this is a simple proportion of the raw data accumulated from the survey, all of the spending categories remain the same in terms of order of amount of spending (i.e., lodging still had the most money spent, laundry still had the least amount spent, etc.). Following the calculations of the prior three tables, the results of Table 2.2 were put into an EMSI Input-Output model in order to calculate estimated change in earnings,

estimated change in jobs, estimated change in tax on production and imports. A predetermined multiplier on the EMSI software was used to calculate these numbers shown below in Table 2.3

Table 2.3: Summary of EMSI Input-Output Analysis of Out of Region Attendee/Team Data

	Aggregate Change in Earnings	Aggregate Change in Jobs	Aggregate Change in Taxes on Production and Imports (TPI)
Attendee Data Impact Scenario	\$2,089,696 *1.61 Multiplier	91 *1.36 Multiplier	\$615,836
Team Data Impact Scenario	\$77,047 *1.58 Multiplier	3 *1.32 Multiplier	\$22,651

The event amounted to an overall change in earnings of \$2,166,743 for Harrison, Hancock, Jackson, George, Pearl River and Stone Counties. This total is broken down into \$2,089,696 from the individual survey responses and \$77,047 from the team responses. Because this event is a three-time event, these numbers are likely to double and even triple for the other occurrences and bring even more jobs and changes in earnings to the area and region if proven just as or more successful. These jobs created may be long term but may also be part time for events like the Conference USA Tournament or other tourism events similar to it. Note that the multipliers for the attendees used were 1.61 for the change in earnings and 1.36 for the aggregate change in jobs. These multipliers were 1.58 and 1.32 respectively for the aggregate change in earnings and aggregate change in jobs for the team impact.

Because this is proportionate to original results, the largest change in earnings from the tournament comes from lodging, food and drink (from limited service

restaurants) and gambling (from casinos) as seen below. These numbers are derived after the multipliers and coefficient are taken into effect

Table 2.4: EMSI Input-Output Analysis Earnings Impact

EMSI Classification Code	EMSI Classification Description	Attendee Earnings Impact	Team Earnings Impact
481111	Scheduled Passenger Air Transportation	\$66,789	\$10,680
447110	Gasoline Stations with Convenience Stores	\$503,958	\$2,236
711310	Promoters of Performing Arts, Sports and Similar Events with Facilities	\$ 261,944	\$8,000
722513	Limited Service Restaurants	\$758,028	\$32,000
721110	Casino Hotels	\$1,057,269	\$101,336
812310	Coin Operated Laundries and Dry Cleaners	\$32,887	\$2,400
453998	Sporting Goods Stores	\$50,912	\$2,664
713990	All Other Amusement and Recreation Industries	\$311,802	N/A
453220	Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores	\$136,341	N/A
453998	All other Miscellaneous Store Retailers (except Tobacco Stores)	\$385,520	\$5,336
713210	Casinos (except Casino Hotels)	\$939,202	N/A

Once again, the amount spent on lodging, food and drink and gambling had the most impact on a change in earnings for the region. Laundry, sporting goods stores, and air travel (after the multiplier) contributed the least amount to new earnings and jobs. It is certainly of note that some of this spending could have occurred outside the zip codes of

the six counties from the Mississippi Gulf Coast, but the multipliers and RPC are designed to account for that kind of spending in the most accurate way possible.

Additionally, it was discovered that approximately 40% of attendees of the event were outside of the state of Mississippi. For the purposes of this study, finding an impact of new state earnings is just as useful of information as finding impact of the region.

Luckily, with the data accumulated from the survey, it was possible to find the impact of both. Table 2.5 and Table 2.6 show the impact of the event on the state of Mississippi from out of state visitors adjusted for the Regional Purchasing Coefficient of 65%.

Table 2.5: Expenditures of Attendees Outside of Mississippi per NAICS Category

Survey Category	Average Expenditure per Attendee	Total Number of Ticketed Sales	Total Expenditures of All Persons
Air Transportation	\$127.46	210	\$26,767
Ground Transportation	\$55.60	3,632	\$202,945
Admission and Parking	\$27.32	3,842	\$104,963
Food and Drink	\$79.06	3,842	\$303,749
Lodging	\$110.27	3,842	\$423,657
Laundry	\$3.43	3,842	\$13,178
Sports Equipment	\$5.31	3,842	\$20,401
Recreation	\$32.52	3,842	\$124,942
Souvenirs	\$14.22	3,842	\$54,633
Other	\$40.00	3,842	\$153,680
Gambling*	\$163.26	3,842	\$376,346
Total			\$1,805,162

The outside of Mississippi figures are calculated by multiplying the average expenditures originally calculated in Table 2.0 by 3,842 or 40% of the total ticket sales to represent the percentage of attendees of the event who were visiting outside of the state of Mississippi. As shown above, the air and ground transportation numbers were

multiplied by the same proportion of air and ground travelers to split those 3,842 tickets into 210 for air transportation and 3,632 for ground transportation respectively. Table 2.6 below shows these spending figures from Table 2.5 adjusted for the Regional Purchasing Coefficient of 65%.

Table 2.6: Outside of Mississippi Expenditures at Regional Purchasing Coefficient

EMSI Classification Code	EMSI Classification Description	Non-Mississippi Resident at 65%
481111	Scheduled Passenger Air Transportation	\$17,398
451110	Gasoline Stations with Convenience Stores	\$131,914
711310	Promoters of Performing Arts, Sports and Similar Events with Facilities	\$68,226
722513	Limited Service Restaurants	\$197,436
721110	Casino Hotels	\$275,377
812310	Coin Operated Laundries and Dry Cleaners	\$8,565
453998	Sporting Goods Stores	\$13,260
713990	All Other Amusement and Recreation Industries	\$81,212
453220	Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores	\$35,511
453998	All other Miscellaneous Store Retailers (except Tobacco Stores)	\$99,892
713210	Casinos (except Casino Hotels)	\$244,625

Hotels and gambling alone for this event account for more than \$500,000 brought to the state of Mississippi. The top four classifications alone (transportation, lodging, gambling and food drink) account for over \$750,000 brought in. The \$244,625 from

gambling shown in Table 2.6 is money coming in to the state that would only occur in Biloxi and not Hattiesburg. This alone gives a large leg up to the Mississippi Gulf Coast as a host community for the future.

Table 2.7: Summary of EMSI Input-Output Analysis of Out of State Attendee/Out of State Team Data

	Aggregate Change in Earnings	Aggregate Change in Jobs	Aggregate Change in Taxes on Production and Imports (TPI)
Attendee Data Impact Scenario	\$881,797 *1.70 Multiplier	37 *1.42 Multiplier	\$259,000
Team Data Impact Scenario	\$73,740 *1.66 Multiplier	3 *1.37 Multiplier	\$21,457

Table 2.8: Outside of Mississippi EMSI Input-Output Analysis Earnings Impact

EMSI Classification Code	EMSI Classification Description	Attendee Earnings Impact	Team Earnings Impact
481111	Scheduled Passenger Air Transportation	\$26,766	\$10,680
451110	Gasoline Stations with Convenience Stores	\$201,961	\$1,956
711310	Promoters of Performing Arts, Sports and Similar Events with Facilities	\$104,974	\$7,000
722513	Limited Service Restaurants	\$303,778,72	\$28,000
721110	Casino Hotels	\$423,699	\$88,669
812310	Coin Operated Laundries and Dry Cleaners	\$13,179	\$2,331
453998	Sporting Goods Stores	\$20,403	\$4,669
713990	All Other Amusement and Recreation Industries	\$124,954	N/A
453220	Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores	\$54,639	N/A

453998	All other Miscellaneous Store Retailers (except Tobacco Stores)	\$153,695	\$4,669
713210	Casinos (except Casino Hotels)	\$376,384	N/A

The spending from the patrons of this event resulted in a change of earnings of \$955,537 (\$881,797 and \$73,740 from the attendees and teams respectively as shown in Table 2.7) for the state of Mississippi. This earnings figure was used to calculate change in earnings entering the state of Mississippi from other states occurring because of tournament related spending. This impact was based on personal income and sales tax. This event also supported 40 jobs (37 & 3 from attendees and participants respectively). Concerning change in Aggregate Taxes on Production and Imports (TPI), this event yielded a total change of \$280,457. Of this total, \$259,000 came directly from attendees of the event while \$21,457 came from participants.

Qualitative Findings

Among all of the qualitative questions on the survey, there were also qualitative blanks to gauge a better understanding of the tournament's audience and tendencies moving forward. Of those surveyed, the average group size was 3.19 people with 22 percent of those people being children. A total out of the 336 surveyed, attendees stayed a total of 2,102 hours with the average person staying 6.25 hours per stay. Over 31 percent stayed for longer than 2 game stints (greater than 6.5 hours) while nearly 14 percent stayed longer than 3 game stints (greater than 10.5 hours). In terms of days, the average surveyed visitor was staying 3.51 days. Over 56 percent of surveyed attendees stayed longer than 3 days and nearly 44 percent of those guests stayed longer than 4 days throughout the tournament. Furthermore, a commanding 98 percent of people said that

they would attend the tournament again if it were in the same location. In terms of length of stay and possibility of return, it appears the tournament's numbers have some positive longevity to them.

In regard to transportation, more than 92 percent of guests surveyed traveled to the tournament by automobile, 5 percent traveled by plane and the other 2 or 3 percent traveled by other means of transportation such as foot, public transportation, etc. The mean household income for attendees was \$132,965 with the medium being a flat \$100,000. About 25 percent of guests stayed at a casino during their trip to the tournament and 42 percent said that they would participate in gambling during their stay. The average amount of money risked at the casinos gambling during these trips was \$194. The average hotel night stay was 2.96 nights among those surveyed. Almost 16 percent of visitors to the tournament said that their experience Conference USA Baseball Tournament was their first trip to the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

In terms of recurring tournament guests, 27 percent said that 2018 was the first year they attended a Conference USA Baseball Tournament, 24 percent had attended the tournament in a different location and 47 percent were attendees at the previous May in Biloxi. A majority (52 percent) of people surveyed said that the tournament was "Extremely Important" in their visiting the area, with 22 percent saying that the location was "very important." Of those surveyed, almost 40 percent have attained a master's degree of some sort or greater as their highest level of education, 21 percent earned a bachelor's degree, 10 percent have completed some college, 8 percent an associate's degree while 1 percent listed a high school diploma as the highest level of their education. Finally, 64 percent of those surveyed were male and 36 percent were female.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Comparison to Past Studies

Table 2.9: Comparison of Two Studied Tournaments

	2015 Conference USA Tournament in Hattiesburg, MS	2018 Conference USA Tournament in Biloxi, MS
Attendance	8,881	12,000
Out-of-State Visitors	2,943	3,842
Aggregate Change in Earnings	\$648,211	\$2,166,743
Jobs Supported	41	94

Comparisons for this study will be made to Stoner (2016) and his analysis of the 2015 Conference USA Tournament in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. All in all, Biloxi was more profitable and beneficial to the Gulf Coast than Hattiesburg's version of the tournament was to Hattiesburg. In terms of tickets, there were 707 more tickets outside of the region sold in Biloxi than Hattiesburg (8,881 to 9,588). Also, 899 more tickets were sold out of state in Biloxi than Hattiesburg (3,842 to 2,943). In terms of total expenditures, attendees spent approximately \$1.77 million more in Biloxi than in Hattiesburg, which brought in \$2.77 million. Biloxi's change in earnings came in at a total of \$2.17 million which is above Hattiesburg's mark of \$648,000 by around \$1.5 million. Biloxi also drew a higher out of state percentage of visitors (40%) than of Hattiesburg in 2015 (24%). This out of state percentage leads to nearly \$900,000 more in expenditures brought into Mississippi from other states from this year's tournament. In terms of jobs, the Biloxi tournament supported 94 jobs compared to Hattiesburg's 41 jobs. Tax impacts were not calculated on Stoner's (2016) study. Also, gambling

accounted for nearly \$1 million of expenditures for this tournament which was the second largest category. This is a category that is unable to have a single dollar in it from the city of Hattiesburg.

Findings and Discussions

While it is difficult to pinpoint an exact dollar sign and number on this or any five-day tournament, this study has definitely yielded positive results for the City of Biloxi, the Mississippi Gulf Coast and Conference USA. The city of Biloxi and the Mississippi Gulf Coast as a whole have proven with this study to be well equipped to host an event of this size and duration. With something like Stoner (2016) to compare this tournament to, it leaves little doubt on where most money is generated in the state of Mississippi for this tournament. Gambling, larger out of state attendance, a bigger airport, beaches and many more factors played in to the ballpark's construction, the bid to host the tournament, and the success of the tournament described above. Above all, more spending, higher changes in earnings, more jobs and a larger draw from outside spectators are all the factors that this tournament pointed to studying. All signs point to Biloxi as the more successful tournament. Biloxi's lodging costs, food and drink costs, and costs of living in general are all similar in Hattiesburg (and even bigger in conference cities such as Houston, Charlotte and Miami), Biloxi will have what all of these others will not and that is the gambling and casino industry.

Another noteworthy anecdote lies in the fact that this tournament is hosted at a neutral site for all 8 teams. This means that one more team and one more fan base has to travel to the event than if it were hosted on a campus of one of the participating teams. Because this particular fan base (Southern Miss) is the largest one accounting for the

crowd based off in-state calculations, it makes sense that there would be more impact on the Mississippi Gulf Coast than the Hattiesburg Tournament would have on the city and Southern Miss as it did in 2015.

The results of this study show that the 94 supported jobs correlate most to lodging, gambling, restaurants and transportations throughout the duration of the tournament. The surge in dollars to these industries during these five days leads to a correlation of a change in earnings in the area calculated above. Also shown above are the impacts of taxes on production and imports (TPI) on the area.

While there is currently minimal research done in the field of mid-major sports and economic impact, there is even less that offers the tax impact on these small events. This study helps give needed contribution to the field and offers a direct comparison to Stoner's (2016) study in many ways. However, both the 3-year gap between tournaments, the neutral site factor and gambling presence in only one of the cities that does not paint the clearest of pictures when trying to directly compare the two. Most importantly, the neutral site factor that occurs in this tournament is one that can be built upon immensely in future studies. This study could serve as a foundation in determining whether or not mid-major schools and conferences are equipped to tackle tournaments of this kind just as larger events such as the Super Bowl and World Cup are hosted neutrally (Coates and Depken 2010).

In addition, this study adds to the collection of knowledge regarding small-scaled sporting events and cities for others looking to host events comparable to this one for athletics, arts, entertainment or anything to generate out-of-region travel. This research also has a direct impact on where the next location of the Conference USA Baseball

Tournament's destination will be during its next signed contract sometime in the year of 2019. This is just as equally useful for the Mississippi Gulf Coast as it is for Conference USA, Southern Miss, and every other potential school or city looking to host the event in the future. This research also provides the Mississippi Gulf Coast and Conference USA an opportunity to see the success of college baseball specifically in the area as opposed to the minor league professional baseball games that take place at MGM Park throughout the summer and the other 13 sports that Conference USA competes in with championship games and tournaments.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Limitations

While the first four research objectives have already been addressed in the text thus far, my conclusion for both Conference USA and the Mississippi Gulf Coast is to resubmit a bid to host the tournament and keep the tournament in Biloxi in the years to come. Biloxi is a great, well-equipped setting where the tournament can thrive. MGM Park is a terrific, newly constructed ballpark, and the results of this study reflect this directly. Conference USA would also benefit from the tournament here in that it has been proven more successful than one of the most prevalent editions of the tournament in 2015 in Hattiesburg. The lodging, dining options and gambling in Biloxi are all ideal for a setting to both bring in new tourists and keep the same audience returning year after year. An extension of the current deal would be the most beneficial option for all parties involved. A central location in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, as opposed to Houston, Texas, or Miami, Florida, only further validates that the most logical location for the tournament is on the Mississippi Gulf Coast

Although this study was successful as a whole, that does not mean that the research was without any limitations or difficulties. One part of the weekend that this study has not mentioned yet was that there was a total of 13 weather delays over five days throughout the duration. There was no way to account financially for the impact that this had on the study. Whether people filled out their information on their stay, attitude, or spending before or after these delays and, in turn, overstated or understated their information because of it, is unknown. On top of the rain delays, this particular tournament included the team closest to Biloxi (Southern Miss) playing the maximum amount of games and eventually winning the tournament. While this result was most

likely beneficial for the event, there is no way to determine how much of a hit the event would have taken or will take in the future if the Southern Miss Golden Eagles lose their first two games or fail to qualify for the tournament altogether.

In regard to the data collected, there was so much data collected from attendees of the event that were only of 1 to 3 counties away from the Mississippi Gulf Coast that was difficulty in gauging just what money went to the region, and how much of that was “new” money entering the region. This large amount of proximity to the event also leaks into the rain delays effect where the attendees may have either stayed in their home for the day and not attended or decided to get a hotel across the street from MGM Park a night or two when they had already said they were not staying on the survey. While it is already a difficult enough task to calculate economic impact in a study such as this one, these are just a few variables that I found difficult in accounting for throughout my conduction of research.

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Appendix A: Surveys

Patrons at the Conference USA Baseball Tournament Survey Questions

Please take a few minutes to complete the following questions. Your participation is voluntary in this honors thesis research. All information that you provide will be anonymous, confidential, and reported only in the aggregate. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your inputs for this survey, please contact Jonathan Brent (jonathan.brent@usm.edu) or faculty adviser: Dr. Chad Miller (chad.r.miller@usm.edu). **IRB Approval 18030601**

1. Including yourself, how many people are in your group today?

1a. Your group consists of: ___ Your spouse/partner ___ Your Children
___ Friends/Relatives

___ Others (Please Specify: _____)

2. How many hours do you plan on spending at the event today? _____

3. How many days do you plan to attend this event this year? _____

4. Would you attend this event again if it was hosted at this same location? Yes No

5. What was the primary method of transportation used to get to this tournament (circle one)?

Automobile/ Bike/ Walk Bus /Public Transportation /Airplane

Other (Please Specify: _____)

6. What is your estimated household income?

\$ _____

7. Please estimate and list how much you and the group you monetarily support will spend in each category in the Gulf Coast during this visit

Transportation (gas, vehicle repairs, vehicle rental, etc.) \$ _____

Admission and Parking \$ _____

Food and Drink \$ _____

Lodging \$ _____

Laundry Services \$ _____

Sports Equipment \$ _____

Recreation (other entertainment) \$ _____

Souvenirs \$ _____

All other area spending \$ _____

8. Is the hotel you're staying at also a casino? Yes No N/A

9. Will you be gambling this trip? Yes No

If you marked yes, how much do you anticipate spending at said casinos? \$ _____

10. What is your home town zip code? _____

Complete this section if you selected a Mississippi Gulf Coast Zip Code for question 10, otherwise please continue to the next section (Mississippi Gulf Coast Residents)

The following questions will help determine the economic impact of the baseball tournament from patrons within the MS Gulf Coast

11. If the tournament did not happen in this area at this time, would you have spent your money (i.e., same amount of money) on something else in the local area (MS Gulf Coast)? Yes No

12. If the tournament did not happen in this area at this time, what would be the total estimated spending related to your daily life during the tournament? \$ _____

Complete this section if you are a visitor to the Gulf Coast. (Visitors to Gulf Coast)

The following questions will help determine the economic impact of the baseball tournament from patrons outside of the MS Gulf Coast region.

13. If you marked "other" for the zip code.

13a. How many nights will you stay in the area? _____ 11b. Where are you staying? (Circle below)

Hotel /With Friends or Relatives /Other (Please Specify: _____)

ECONOMIC IMPACT: CUSA BASEBALL TOURNAMENT

First time visiting the area Visited area? Yes No (How many times: _____)

13d. Is this your:
____ First time to attend the tournament ____ Attended the tournament in a different location
____ Attended the tournament in this location last year

14. How important was the event in your decision to come to the area?

Not at all Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Extremely Important

15. Gender Male Female

16. Current level of education Some High School High School Associates Degree
Some College Bachelor's Degree Master's Degree

Thank you for your time and consideration. Your responses will provide us with valuable information as to how this event impacts the South Mississippi Community.

Teams at the Conference USA Baseball Tournament Survey Questions

Please take a few minutes to complete the following questions. Your participation is voluntary. All information that you provide will be anonymous, confidential, and reported only in the aggregate. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your inputs for this survey, please contact Jonathan Brent (jonathan.brent@usm.edu) or faculty adviser: Dr. Chad Miller (chad.miller@usm.edu). This project has been approved as IRB **18030601**

1. How many people were brought by your school to the Conference USA Baseball Tournament? (Please include coaches, players, trainers, scorekeepers, school officials, etc.)

2. What was the primary method of transportation used to get to this tournament? Automobile
Bike/Walk Bus/Public Transportation

Airplane Other (Please Specify: _____)

3. How many nights did your school stay in the Gulf Coast area?

4. Where did your team stay?

All members at the same hotel At separate hotels Other (Please

Specify: _____)

5. Approximately how many hotel rooms were utilized?

6. Would you attend this event again if it was hosted at this same location? Yes No

7. How would you rate your overall experience at the Conference USA Baseball Tournament at MGM Park (1 to 10, 10 being the best)

8. Please estimate and list how much you and the group you monetarily support will spend in each category in The Gulf Coast during this visit

Transportation (gas, vehicle repairs, vehicle rental, etc.) Admission and Parking

Food and Drink

Lodging

Laundry Services

\$ _____

\$ _____

\$ _____

\$ _____

\$ _____

ECONOMIC IMPACT: CUSA BASEBALL TOURNAMENT

Sports Equipment
Recreation (other entertainment) Souvenirs

All other area spending

9. Are there any other comments that you have regarding the Conference USA Baseball Tournament, MGM Park, Overtime Sports or the Mississippi Gulf Coast that you would like to share?

Thank you for your time and consideration. Your responses will provide us with valuable information as to how this event impacts the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community.



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NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the “Adverse Effect Report Form”.
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.
PROTOCOL NUMBER: 18030601 PROJECT TITLE: The Economic Impact of the 2018 Conference USA Baseball Tournament on the Mississippi Gulf Coast PROJECT TYPE: Honor's Thesis Project RESEARCHER(S): Jonathan

Brent COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Business DEPARTMENT: Economic
Development and Tourism FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A IRB
COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval PERIOD OF
APPROVAL: 04/17/2018 to 04/16/2019 **Lawrence A. Hosman,**
Ph.D. Institutional Review Board