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Involvement of College Football Fans at The University of Southern Mississippi

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by
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Abstract

The modern college football market faces several challenges including the fact that game day attendance numbers have continued to drop for the past few years and show no signs of slowing down. Understanding the psychological involvement of sports fans could play a major role in improving attendance numbers and providing consumers with a greater experience during football games. The primary goal of this research was to determine predictors of sports involvement among Southern Miss football fans. Another goal was to determine which facets of involvement predicted return intentions. With those who had attended a home Southern Miss football game in the last three years as the target demographic, a survey was created to understand which aspects of the game day experience influenced fans' involvement and return intentions. A series of multiple regression analyses were utilized to examine the predictors of involvement with two distinct samples (students and non-students). As a result, this study contributed to the field of marketing by revealing that there are differences between the predictors of involvement for students and non-students, and that importance and pleasure play the largest role in determining return intentions.

Key Words: sports involvement, return intentions, marketing

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Introduction

Sporting events play a major role in American society, with approximately 70% of Americans watching, reading, or discussing sports at least once a day (Iso-Ahola and Hatfield, 1986). At an American university level, collegiate sports are one of the most prominent outward facing aspects of the institution. College sports generate revenues for their respective universities, with the NCAA reporting over $1 billion in annual revenue in the 2016-17 school year (Rovell, 2018b). According to Branscombe (1991), as traditional social and community ties have declined due to increased geographic mobility and industrialization, sports spectatorship has continued to succeed. Sports involvement - or the degree to which a sport provides hedonic and symbolic value to a consumer (Beaton, 2011) - plays a large role in the fan base of any sports team. Involvement in sporting events has been linked to decreased alienation, (Branscombe, 1991) coping with emotions (Zillman, 1979), and a sense of personal identity (Sloan, 1989). Additionally, connections have been established between future attendance intentions and the psychological involvement of the consumer (Hill, 2000). Being able to accurately predict the future attendance of sporting events is crucial for the front offices of those sports teams to both plan the logistics of the events and maintain financial goals.

From a financial point of view, sports organizations should focus on building a consumer base with high involvement for several reasons. Highly involved fans tend to watch live sporting events (in person or over a digital medium) more frequently (Armstrong, 2002) and view the sponsors of that sports brand in a more positive light (Filo, 2010). Therefore, higher involvement within a sports brand will lead to greater loyalty and revenues for that brand. Furthermore, fans with higher involvement with a

team are more likely to attend that sports team's future games (Hill, 2000). In the collegiate world, undergraduate and graduate students are key demographic segments, as they will typically support their teams during their academic career and after they graduate as further supporting alumni (Ferreria, 2004). Understanding these two segments and their involvement is critical for collegiate sports brands, as attendance at college football games has declined by over 7% over the last four years (Bachman, 2018)., Attendance has also dropped at Southern Miss in recent years, averaging 22,744 fans a game in 2017, ranking 5th in the conference for game attendance (Magee, 2017).

The goal of this research project is to better understand the role that sports involvement plays at the University of Southern Mississippi in relation to return intentions, price fairness of the football game day experience, attitude towards the Southern Miss football team, perceived quality of the sports environment, and attitude towards the strength of schedule of the football team. In order to understand how each of these research variables relates to involvement, a series of multiple regression analyses and follow-up analyses will be performed. Next, the research variables will be investigated in the literature review to support the development of the proposed hypotheses.

Literature Review

Sports Involvement

There have been many studies that attempt to define sports involvement, but the multi-dimensionality of the construct has led to a cascade of slightly different definitions. Houston and Rothschild (1978), the first researchers to break down involvement into a

multi-dimensional construct, separated involvement into three distinct types: situational, enduring, and response involvement. While situational and response involvement deal with a temporary kind of involvement when making decisions around the purchasing of a product, enduring involvement captures linkages of prior experiences with the object or situation, and the strength of the values to which the situation is relevant (Houston, 1978.) This idea of an enduring involvement lays the framework for the construct used in this research project. Sports fans illustrate enduring involvement by attending games regularly, wearing branded apparel of their chosen team, and engaging in fan organizations centered around discussing the performance and news of their team.

Laurent and Kapferer (1985) proposed involvement as a multidimensional construct that consisted of perceived importance, perceived risk, symbolic value, and hedonic value of the product. After reviewing previous work done on involvement, Havitz and Dimanche (1990) defined involvement as "a psychological state of motivation, arousal, or interest between an individual and recreational activities, tourist destinations or related equipment at one point in time." They characterized involvement using an altered set of components: importance, pleasure value, sign value, and perceived risk (Kerstetter, 1997). Empirical use of this involvement construct and its subsequent components have been proven valid by Dimanche, Havitz, and Howard's involvement profile for tourist and recreational activities (Dimanche et al., 1991.) The scale used features five-point Likert scales on each of the components of the construct. This scale was adapted by Kerstetter and Kovich (1997) to investigate involvement profiles of women's basketball fans. The five-point scale served as a model to use for this research project given both the similarities in scope and the multi-faceted approach to

understanding the involvement of sports fans. The facets of involvement as determined by Laurent and Kapferer (1985) are as follows:

Importance Facet

Importance is defined as the subjective level of how much the object or activity matters to the individual, not the objective importance of the object or activity (Havitz, 1990.) For example, the brand that a football team wears (i.e. Nike, Adidas, Russell) may be important to the spectator because of the value he or she places on a certain brand, even though the brand ultimately has little influence or effect on the competitive success of the team. As an extension, if a sports team is important to a consumer, it is likely that they are more likely to attend that team's games as opposed to someone who believes that said sports team is not that important. Therefore, it would follow that:

H1a: There is a positive linear relationship between fan return intentions and the importance facet of involvement.

Hedonic Value Facet

A fair assumption to conjure is that consumers attend sporting events for the hedonic value of the experience. Holbrook (1982) discusses two popular view of consumption within the realm of market research: the information processing view and the experiential view. The information processing view examines consumers as one who has a problem that needs solving, and is willing to do research about one's problem, weigh multiple options, and make a carefully thought out judgement about the solution to said problem. The experiential view sees consumers as making choices based on hedonic

needs and what will lead one to fun, amusement, and a sense of stimulation (Holbrook, 1982). This experiential view is important to understanding the role pleasure plays on the decision-making process of consumers seeking out leisure activities, as the opportunity cost of said activities in a college town are high. While the conclusion might be obvious, most consumers attend sporting events as a leisure activity for recreation (Havitz, 1990). As a result, pleasure experienced during the sporting event is an important aspect in determining the involvement of the consumer. Therefore:

H1b: There is a positive linear relationship between fan return intentions and the pleasure facet of involvement.

Sign Value Facet

Sign value is the symbolic value that is attributed to a consumer towards some object or activity, and plays a large role in enduring involvement. Consumers may participate in an activity due to a desire to feel included or to differentiate themselves from others. Kerstetter and Kovich (1997) used the example of consumers belonging to a fan club or similar group as a way of outwardly expressing the sign value they attribute to a team. Additionally, consumers may choose to partake in a leisure activity for social status, associating themselves with an activity or group in hoping that their association may say something about themselves to their friends and family (Havitz, 1990.) Therefore, it follows that:

H1c: There is a positive linear relationship between return intentions of consumers and the sign value facet of involvement.

Perceived Risk Facet

In purchasing a product or service with any amount of uncertainty surrounding the decision, there are numerous potential outcomes, quite possibly with some of the outcomes resulting in a negative reaction. Consumers attempt to mitigate this risk by looking at reviews of products and services or by the word of mouth of other consumers. At the very minimum, a consumer's buying decision must come with an opportunity cost to that consumer's financial resources that could be used for numerous other alternatives (Bauer, 1960). Cheron and Ritchie (1982) expanded upon Bauer's concept and said that the overall risk of a leisure activity had two dimensions: the risk of the outcome of the decision, and the probability of a negative outcome of the decision. Similarly, Laurent and Kapferer (1985) attribute the risk component of involvement as two different facets: the perceived importance of negative consequences in the case of a poor choice and the perceived probability that a poor choice would occur. Variables of perceived risk can include time and effort costs, monetary costs, and perceived risk of danger (Havitz, 1990). These variables of perceived risk may influence sports fans when choosing whether or not to attend a sporting event over another activity. Therefore, it would follow:

H1d: There is a negative linear relationship between return intentions of the consumer and the perceived risk consequence facet of involvement.

H1e: There is a negative linear relationship between return intentions of the consumer and the perceived risk probability facet of involvement.

In conjunction with determining significant predictors of return attentions, another goal of this research project is to determine significant predictors of involvement using relatively controllable aspects of the game day experience. The next section of this literature review will explore the selected research variables and how they relate to sports involvement.

Research Variables

Price Fairness

Price is an important aspect of the consumer decision making process, and prices associated with college football are no exception. Price fairness has been defined as the discernment by consumers in determining if a transaction outcome is reasonable, acceptable, or just (Xia, 2014). In determining whether or not a transaction meets the criteria of "fair," a comparison to another product or service is usually involved (Xia, 2014). In the scope of college football, this comparison is usually tied to the prices of tickets and concessions at similar sporting events. Consumers perceiving prices as unfair may result in said consumers failing to purchase the product or service, lowering the overall revenue of the firm (Kwak, 2015). Additionally, a lack of perceived price fairness can lead to complaints and negative word-of mouth communications (Xia, 2014).

In the wake of declining attendance of football games at the national and collegiate level, there has been a recent national movement towards providing the

consumer with a greater-valued football game experience. Wakefield and Sloan (1995) argue that inflated food service prices could possibly encourage fans to purchase food and drinks before or after the event at a location outside the stadium. The Atlanta Falcons recently opened a new facility, the Mercedes-Benz Stadium, and introduced a series of "fan friendly" initiatives. According to Steve Cannon, CEO of AMB "…although food and beverage prices were 50 percent lower in its new Mercedes-Benz Stadium than the prices in the Georgia Dome the previous year, fans spent 16 percent more." Additionally, in an internal survey conducted by the National Football League, the Atlanta Falcons finished No. 1 among all teams, in food quality, price to value ratio, speed of service and variety (Rovell, 2018).

Schools that are pressed to fill seats such as the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) have started offering "all you can eat" game plans that combine tickets with unlimited buffet items. After sending out surveys to season ticket holders and alumni, the administration at UNLV discovered that a common theme among their fans was the desire to make football games more affordable (Brewer, 2018).

The state of Mississippi is also moving toward providing a better game day experience to football fans. Both Mississippi State University and the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss, 2018) have introduced price-value based initiatives at their collegiate sporting events. Mississippi State University recently unveiled a "Moor Value" marketing campaign named after recently appointed Head Football Coach Joe Moorhead. This campaign slashes the prices of all concessions by up to 60% of their original price in an attempt to make games more appealing and of a greater value to fans. In addition, ticket prices have also been lowered by 20% (Smith, 2018.) The University of

Mississippi is experimenting with cutting the price of concessions by lowering the cost of all food and drinks at Ole Miss basketball games by up to 50% (Ole Miss, 2018.)

The perception of the price fairness of tickets and the price fairness of concessions could be viewed differently by the same consumer, and as a result must be split into separate hypotheses. Given the nature of the financial risk as a component of perceived risk within the involvement scale, the following series of hypotheses would argue:

H2a: There is a positive linear relationship between the importance facet of involvement and the perceived price fairness of tickets.

H2b: There is a positive linear relationship between the pleasure component of involvement and the perceived price fairness of tickets.

H2c: There is a negative linear relationship between the risk consequence component of involvement and the perceived price fairness of tickets.

H2d: There is a negative linear relationship between the risk probability component of involvement and the perceived price fairness of tickets.

H2e: There is a positive linear relationship between the symbolic value component of involvement and the perceived price fairness of tickets.

H3a: There is a positive linear relationship between the importance facet of involvement and the perceived price fairness of concessions.

H3b: There is a positive linear relationship between the pleasure component of involvement and the perceived price fairness of concessions.

H3c: There is a negative linear relationship between the risk consequence component of involvement and the perceived price fairness of concessions.

H3d: There is a negative linear relationship between the risk probability component of involvement and the perceived price fairness of concessions.

H3e: There is a positive linear relationship between the symbolic value component of involvement and the perceived price fairness of concessions.

Perceived Quality of Sports Environment

Sports teams are constantly looking for new ways to capture the interest of consumers. The construction of new stadiums and renovations to existing stadiums are included in the efforts made towards this goal. Poorly designed stadiums can lead to negative effects on a sports team's game attendance and negatively affect revenue earned (Greenwell, 2002). Greenwell et al. (2002) researched consumer's perception of the physical sports facility of a minor league hockey team in relation to consumer satisfaction and found that consumers' judgement on satisfaction were based on their interactions with the facility. Furthermore, Bitner (1992) implies that physical aspects of a sports venue can influence consumers' perceptions and willingness to attend games. Wakefield and Sloan (1995) further extrapolate upon this by researching specific stadium factors that could have implications on attendance intentions such as cleanliness, crowding, food service, fan control, and parking. Each of these factors were found to be significant and determined that stadium surroundings play an important role in determining attendance intentions of fans (Wakefield, 1995). Hill and Green (2000) also found some support for their hypotheses arguing that there is a positive relationship between attitude towards the

sportscape and future attendance intentions. If fans enjoy the environment in which they are viewing the sporting event from, there is a likely chance that the fan's pleasure experienced is greater than if the environment was sub-par. Furthermore, if a fan can count on the venue adding value to the experience, there is a chance that the perceived risk of choosing that activity is also lowered. Thus, the following hypotheses of this study are:

H4a: There is a positive linear relationship between the importance facet of involvement and the perceived quality of sports environment.

H4b: There is a positive linear relationship between the pleasure component of involvement and the perceived quality of sports environment**.**

H4c: There is a negative linear relationship between the risk consequence component of involvement and the perceived quality of sports environment.

H4d: There is a negative linear relationship between the risk probability component of involvement and the perceived quality of sports environment.

H4e: There is a positive linear relationship between the symbolic value component of involvement and the perceived quality of sports environment.

Attitude Towards Strength of Schedule and Sports Team

The pinnacle of success for NCAA Division I collegiate sports teams is to compete in and win a national championship. Within the realm of college football, this task is completed by being selected to compete in the College Football Playoff, a single elimination bracket tournament consisting of the four highest ranking college football

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teams as decided by a committee. (College Football Playoff, N.D.) Next to a team's win-loss record, strength of schedule is one of the most highly weighted contributing factors to whether or not a collegiate football team will make the cut to be in the top four teams (College Football Playoff, N.D.) For this reason, a team's strength of schedule can be important to spectators and fans, as it can be indicative of post-season success and placement.

Cialdini and Borden (1976) argue that people have a tendency to attempt to associate themselves with successful accomplishments or groups, or to "bask in the reflected glory" (BIRG), of said group. When a team is performing poorly, a college football fan may distance themselves from the team to protect their self-esteem, or "cut off reflected failure" (Cialdini, 1976). Both of these phenomena incorporate some capacity of involvement or identification with the fan towards the sports team. One of the cognitive antecedents that is theoretically related to "BIRGing" is the quality of opponent (Madrigal, 1995). The quality of opponent can be defined as the level of competition that an opposing team presents to the fan's supported team.

Cialdini et al's (1976) studies two and three support the notion that "BIRGing" is most likely to occur when a fan's public image is threatened. Madrigal (1995) also made the connection that victories against teams that are perceived as a greater threat will cause fans of the winning team to want to associate more so with their respective team. Cialdini's concept of BIRGing and CORFing incorporate consumer's perceptions of risk in the manner that if their chosen team falls short of their predicted "glory", negative attitudes could ensue. Furthermore, a team must be somewhat important to a fan for them to engage in BIRGing or CORFing behavior. Each of these facets of involvement,

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combined with the strengthening of association that occurs between a fan and a team who is winning against quality opponents leads into this study's next hypotheses that:

H5a: There is a positive linear relationship between the importance facet of involvement and the **attitude towards the strength of schedule of the Southern Miss Golden Eagles football team.**

H5b: There is a positive linear relationship between the pleasure component of involvement and the **attitude towards the strength of schedule of the Southern Miss Golden Eagles football team.**

H5c: There is a negative linear relationship between the risk consequence component of involvement and the **attitude towards the strength of schedule of the Southern Miss Golden Eagles football team.**

H5d: There is a negative linear relationship between the risk probability component of involvement and **attitude towards the strength of schedule of the Southern Miss Golden Eagles football team.**

H5e: There is a positive linear relationship between the symbolic value component of involvement and the **attitude towards the strength of schedule of the Southern Miss Golden Eagles football team.**

Attitude Towards the Southern Miss Football Team

Gladden and Funk (2001) define attitude as the consumer's overall evaluation of the brand that depends on the strength and favorability of the brand's attributes and benefits provided by the brand. There are three components of attitude: affective,

cognitive, and behavioral (Babin, 2018). In general, it is important for those marketing a sports team to understand the underlying feelings, thoughts, and intentions of its fan base in order to best serve their needs. Babin (2018) further states that in general, consumers have better attitudes towards products that provide value. Functions of consumer attitudes include allowing the consumer to simplify their decision-making process, express their core values and beliefs to others, and obtain rewards and minimize punishments (Babin, 2018). Each of these functions can play a role in the consumer's decision to become involved with a sports team, and while the relationship between a positive attitude towards a sports team and their subsequent involvement may be assumed by the reader, it is important to investigate if a significant relationship exists between these two variables. Previous works have shown significant relationships between positive attitudes towards a team and team loyalty (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, and Exle, 2008.) Additionally, Gladden and Funk (2001) suggest that attitudes play a role within brand associations and brand loyalty towards sports teams. Therefore, it would follow that:

H5a: There is a positive linear relationship between the importance facet of involvement and the attitude towards the Southern Miss football team.

H5b: There is a positive linear relationship between the pleasure component of involvement and the attitude towards the Southern Miss football team.

H5c: There is a negative linear relationship between the risk consequence component of involvement and the attitude towards the Southern Miss football team.

H5d: There is a negative linear relationship between the risk probability component of involvement and attitude towards the Southern Miss football team.

H5e: There is a positive linear relationship between the symbolic value component of involvement and the attitude towards the Southern Miss football team.

Methodology

Sample and Procedure

To address the aforementioned hypotheses, a survey was created using Qualtrics to gather information regarding Southern Miss fans attitudes and beliefs towards the Southern Miss football team. The survey was distributed through e-mail and social media to both students and alumni. Faculty within the School of Marketing shared the survey with their respective classes, with some offering extra credit within their respective courses upon completion. The survey was shared with multiple student organizations on campus such as the Student Government Association and Eagle Connection, a student led tour group. The Southern Miss Alumni Association also shared the survey through social media, as well as through their newsletter via email. The survey link was distributed among Southern Miss fans through social media, and was posted to several prominent Southern Miss athletics message boards. The survey was available to take for two weeks in the spring semester. Because the goal of this survey was to understand the relationship between involvement and various factors of the game day experience, participants were screened at the beginning of the survey to determine if they had attended a Southern Miss football game at M.M. Roberts Stadium in the past three years and were over the age of 18. The cutoff of three years was chosen to avoid the potential inability of fans to accurately recall their experiences, and to keep some relative consistency among the game day experience. Those who had attended proceeded to the main survey, while those

who had not been to a game in the last three years proceeded to a slightly altered survey that asked questions on their reasons for not attending. A total of 660 responses were collected, with 606 responses consisting of usable data.

Out of the respondents, 515 (85%) had been to a Southern Miss football game at M.M. Roberts Stadium in the past three years and 91 (15%) had not. 51.8% of respondents were male, 42.7% were female, 0.8% preferred not to respond, and 4.6% did not leave a response. Additionally, 49.8% of the respondents were current students at Southern Miss, 46.2% were not current students, and 4.0% failed to leave a response. Finally, 85.6% of respondents attended Southern Miss at some point, while 10.4% had never attended the university.

Survey

The survey used was created in Qualtrics and was comprised of 48 questions regarding their relative involvement, attitudes, and perceptions of aspects of their experience at Southern Miss football games. A 5-point Likert scale was adapted from Kerstetter and Kovich's (1997) research of college women's basketball spectators' involvement profiles and used in the survey to measure Southern Miss football fan's level of involvement. A Likert scale item was also used to measure attitudes towards the Southern Miss football team (adapted from Lacey, Kennett-Hensel, and Manolis, 2015). 5-point semantic differential scales were used to measure the perceived price fairness of concessions and tickets (adapted from Kwak, 2015), attitudes towards the strength of schedule of the team (Sawyer and Howard, 1991), and the quality of the sports environment (adapted from Fisher, 1974). Respondents rated their responses on a 5-point scale where 1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree. Open ended responses were

included to better understand participant's reasons for not attending games and to allow

suggestions from participants on how to better the game day experience.

Method of Analysis Overview

The data collected from the survey was analyzed using the Statistical Package for

the Social Sciences (SPSS). A reliability analysis of the summated research variables was

performed, followed by a principal axis factor analysis using an oblique rotation in order

to both determine if the dimensions of involvement existed within the Southern Miss

football fan base and to compare the results to Kerstetter and Kovich's (1997) similar

research. An independent samples T-Test was performed to determine if a difference

between the means of students and non-students existed. A series of multiple regression

analyses were then run to test the hypotheses. Finally, NVivo, a qualitative word analysis

program, was used to investigate common themes within the open ended responses for

suggestions on how to better the game-day experience. Word frequencies of the

responses (n=355) were calculated and further analyzed for underlying themes.

Results

Reliability Analysis

Multiple item constructs were included within the survey, and thus a reliability

analysis was performed on each of the components of involvement as well as on the

research variables surrounding the game day experience. Each of the research variables

had a coefficient alpha greater than .70, meaning that the data was reliable and could be

used in the regression. The facets of involvement all had a coefficient alpha greater than

.70 except for "Risk Probability", which had an alpha of 0.519. The reliable items were

summated to create summated measure for each construct. Because "Risk Probability"

was not reliable when summated, a single item from the Risk Probability series of

questions (RP2: Whenever I attend Southern Miss football games I am confident that it is

the right activity choice) was utilized as the dependent variable in the regression analyses.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Variable	Coefficient Alpha	Number of Items in Scale
Research Variables		
Attitude Towards Team	0.813	4
Quality of Environment	0.933	7
Price Fairness of Concessions	0.969	4
Price Fairness of Tickets	0.975	4
Attitude Towards Strength of Schedule	0.932	4
Components of Involvement		
Importance	0.909	2
Pleasure	0.898	3
Risk Consequence	0.774	2
Risk Probability	0.519	2
Symbolic Value	0.772	2

In order to get a more accurate overview of the relationships between the research

variables and the components of involvement, the sample was divided into two groups:

students (n=302) and non-students (n=280). Students and non-students may have

different reasons for attending Southern Miss football games, and may differ in how their

attendance and involvement are predicted by the research variables. For example,

students at Southern Miss get free admission into all sporting events, and therefore the

perceived price fairness of tickets may not be a significant predictor of their involvement.

Furthermore, the alumni who discovered the survey link through the Southern Miss

Alumni Association or various Southern Miss message boards may be more involved

than the students, as would be predicted by their participation in such groups.

Factor Analysis

Table 2: Factor loadings and communalities based on a principal components analysis with Varimax rotation for 12 items of the involvement scale (N=606)

Variables	Loadings			Communality
	Factor 1: Enjoyment	Factor 2: Risk Aversion	Factor 3: Personal	
Importance 1	0.783		0.336	0.728
Importance 3	0.808		0.321	0.766
Pleasure 1	0.870			0.793
Pleasure 2	0.819	-0.287		0.755
Sign Value 1			0.896	0.816
Sign Value 2	0.373		0.794	0.787
Risk Consequence 1	-0.234	0.765		0.648
Importance 2	0.552	-0.239		0.375
Risk Consequence 2		0.797		0.648
Risk Consequence 3		0.784		0.648
Risk Probability 1		0.58	-0.244	0.422
Risk Probability 2	0.57	-0.338	0.287	0.521
Eigenvalue	5.0588	1.6698	1.1789	
% of Total Variance	42.157	13.915	9.825	
Total Variance			65.897	

A basic factor analysis was performed to attempt to replicate Kerstetter and Kovich's results and to determine how each of the facets of involvement loaded with one another. Twelve of the items from Kerstetter and Kovich's (1997) involvement scale were factor analyzed using a principal factor component analysis with Varimax rotation. The analysis determined three factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1 that explained 65.897% of the variance for the set of variables. The first factor was labeled as "enjoyment" due to the high loadings in Importance 1, Importance 3, and Pleasure 2, and accounted for 42.157% of the variance. The second factor was labeled "risk aversion" due to its high loadings with Risk Consequence 1, Risk Consequence 2, and Risk Consequence 3, and accounted for 13.915% of the variance. The final factor was labeled

"personal" because of its high loadings in Symbolic Value 1 and Symbolic Value 2, and accounted for only 9.825% of the variance.

The KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity both show that this set of variables are related enough to perform this factor analysis. The KMO=.835, well above the accepted value of .6, while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity had a sig. value < .01. The communalities of the variables tended to be fairly high with the exceptions of Importance 2 (Comm.=.375) and Risk Probability 1 (Comm.=.422), which is somewhat consistent with the results of Kerstetter and Kovich's (1997) factor analysis. Kerstetter and Kovich (1997) also found low communalities in Importance 2 and Risk Probability 1, striking them from their final factor analysis along with Risk Consequence 2 and 3, which had middling communalities in this project. The differences between the two results may be a result of Southern Miss's difference in geographic location, university size, and conference affiliation. Based on the results from the factors analysis, the multi-faceted approach to understanding involvement is appropriate for this project.

Multiple Regression Analyses

First, I ran a multiple regression analysis to determine the relationship between return intentions of consumers and the facets of involvement. Table 3 lists the full results from the regression. Tests to determine if multicollinearity was a problem proved that it was not an issue, as all each of the scores fell well below a VIF of five. The multiple regression analysis of the non-student segment produced F = 24.882, and a p value < .01, meaning that the overall model was significant and approximately 33% of the variance of consumer's return intentions is explained by the independent variables. Significant

predictors of return intentions for the 2019 Southern Miss football season for non-students were the importance and pleasure facets of involvement. Importance had a T-value = 6.617, p-value < .01, and a standardized beta = .391. Pleasure had a T-value = 3.351, p-value < .01 and a standardized beta = .219. For non-students, the importance facet of involvement was the strongest predictor of return intentions, followed by the pleasure facet of involvement which also has a strong relationship with return intentions.

Next, I ran a multiple regression analysis with the student sample. There were no issues with multicollinearity, with each VIF falling below five. The multiple regression analysis of the student segment produced F = 27.780 and a p-value < .01. This means that the overall model was significant and approximately 37% of the variance for student's return intentions is explained by the independent variables. The significant predictors of return intentions were the importance facet of involvement which had a T-value = 5.347, p-value < .01, and standardized beta = .436 and the risk probability facet, which had a T-value = 2.704, p-value < .01, and a standardized beta = .171.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis of Return Intentions vs. Facets of Involvement

Non-Students	Standardized Beta Coefficient	T-Value	Significance
Importance	0.391	6.617	0.000
Pleasure	0.219	3.351	0.000
Risk Consequence	0.068	1.194	0.415
Symbolic Value	0.039	.704	0.295
Risk Probability	0.105	1.657	0.099
Students	Standardized Beta Coefficient	T-Value	Significance
Importance	0.400	4.904	0.000
Pleasure	0.048	0.622	0.534
Risk Consequence	-0.049	-0.859	0.391
Symbolic Value	0.076	1.277	0.203
Risk Probability	0.171	2.704	.007

A regression analysis was then performed to determine the relationship between the various research variables surrounding Southern Miss football game-day experiences and the facets of involvement of different segments of Southern Miss fans. The complete results of this analysis can be found on Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis of the Components of Involvement

Non-Students

Importance	Standardized Beta Coefficient	T Value	Sig.
Attitude Towards Team	0.247	3.17	*0.002
Price Fairness of Tickets	0.162	2.177	**0.031
Price Fairness of Concessions	-0.203	-2.9	*0.004
Quality of Environment	0.054	0.651	0.516
Attitude Towards Strength of Schedule	-0.157	-2.097	**0.037

Pleasure	Standardized Beta Coefficient	T Value	Sig.
Attitude Towards Team	0.354	5.176	*0.000
Price Fairness of Tickets	-0.003	-0.039	0.969
Price Fairness of Concessions	-0.059	-0.963	0.336
Quality of Environment	0.229	3.128	*0.002
Attitude Towards Strength of Schedule	0.104	1.581	0.115

Risk Consequence	Standardized Beta Coefficient	T Value	Sig.
Attitude Towards Team	-0.349	-5.268	*0.000
Price Fairness of Tickets	-0.132	-2.1	**0.037
Price Fairness of Concessions	0.13	2.191	**0.029
Quality of Environment	-0.264	-3.732	*0.000
Attitude Towards Strength of Schedule	-0.047	-0.742	0.459

Symbolic Value	Standardized Beta Coefficient	T Value	Sig.
Attitude Towards Team	0.242	3.065	*0.002
Price Fairness of Tickets	-0.007	-0.093	0.926
Price Fairness of Concessions	-0.038	-0.534	0.594
Quality of Environment	0.075	0.888	0.376
Attitude Towards Strength of Schedule	0.01	0.138	0.891

Risk Probability	Standardized Beta Coefficient	T Value	Sig.
Attitude Towards Team	0.371	5.254	*0.000
Price Fairness of Tickets	-0.001	-0.015	0.988
Price Fairness of Concessions	-0.088	-1.396	0.164
Quality of Environment	0.165	2.192	**0.029
Attitude Towards Strength of Schedule	0.107	1.570	0.118

*significant at $p < .01$
**significant at $p < .05$

Non-students: Importance

The non-student segment proved to have a greater number of significant predictors of the facets of involvement than the student segment. A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the relationship between the importance facet of involvement and the five research variables. There were no multicollinearity issues, as VIF was less than five on each of the predictors. When run with the five research variables, the regression produced $F = 5.170$, and a p-value $< .01$. This means that the overall model was significant and approximately 10% of the variance for non-students perceived importance is explained by the independent variables. Significant predictors of importance were attitude towards the team ($p < .01$, $B = .247$), price fairness of tickets ($p < .05$, $B = .162$), price fairness of concessions ($p < .01$, $B = -.203$), and attitude towards the strength of schedule ($p < .05$, $B = -.157$). Based on the standardized beta values, attitude towards the team was the most predictive variable, followed by price fairness of concessions, price fairness of tickets, and lastly attitude towards strength of schedule.

Non-students: Pleasure

A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the relationship between the pleasure facet of involvement and the five research variables. There were not issues with multicollinearity as VIF was less than five on each of the predictors. When run with the five research variables, the regression produced $F = 20.278$, and a p-value $< .01$. This means that the overall model was significant and approximately 31% of the variance for non-student's pleasure experienced at games is explained by the independent variables. Significant predictors of pleasure were attitude towards the team ($p < .01$, $B = .354$) and perceived quality of environment ($p < .01$, $B = .229$). Based on the

standardized beta values, attitude towards the team was the most predictive variable, followed by perceived quality of sports environment.

Non-students: Risk Consequence

A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the relationship between the risk consequence facet of involvement and the five research variables. There were no issues with multicollinearity as VIF was less than five on each of the predictors. When run with the five research variables, the regression produced $F = 25.298$, and p-value $< .01$. This means that the overall model was significant and approximately 36% of the variance for non-students perceptions of risk consequence is explained by the independent variables. Significant predictors of importance were attitude towards the team ($p < .01$, $B = -.349$), price fairness of tickets ($p < .05$, $B = -.132$), price fairness of concessions ($p < .05$, $B = .13$), and perceived quality of the environment ($p < .01$, $B = -.264$). Based on the standardized beta values, attitude towards the team was the most predictive variable, followed by perceived quality of sports environment, price fairness of concessions, and price fairness of tickets.

Non-Students: Symbolic Value

A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the relationship between the symbolic value facet of involvement and the five research variables. There were no issues with multicollinearity as VIF was less than five on each of the predictors. When run with the five research variables, the regression produced $F = 3.895$, and a p-value $< .01$. This means that the overall model was significant and approximately 8% of the variance for non-student's symbolic value is explained by the independent variables.

The only significant predictor of symbolic value was attitude towards the team (p < .01,

B = .242).

Non-students: Risk Probability

A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the relationship

between the risk probability facet of involvement and the five research variables. There

were not issues with multicollinearity as VIF was less than five on each of the predictors.

When run with the five research variables, the regression produced F = 16.442, and a p-

value <.01. This means that the overall model was significant and approximately 27% of

the variance for non-student's perceived probability of risk experienced is explained by

the independent variables. Significant predictors of risk probability were attitude towards

the team (p <.01, B = .371) and perceived quality of environment (p < .05, B = .165).

Based on the standardized beta values, attitude towards the team was the most predictive

variable, followed by perceived quality of sports environment.

Table 5: Multiple Regression Analysis of the Components of Involvement

Students			
Importance	Standardized Beta Coefficient	T Value	Sig.
Attitude Towards Team	0.396	5.379	*0.000
Price Fairness of Tickets	-0.004	-0.053	0.957
Price Fairness of Concessions	-0.007	-0.111	0.912
Quality of Environment	0.03	0.422	0.673
Attitude Towards Strength of Schedule	0.023	0.341	0.733
Pleasure	Standardized Beta Coefficient	T Value	Sig.
Attitude Towards Team	0.372	5.335	*0.000
Price Fairness of Tickets	-0.001	-0.017	0.987
Price Fairness of Concessions	-0.049	-0.784	0.434
Quality of Environment	0.211	3.112	*0.002
Attitude Towards Strength of Schedule	0.046	0.735	0.463
Risk Consequence	Standardized Beta Coefficient	T Value	Sig.
Attitude Towards Team	-0.391	-5.453	*0.000
Price Fairness of Tickets	-0.053	-0.831	0.407
Price Fairness of Concessions	0.061	0.949	0.344
Quality of Environment	-0.153	-2.189	**0.030
Attitude Towards Strength of Schedule	0.051	0.793	0.429
Symbolic Value	Standardized Beta Coefficient	T Value	Sig.
Attitude Towards Team	0.229	2.916	*0.004
Price Fairness of Tickets	-0.003	-0.042	0.967
Price Fairness of Concessions	0.074	1.052	0.294
Quality of Environment	-0.108	-1.416	0.158
Attitude Towards Strength of Schedule	0.051	0.717	0.474
Risk Probability	Standardized Beta Coefficient	T Value	Sig.
Attitude Towards Team	0.314	4.299	*0.000
Price Fairness of Tickets	0.039	.590	0.556
Price Fairness of Concessions	-0.071	-1.086	0.279
Quality of Environment	0.174	2.445	0.15
Attitude Towards Strength of Schedule	0.014	0.216	0.829

*significant at $p < .01$
**significant at $p < .05$

Students: Importance

A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the relationship

between the importance facet of involvement and the five research variables. There were

no problems with multicollinearity as VIF was less than five on each of the predictors. When run with the five research variables, the regression produced F = 9.603 and a p-value < .01. This means that the overall model was significant and approximately 17% of the variance for student's perceived importance is explained by the independent variables. The only significant predictor of importance was attitude towards the team (p < .01, B = .396).

Students: Pleasure

A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the relationship between the pleasure facet of involvement and the five research variables. There were no issues with multicollinearity as VIF was less than five on each of the predictors. When run with the five research variables, the regression produced F =16.475 and a p-value < .01. This means that the overall model was significant and approximately 27% of the variance for non-student's pleasure is explained by the independent variables. Significant predictors of pleasure were attitude towards the team (p < .01, B =.372) and perceived quality of environment (p < .01, B = .211). Based on the standardized beta values, attitude towards the team was the most predictive variable, followed by quality of the environment. Based on the standardized beta values, attitude towards the team was the most predictive variable, followed by perceived quality of sports environment.

Students: Risk Consequence

A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the relationship between the risk consequence facet of involvement and the five research variables. There were no problems with multicollinearity as VIF was less than five on each of the predictors. When run with the five research variables, the regression produced F = 12.913

and a p-value less than .01. This means that the overall model was significant and approximately 22% of the variance for non-student's perceptions of risk is explained by the independent variables. Significant predictors of the risk consequence facet were attitude towards the team ($p <.01$, B = -.392) and perceived quality of the environment ($p < .05$, B = -.153). Based on the standardized beta values, attitude towards the team was the most predictive variable, followed by perceived quality of sports environment.

Students: Symbolic Value

A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the relationship between the symbolic value facet of involvement and the five research variables. There were no problems with multicollinearity was met as VIF was less than five on each of the predictors. When run with the five research variables, the regression produced F = 2.834 and a p-value $< .05$. This means that the overall model was significant and approximately 6% of the variance for student's symbolic value is explained by the independent variables. The only significant predictor of symbolic value was attitude towards the team ($p < .01$, B = .229).

Students: Risk Probability

A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the relationship between the risk probability facet of involvement and the five research variables. There were no issues with multicollinearity as VIF was less than five on each of the predictors. When run with the five research variables, the regression produced F = 10.305, and a p-value $< .01$. This means that the overall model was significant and approximately 18% of the variance for student's perceived probability of risk experienced is explained by the

independent variables. The only significant predictor of symbolic value was attitude towards the team (p < .01, B = .314).

Qualitative Word Analysis

Table 6: Sports Involvement Survey Open Ended Question's Most Frequent Responses (n=355)			
Word Used	**Related Words**	**Number of Times Word Appears**	**General Associated Ideas**
Student	students	88	Greater Student Section attendance/retention, better student school spirit, improving student gameday experience, improved student engagement during games.
concession	concessions	87	Cheaper concessions, wider variety of concessions, deals for families, ability for students to use Bonus Bucks at games,
fan	fans	87	More fans present, keep fans involved and engaged during the game
stadium		84	Improved stadium, cleaner stadium, improved stadium atmosphere, more vendors and amenities inside stadium, parking near stadium
tailgate	tailgating, tailgates	49	Better tailgating atmosphere, more tailgaters into the stadium, better designation of tailgating areas, more activities for children, higher presence of Seymour, Cheerleaders, band, etc.
Conference	conferences	38	Change conferences, better non-conference opponents at home

I performed a qualitative word analysis using NVivo 12 to investigate the open-ended responses to the question "Please list/describe suggestions on how to improve the Southern Miss football game day experience." Of the 606 respondents, 355 left an open-ended response. A query was run to determine the top 100 most frequently used words. From this list, the most frequently used unique words were singled out and added to the table, along with most frequently expressed ideas using that respective word. Words such

as "the", "and" or any other frequently used word not expressing a unique idea was omitted from being analyzed. The most frequently mentioned suggestions centered around improvements to the attendance of students/school spirit, price and quality of concessions, general fan attendance and retention, and improvements to the atmosphere of the stadium.

Discussion and Implications

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the role that involvement plays within the consumer base of Southern Miss football. The data that was collected and analyzed paints a picture of the Southern Miss football landscape. 17 of the 48 conjectured hypotheses were supported. Interestingly, the differences that exist between student and non-student populations resulted in variations in the significant predictors of each facet of involvement.

Discussion: Predictors of Return Intentions

Southern Miss occupies a unique space within the college football realm. Being a mid-major university with a rich sports history, it would make sense that many older fans would remain somewhat involved with the ongoings of their school past their undergraduate years. For non-students, we found that significant predictors of return intentions were the importance and pleasure facets of involvement, supporting hypotheses H1a and H1b. Each of these are consistent with the existing literature, as many sports fans attend games as a leisure activity and are more likely to attend given its relative importance (Havitz, 1990). For the student population, importance and risk probability were the only facets of involvement that were significant predictors of return intentions. Risk Consequence and symbolic value were not significant predictors in either

segment. For both segments, the primary driver of attendance is if they believe Southern

Miss football is important. For non-students, the enjoyment experienced at games is also

a telltale sign of if they will return. The non-student sample has an average age of 45, and

do not receive free admission like the students. With full time careers and potential

families to take care of, it could be that free time of the non-student segment is limited,

and they are therefore motivated in making sure that the events they are attending are

enjoyable.

Discussion: Predictors of Importance

To uncover predictors of each facet of involvement, a series of regression

analyses were run with each facet of involvement as the dependent variable, with the

selected research variables as the independent variables. As importance was the one facet

of involvement that predicted return intentions across both segments, its predictors are

especially prevalent. For the non-student segment, importance had a positive linear

relationship with attitude towards the team and the perceived price fairness of tickets,

supporting hypotheses H2a and H6a. There were also significant negative relationships

with the perceived price fairness of concessions and attitude towards the strength of

schedule, which means that hypotheses H3a and H4a were not supported. There was no

relationship between perceived quality of environment and importance. These predictors

show us that the fans who believe Southern Miss football is important tend to have a

positive attitude towards the team, think the ticket prices are fair, but believe the strength

of schedule is lackluster and that the concession prices are too high. This coincides with

the qualitative analysis, as two of the most frequently mentioned improvements were the

quality and prices of concessions, as well as a desire to move into a more competitive conference.

In the student segment, the only significant predictor of importance was attitude towards the team, supporting hypothesis H6a. Each of the other research variables did not have a significant relationship with the importance facet of involvement. One explanation for the difference of predictors of involvement, is that the student segment is simply not as engaged as the non-student segment. This coincides with the qualitative analysis as well, with suggestions of improving student attendance being the most frequent response.

Different approaches must be adopted to increase the importance of the Southern Miss football team in each segment. For non-students, creating and executing targeted concession specials for families and season ticket holders could prove beneficial for increasing involvement. As stated in the literature review, many teams – at both professional and college levels- have already adopted concession price initiatives and have found relative success. Furthermore, attempting to schedule out of conference games with teams of higher caliber may prove to be successful in involving fans. The negative relationship between attitude towards strength of schedule and importance is related to Madrigal's (1995) idea that victories against difficult teams ultimately lead to greater association with one's team. For students, positive attitudes towards the team are key. Babin (2018) stated that consumers tend to have better attitudes towards products that provide value. One marketing implication would be to focus on providing a valuable product to the student segment in the form of greater entertainment that can compete with other leisure activities such as sports bars, continued tailgating during the football game, or other non-sport related leisure activities. One of the themes presented in the qualitative

analysis was the desire to encourage tailgaters to transition into the stadium. Therefore, Southern Miss game-days could see greater numbers of students within the stadium if the administration can provide the students with a more valuable product during the game.

Discussion: Predictors of Pleasure

Predictors of pleasure for both non-students and students were attitude towards the team and perceived quality of the environment. Both segments' pleasure facet had a positive linear relationship with both variables, maintaining that hypotheses H6b and H4b are supported. Additionally, attitude towards strength of schedule and perceived price fairness of concessions and tickets were not significant predictors of pleasure experienced in either segment, meaning that hypotheses H2b, H3b, and H5 were not supported.

Perceived quality of the sports environment acting as a predictor of pleasure experienced at the football game was expected, as Greenwell (2002) and Bitner (1992) found similar results. Bitner determined that the physical attributes of a sports venue impacted consumer's willingness to return, which coincides with the findings of this study that pleasure was a predictor of return intentions for the non-student segment. Attitude towards the team was also an expected predictor, as obtaining rewards (the enjoyment of attending a game being the reward) is a key function of attitude (Babin, 2018).

Finding ways to make going to games a more pleasurable experience than other competing activities is important to increase fan involvement. Wakefield (1995) believed that factors that would affect pleasure and return intentions were cleanliness, crowding, food service, fan control, and parking. These findings coincide with the qualitative analysis, as one of the central themes found involved improvements to the stadium.

Among the suggestions to improve the stadium were improved cleanliness, improved atmosphere, and parking within a greater vicinity to the stadium. With the non-student segment, pleasure experienced at games is a significant predictor of return intentions, therefore finding ways to improve both the physical characteristics of the stadium as well as the general atmosphere should improve game-to-game retention.

Discussion: Predictors of Risk Consequence

The risk consequence scale was used to measure the importance of the potential risk that is associated with any consumer's purchase of a product. The non-student and student segments each had a different group of predictors for perceptions of risk. For the non-student segment, variables that had a negative relationship with risk were attitude towards team, price fairness of tickets, and perceived quality of environment, supporting hypotheses H6c, H2c, and H4c. There was also a positive linear relationship between price fairness of concessions and risk consequence, leaving hypothesis H3c unsupported. There was no relationship between attitude towards strength of schedule and perceived risk, meaning hypothesis H5c was not supported.

If fans have a less than positive attitude towards the team, perceive ticket prices to be unfair, or have a poor perception to the quality of the environment of the stadium, the importance of the negative consequences in the case of a poor choice increases. In order to mitigate the risk consequence, those marketing football games should focus on keeping ticket prices at a reasonable price while finding ways to enhance the stadium environment. The results show that fan's perceived importance of a negative outcome should the case arise can be mitigated if they have a positive attitude towards the team.

Community outreach events by the team or similar activities may be beneficial in increasing fan's overall attitude of the team.

For the student segment, both attitude towards team and quality of sports environment had a negative linear relationship with risk consequence, supporting hypotheses H6c and H4c. There was no significant relationship between risk consequence and each of the other research variables for the student segment. Perceived price fairness of tickets as a predictor of risk consequence is to be expected, as students have free admission into football games. For each of the other two predictors, similar strategies mentioned previously to build attitude towards the team and improve stadium quality would result in a lessening of the importance of the negative outcome of students when considering the risk of attending a game. For both segments, creating a quality of environment inside the stadium greater than competing leisure activities is key to abating the risk that fans experience when considering different game day activities.

Discussion: Predictors of Symbolic Value

The only significant predictor of symbolic value for both segments was attitude towards team, supporting hypothesis H6e. None of the other research variables had a significant relationship with the symbolic value facet of involvement, nor was symbolic value a predictor of return intentions for fans. Interestingly, it is worth noting that had a 90% confidence interval been used, symbolic value would have been a significant predictor of return intentions of students ($p < .10$). This does not mean that symbolic value is not important to creating a more involved fan base, but rather most the selected research variables lacked a relationship. Fans' feelings of symbolic value from a team is a prime example of enduring involvement, manifesting in the form of fan clubs or other groups that

pride themselves on their Southern Miss affiliation. Future research could investigate different aspects of the Southern Miss football game day experience that were not explored in this project for connections to symbolic value.

Discussion: Predictors of Risk Probability

Risk probability is the chance that a negative consequence will occur when purchasing a product or service. The risk probability scale was shown to be unreliable when summated, so the survey item "Whenever I attend Southern Miss football games I am confident that it is the right activity choice*"* was used to represent the risk probability facet. The non-student and student segments each had a different group of predictors for perceptions of risk probability for both segments, there were no negative relationships between risk probability and the research variables, meaning that none of the hypotheses were supported. For the non-student segment, variables that had a positive relationship with risk probability were attitude towards team and perceived quality of environment. This shows that non-student fans that have a positive disposition towards the team and have a positive perception of the quality of environment inside M.M. Roberts stadium tend to think that their purchase decision will have a positive outcome. For students, attitude towards team was the only significant predictor, and had a positive linear relationship with risk probability. This shows that lowering the perceived probability of a negative outcome from occurring when choosing to attend a Southern Miss football game can be alleviated by improving attitude towards the team in both segments. For students, risk probability was a significant predictor of return intentions. Similar strategies mentioned previously to

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improve attitude towards the team could be utilized in order to further foster student return intentions.

Limitations and Future Research

The main limitation to this research project was the researcher's inexperience in conducting advanced quantitative analysis. Structural equation modeling, which is outside of the researcher's current capabilities, could provide a more in depth understanding of involvement and how it relates to bettering the fan experience at college football games. Due to experience constraints, regression was the primary tool used to investigate involvement, which created more hypotheses than initially planned. The dual nature of the sample size also increased the number of analyses that needed to be run and hypotheses that needed to be tested separately in each segment. Another limitation is the potential bias of the sample surveyed. Because the survey was shared through the Southern Miss Alumni Association's social media and unofficial fan pages, the predisposition of those willing to take the survey may be that they are more involved than the average fan. A large amount of participants also came from students enrolled in marketing classes, which may not give an accurate representation of the entire student body. A mentioned before, the unique characteristics of the Southern Miss fan base did not perfectly align with every facet involvement. Future research could explore different variables of the game day experience and how they affect involvement, such as the start time of game or geographic proximity to campus.

Conclusion

This project provides an analysis of Southern Miss football that examines how each facet of involvement and the subsequent aspects of game days build off one another to

illustrate the needs and motivations of Southern Miss football fans. Students and non-students have different predictors of involvement, and therefore must be marketed to in different capacities. The data shows that involved non-students need to have an enjoyable time at Southern Miss football games, while also paying an affordable price for their ticket and concessions. For students, there are significantly less predictors of involvement and return intentions. If the front office wishes to have a high number of students attending football games, convincing students that Southern Miss football is important is crucial. Furthermore, improving the physical aspects of the stadium, as well as the atmosphere, should have significant results in improving the involvement of the student population. Ultimately, providing a product on and around the field that is more valuable than other competing leisure time activities is the key to success in increasing the involvement of Southern Miss football fans.

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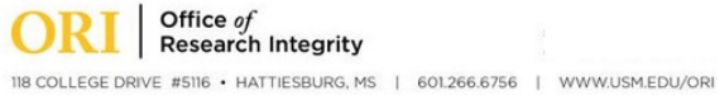Wakefield, Kirk & Sloan, Hugh. (1995). The Effects of Team Loyalty and Selected Stadium Factors on Spectator Attendance. Journal of Sport Management. 9. 153-172. 10.1123/jsm.9.2.153.

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Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

ORI | Office *of* Research Integrity

118 COLLEGE DRIVE #5116 · HATTIESBURG, MS | 601.266.6756 | WWW.USM.EDU/ORI

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/research/institutional-review-board

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project below 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 regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and 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 involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident template on Cayuse IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-18-136

PROJECT TITLE: Southern Miss Football Sports Involvement

SCHOOL/PROGRAM: School of Marketing

RESEARCHER(S): Cameron Kenney
　　　　　　　　Melinda McLelland

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved
CATEGORY: Expedited
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: December 11, 2018 to December 11, 2019

Edward L. Goshorn, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

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Appendix B: Cover Letter

Dear Southern Miss Students, Alumni, and Fans:

My name is Cameron Kenney and I am a senior Marketing major completing research for the Honors College through the School of Marketing in the College of Business & Economic Development. I am currently researching aspects of the Southern Miss football game day experience and would be grateful if you considered completing the following survey. The survey will take no longer than 10 minutes and will ask questions regarding the atmosphere and importance of Southern Miss football within the community. Survey participants must be over the age of eighteen and participation is voluntary and up to the taker's discretion.

Survey participants may discontinue taking the survey at any time with no penalties. There are no risks associated with participating in this study. Participants will not be asked for any identifying information. If applicable, students will have the option to include their name and class at the end of the survey for extra credit. All personal information is strictly confidential, and no names will be disclosed.
Questions concerning the research, at any time during or after the project, should be directed to Cameron Kenney with the contact information provided below. This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5116, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601-266-5997.

SMTTT,
Cameron Kenney
Cameron.Kenney@usm.edu

Directions: Please select a response to the following question.

Have you attended a Southern Miss football game at M.M. Roberts Stadium within the last 3 years?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

How likely are you to attend Southern Miss football games next season?

○ Extremely unlikely (1)

○ Somewhat unlikely (2)

○ Neither likely nor unlikely (3)

○ Somewhat likely (4)

○ Extremely likely (5)

In general, do you like watching college football?

○ Dislike a great deal (1)

○ Dislike somewhat (2)

○ Neither like nor dislike (3)

○ Like somewhat (4)

○ Like a great deal (5)

Please briefly elaborate on your reasons for not attending a Southern Miss football game at M.M. Roberts Stadium within the last 3 years.

_____

_____

_____

What would motivate you to attend a Southern Miss football game at M.M. Roberts Stadium?

_____

_____

_____

Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Southern Miss football is important to me.	○	○	○	○	○
Southern Miss football never leaves me indifferent.	○	○	○	○	○
Southern Miss football interests me a lot.	○	○	○	○	○
I really enjoy attending Southern Miss football games.	○	○	○	○	○
Attending Southern Miss football games is pleasurable.	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I get annoyed if I attend Southern Miss football games and it proved to be the wrong activity choice.	○	○	○	○	○
When I mistakenly chose to attend a Southern Miss football game from among other activities it really matters to me.	○	○	○	○	○
If, after I have attended a Southern Miss football game, my choice proved to be poor, I would be upset.	○	○	○	○	○
I am sometimes conflicted when choosing Southern Miss football games over other activities.	○	○	○	○	○
Whenever I attend Southern Miss football games I am confident that it is the right activity choice.	○	○	○	○	○

I can tell a lot about a person by whether or not they support sports like Southern Miss football.	○	○	○	○	○
My attendance at Southern Miss football games says a lot about me.	○	○	○	○	○

Directions: Please indicate your perceptions about the price of TICKETS to attend Southern Miss football games by selecting a response for each dimension below.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unfair	○	○	○	○	○	Fair
Unjust	○	○	○	○	○	Just
Unreasonable	○	○	○	○	○	Reasonable
Unacceptable	○	○	○	○	○	Acceptable

Directions: Please indicate your perceptions about the price of CONCESSIONS at Southern Miss football games by selecting a response for each dimension below.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unfair	○	○	○	○	○	Fair
Unjust	○	○	○	○	○	Just
Unreasonable	○	○	○	○	○	Reasonable
Unacceptable	○	○	○	○	○	Acceptable

Directions: How do you find the environment of M.M. Roberts Stadium? Please rate the stadium environment on the following dimensions.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unattractive	○	○	○	○	○	Attractive
Uninteresting	○	○	○	○	○	Interesting
Bad	○	○	○	○	○	Good
Depressing	○	○	○	○	○	Cheerful
Dull	○	○	○	○	○	Bright
Uncomfortable	○	○	○	○	○	Comfortable
Unpleasant	○	○	○	○	○	Pleasant

Directions: Please indicate your overall feelings or impressions towards the level of competition (strength of schedule) of the 2018 Southern Miss Football schedule.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Bad	○	○	○	○	○	Good
Unsatisfactory	○	○	○	○	○	Satisfactory
Unfavorable	○	○	○	○	○	Favorable
Unexciting	○	○	○	○	○	Exciting

Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding the Southern Miss football team.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I am happy with the efforts this football team is making towards loyal fans like me.	○	○	○	○	○
This football team has high integrity.	○	○	○	○	○
This football team can be trusted by fans.	○	○	○	○	○
In general, I am satisfied with the experiences I get from attending this team's games.	○	○	○	○	○

Directions: Please provide some general information about your experience with Southern Miss football.

Did you attend (or are currently attending) Southern Miss?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

In general, how many HOME Southern Miss football games do you attend each year?

In general, how many AWAY Southern Miss football games do you attend each year?

Directions: Please list/describe suggestions on how to improve the Southern Miss football game day experience.

_____

_____

_____

Have you ever been to a Southern Miss football game at M.M. Roberts Stadium?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

What is your year of birth?

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

○ Less than high school degree (1)

○ High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED) (2)

○ Some college but no degree (3)

○ Associate degree in college (2-year) (4)

○ Bachelor's degree in college (4-year) (5)

○ Master's degree (6)

○ Doctoral degree (7)

○ Professional degree (JD, MD) (8)

Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be:

☐ White (1)

☐ Black or African American (2)

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native (3)

☐ Asian (4)

☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)

☐ Other (6) _____

Please indicate the answer that includes your entire household income in (previous year) before taxes.

○ Less than $10,000 (1)

○ $10,000 to $19,999 (2)

○ $20,000 to $29,999 (3)

○ $30,000 to $39,999 (4)

○ $40,000 to $49,999 (5)

○ $50,000 to $59,999 (6)

○ $60,000 to $69,999 (7)

○ $70,000 to $79,999 (8)

○ $80,000 to $89,999 (9)

○ $90,000 to $99,999 (10)

○ $100,000 to $149,999 (11)

○ $150,000 or more (12)

What is your sex?

○ Male (1)

○ Female (2)

○ Prefer not to respond (3)

Are you a current student at Southern Miss?

◯ Yes (1)

◯ No (2)

Have you ever been affiliated with a Greek organization?

◯ Yes (1)

◯ No (2)