

I Don't Want a Sales Job! Examination of Attitudes toward Ticket Sales Persons by Sport Management Students

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**25-minute oral presentation
(including questions)**

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Ticket sales are believed to be the lifeblood for any sport organization. In intercollegiate sport, for instance, ticket sales represents one of the most important sources of revenue for many intercollegiate athletic departments so that strategic management of a ticket sales operation is becoming a high priority for many athletic departments in recent years (Bouchet, Ballouli, & Bennett, 2011). Thus, many sport organizations are seeking ways to create unique and creative ticket sales methods such as ticket sales force (Bouchet et al., 2011) or ticket sales outsourcing (Lee, Juravich, & Oh, 2016). In academia, knowing the majority of entry level positions within the sport industry is in the area of sales (McKelvey & Southall, 2008), researchers are continuously developing and educating ticket sales models for future sport managers (Irwin, Southall, & Sutton, 2007; Pierce & Irwin, 2016; Pierce & Peterson, 2010).

In general sales literature, the salesperson as a subject matter has received much attention for decades. Particularly, attitudes toward the salesperson has been investigated quite often, and traditionally and consistently, they were viewed unfavorable by the consumers. A Gallup poll showed that two of the five least trusted professions in the U.S. were types of sales person (Washington Post, 2013). In academic literature, generally, the public image of sales person is quite unfavorable (e.g., Babin, Boles, & Darden, 1995; Lee, Sandfield, & Dhaliwal, 2007). What is important is that negative stereotypes could influence consumer behavior (see Babin et al., 1995).

While ticket sales operations are certainly considered vital, interestingly, no academic attention in the field of sport marketing has been directed to understand the salesperson in terms of attitudes they receive. In the field of sport marketing, there have been academic efforts to better prepare sport management students for their professional career upon graduation, it is not known how the students perceive ticket sales persons (e.g., account executives, ticket sales associates, etc). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate sport management students' attitudes toward the ticket sales persons from the sport organizations. It has to be noted that understanding their attitudes will provide both sport management educators and practitioners with great practical implications.

To examine sport management students' attitudes toward ticket salespersons from the sport organizations, Q methodology, a mixed method research approach, will be used as it is a valuable asset to understand attitudes, and various academic fields, such as education (Cross, 2005; Ramlo & Newman, 2011), health (Prasad, 2001), nursing (Yeun, 2005), psychology (Peritore, 1989), terrorism (Nitcavic & Dowling, 1990), used Q methodology to measure attitudes. Q methodology, mainly based on self-psychological credo and abductive logic (Stephenson, 1967), is a robust technique to measure attitudes that exist within a certain group.

The first step of Q methodology is to develop and construct Q statements, which consists of various opinions on a topic. This study developed the statements from the student-instructor communications collected over two semesters from two sport management classes at one large University. Specifically, to generate the Q statements, a Global Single-Item Questions based interviews was employed. Global Single-Item Questions based interviews were selected to receive broad responses like feelings, experiences, and impressions from the interview (Yeun, 2005). A total of 25 statements (e.g. 'salesmen are persistent', 'salesmen are annoying', 'salesmen are pushy', 'salesmen are cheesy', 'salesmen are young') were generated after eliminating redundant and unclear responses. Content validity was examined using an expert panel review. Two professors (one from physics and one from exercise science) who published the papers using Q methodology in the past were asked to serve as an expert panel. The specific questions asked of the experts were if there are different statements that better represent the statements being described. Both

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panel members recommended and asked to consider more diversity in the statements (Ramlo & Newman, 2011) so there will be another round of developing Q statements.

Using the final set of Q statements, then, each survey participant (sport management students) will be asked to perform Q sorting, which includes sorting and ranking statements into a quasi-normal forced distribution. For data analysis, the software PQMethod will be utilized (Schmolck & Atkinson, 2002). Also students' written comments will be collected to further examine their attitudes and to provide insights related to these unique attitudes. This study is in progress and results will be reported in detail at the 2018 SMA conference.

This study will be the first study in the sport marketing literature that examines the attitudes toward ticket salespersons; as a result, it will contribute to the body of literature by offering detailed understanding based on robust research technique. Practically, understanding attitudes will provide instruction on how to understand and use results of this study. For example, understanding attitudes will be helpful in that both the sport organizations who will recruit and hire the students and sport management educators who advise them for their future professional careers could benefit from this study.

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