

MARKETING PRACTICES IN NATIONAL JUNIOR COLLEGE ATHLETIC
ASSOCIATION MEN'S BASKETBALL PROGRAMS: SWOT AND PESTLE ANALYSES

by

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(Under the Direction of James J. Zhang)

ABSTRACT

Although there is an extensive fan base for athletics in the United States, junior college athletics are often overlooked and seldom studied. Thus, there is an inherent need to market junior college athletics. The task of marketing men's basketball programs often falls on the athletic director, sports information director, and in some cases the coaching staff. By completing a document analysis of current marketing materials and interviewing key personnel a clear depiction of marketing strategies utilized can be noted. Upon noting these strategies current practices can be analyzed and suggestions for improvements made. Therefore, this study explored what avenues successful Division I Men's Basketball Programs within the National Junior College Athletic Association employed to market their programs. In addition to examining current practices, the current study sought to analyze the practices and make suggestions for improvement.

Throughout the interview process three common themes emerged (i.e., the significance of social media, the lack of resources both financial and personnel, and the reliance on the local community) with the document analysis supporting these assertions. The results revealed that diversifying the usage of social media, exploring additional digital platforms, and partnering with

local business and industry are three means in which successful men's basketball programs could increase the marketing success of their programs. The discussion offers a comprehensive SWOT and PESTLE analyses of the marketing practices of Division I Men's Basketball Programs within the National Junior College Athletic Association.

INDEX WORDS: National Junior College Athletic Association, Men's Basketball, Sport Marketing, Social Media

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for with Him all things are possible. In addition, I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Lois and Alfred Barney. Despite all the support I have received, none of this would be possible without my parents. From the countless hours in the gym to reinforcing the importance of pursuing my dreams, you both have always encouraged me to pursue my dreams while cultivating my passion for academia. You all always reminded me that no task is too big for me to accomplish. I would not be the individual I am today without you. God made me the luckiest girl in the world by selecting you to be my parents. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The first visionary attempt to create a bridge between high school and four-year colleges was William Rainey Harper. A lifelong academic and educator, in 1896 Harper utilized the campus of the University of Chicago to separate entities and create a junior college. Those in opposition stated that junior colleges were meant to be detours and not final destinations in formal education. Nonetheless, during the early years of junior colleges more students used the technical skills learned to enter the workforce than those who utilized junior college prior to entering a four-year institution (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Robinson-Neal, 2009). Harper feared that awarding this type of degree would reduce the value of the degree, insisting that students may lose their drive to complete a four-year program. Eventually the varying ideals came to a compromise that led to the creation of what is still today known as an Associate of Arts (Erdman & Ogden, 2000; Robinson-Neal, 2009). With the addition of the Associate of Arts degree and a higher demand for workforce education, the credibility and prevalence of junior colleges grew in the 1940s and 50s. During the next twenty years, junior colleges continued to evolve and expand educational fields. Junior colleges began to offer technical courses. Junior colleges are no longer limited to being either technical in nature or an extension of high schools. Junior colleges currently serve a variety of different purposes, from vocational diplomas, two-year degrees, professional certificates, and technical certificates.

The idea of attending a junior college is often one of convenience. Kane and Rouse (1999) note that approximately 33% of high school graduates will elect to continue their education at a junior college. This may stem from the convenience of the class schedule, lower tuition, and the transitional opportunities to the workforce or to a four-year institution that are available at a junior college. Convenience may be a significant factor considering compared to their four-year counterparts, junior college attendees traditionally have a higher average age (Kane & Rouse, 1999). As a result of their demanding schedule and school often being their secondary focus behind their employment, convenience is of the utmost importance. The demands that these students face outside of the classroom may require them to enroll in classes at unconventional times. Junior colleges offer classes of convenience, such as online and extended time-“courses are not only offered during the ‘traditional’ daytime hours, but also at night and on weekends” (Kane & Rouse, 1999, p. 66). Junior colleges may even partner with local business to offer off campus classes in which the professor goes to a different location to meet the students for class. Convenience often plays a significant role in selecting a junior college to further one’s education. However, convenience is not isolated as a motivating factor. Students that attend a junior college also must factor in their goals upon graduation.

The junior college academic environment typically plays one of two roles for the students that elect to attend. Junior college students typically fall into one of two categories. The students are either utilizing the junior college as a transition from high school to a four-year institution or they are learning a vocational trade that requires only an associate’s degree. Students that are using the junior college as a stepping-stone may

elect to take advantage of transfer assistance programs. Some junior colleges have partnered with four-year institutions to guarantee admissions to students who complete the two-year requirements with satisfactory academic performance. Programs such as this can be found all over the country. They facilitate the use of junior colleges as transitional institutions that bridge the high school setting with the four-year institute. In addition to acting as a transition to a four-year college, junior colleges may serve to help students transition to the workplace in fields that only require two-year certificate programs or an associate's degree. Some field that may fall into this category and are offered at junior college are nursing, medical assisting, automotive, paralegal studies, and technician. These positions only require two years of education, thus making the junior college setting enticing to students who desire to enter the workforce.

Community colleges are designed to prepare students educationally, socially, and emotionally for larger institutions. They act as a gateway. One important aspect of this experience for students is athletics. It is not only important to the athletes themselves, but sports have been proven to boost morale of the community and students as a whole in addition to at times generating funding. Breaking gender constraints and attempting to balance opportunities, junior colleges sought to present women as equal opportunity athletes within a competitive spectrum. Athletics bring about continuity and comradery within a junior college environment that can be fairly flexible and unconventional for some students. The National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) governs junior college athletics.

The history of the NJCAA spans nearly eight years. In 1938, representatives of a group of California junior colleges met to write and approve a constitution, and to elect a

president. In the following year the NJCAA had their first championship of events and adopted the name National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA). The first national championship organized was for track and field, the sport that just two years prior had prompted them to petition to join the NCAA. Organizing this event provoked the institutions to also develop and enforce rules regarding eligibility and championship decorum. Members of the NJCAA are all two-year institutions. These institutions saw athletics as a valuable resource and sought a means to organize the competitive events. Over the past eight decades the impact of the NJCAA has grown tremendously. This is indicated by the number of professional basketball players both current and past that played at a member institution within the NJCAA. There are over twenty individuals in the National Basketball Association, NBA, which at some point in their careers played junior college basketball. This does not include former NJCAA players that play professionally overseas. Some notable former NJCAA players that currently play or previously played in the NBA are Jae Crowder, Jimmy Butler, and Dennis Rodman. Junior college basketball served as a means for them to continue the pursuit of their athletic careers that ultimately led to success at the highest level of competition, the professional arena. NJCAA member institutions encourage athletics with the hopes that they generate excitement by producing a competitive product. However, funding is often a factor that limits the success of NJCAA institutions.

Financial considerations are often the cause of limited resources for NJCAA athletic programs. Limited budgets put athletic programs in a bind. State funding, student fees, and donations are typically the primary means of funding athletic programs at the junior college level. Athletic directors are often looking for ways to increase revenue and

funding without overly taxing the student body. Funding may be limited; however, eliminating athletics would pose a major issue not only for the athletes but for the community as well. Some programs are self-sustaining while others struggle with revenue. Evaluating NJCAA marketing practices may lead to increased knowledge surrounding how to utilize athletics to increase revenue. By increasing marketing and increasing knowledge around NJCAA programs, financial situations may improve. Often times, spectators do not realize that the talented athletes they are watching at the NCAA and even the NBA level may have been NJCAA athletes at some point in their careers.

Marketing athletics can be viewed as marketing “two primary product markets, ticket sales and broadcasting rights, which account for over 80 percent of team revenue” (Zhang, Lam, & Connaughton, 2003, p. 33). Junior college athletics often focus on marketing ticket sales. Engaging the target audience and attracting consumers to events is a difficult task. Because junior colleges are transitional and students are programs are designed to be completed in two-years, the fan base fluctuates. This leads to decreased fan retention. However, junior colleges are not alone in facing issues of spectator retention. ‘Spectator retention is the most common problem’ in sport marketing (Zhang et al., 2003, p. 33).

According to Zhang et al. (2003), a number of factors can influence attendance; one of these factors in marketing promotions which includes but is not limited to publicity surrounding the event and promotional items. Creating and marketing an environment that is exciting, competitive, and appealing to the spectator are key factors to increasing ticket sales and game consumption. Game attractiveness is the primary factor tied to game consumption. These are all components that individuals attempting to

market an NJCAA event should consider. Previous collegiate marketing studies have focused on four-year institutions. These marketing studies can be used as a reference for junior colleges but there may not always be a direct application.

Statement of Problem

Research evaluating the current marketing practices, challenges, and implications at the junior college level is rarely done. Thus, this study seeks to utilize inductive reasoning grounded in pragmatism to do what previous studies have failed to do, examine marketing at the junior college level and make suggestions for improvement. Men's basketball findings can be used to generate a foundation for other junior college athletics. Qualitative research is conducted to provide an insight into the role that communication plays in the success of NJCAA athletics. Major issues to be explored are funding, undervaluation of junior college athletics, and marketing. This study is designed to address the following questions:

1. What are the major marketing practices in NJCAA Men's Basketball programs?
2. What are the major challenges, issues, and weaknesses in marketing in the NJCAA?
3. What are the suggested solutions to marketing challenges?

Delimitations of Study

This study is carried out with the following delimitations:

1. NJCAA final polls for the past ten seasons were used to determine the top sixteen programs. Historically unsuccessful teams were not being included.

2. The programs are NJCAA schools that participate in Division-I athletics; whereas, Division II and III were not considered.
3. Athletic directors and sports information directors of participating NJCAA institutions were interviewed.
4. Participating schools' marketing material were compiled and reviewed.
5. The collected information from interviews and documentary analyses were examined and analyzed together with information collected via on-site observations and a comprehensive review of literature.

Definition of Terms

A number of key terms are adopted in this study; to avoid ambiguity of conceptual interpretations, they are constructively or operationally defined as in the following:

1. Inductive reasoning: The ability to utilize a specific case to make general assumptions.
2. Junior college: A two-year institution of higher education.
3. Marketing mix: A combination of factors that can be controlled by a company to influence consumers to purchase its products, referring to the set of actions or tactics including price, product, promotion and place that a company uses to promote its brand or product in the market (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2014).
4. Pragmatic theory: a research theory that is centered on problem solving.
5. Promotion: The advancement of a product, idea, or point of view through publicity and/or advertising. See also sales promotion (Mullin et al., 2014).

6. Success: Athletic performance will be the sole criteria for determining success for this study, in particular, finishing in the top 10 in the final NJCAA poll
7. Target market: A particular market segment at which a marketing campaign is focused (Mullin et al., 2014).

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations are recognized for the conduct of this study:

1. This study is limited to the utilization of NJCAA poll to determine success as opposed to the NJCAA tournament results.
2. The validity of this study is limited to the level of accuracy of marketing campaigns reported in the printed or on-line reports when conducting documentary analyses
3. The researcher may have limited access to marketing materials that are utilized by the programs.
4. The success of this study depends on the voluntary participation of NJCAA athletic departments; without a random sample, the findings may not adequately portray marketing practices of programs.

Significance of Study

Junior college athletics are an area of research that is often overlooked. A study such as this one seeks to explore the current marketing practices, identify weaknesses, and suggest means of strengthening the marketing practices within NJCAA DI Men's Basketball programs. By analyzing marketing practices, this study seeks to fill a void in current research. There are several research studies that are done on four-year institutions and professional athletics; however, junior colleges are a unique realm of higher

education. The ability to understand what is currently done to market such programs provides a foundation for progress. Upon developing a clear picture of current marketing practices, challenges, issues, and weaknesses in marketing can be determined. It is important to identify the challenges; due to the fact, the challenges that a junior college program faces may be different than their four-year counterparts. These challenges, issues, and weaknesses must be considered when making suggested solutions to improve junior college marketing. A study such as this one allows for insight to be gained into the interworking complexities of marketing initiatives within the National Junior College Athletic Association. The study aims to primarily utilize grounded theory to research the top sixteen men's basketball programs over the last ten years to evaluate the marketing initiatives utilized and suggest improvements. The results should provide a research foundation for future studies to further delve into the NJCAA and potentially explore marketing of all NJCAA sports.

The ability to strengthen and mold positive changes within an organization and provide insight into various forms of marketing within the NJCAA, as it relates to men's basketball. The participants in this study have that power. In addition, they possess the chance to review marketing at their institutions. The ability to share can strengthen practices as well as potentially receive confirmation and reassurance of their successful initiatives. They also are able to recognize and reinforce their success. The researcher gets to explore a previously overlooked field when conducting this study. It is a unique chance to look into a field from which others have typically steered away. This can be extremely motivating in conjunction with helping others evaluate their programs. Overall any new research in a field is helpful. The ability to take steps to cast a light on NJCAA

marketing is the primary benefit of this study. A study such as this one attempts to improve marketing in the NJCAA.

As with any study, those involved are impacted. There are benefits and risks associated with participation in a study like this. The risks that the participant opens himself or herself up to are as follows: Exposing shortcomings and vulnerabilities of athletic marketing and being viewed differently if personal ideas do not match ideal marketing practices. These participants are faced with limited potential hindrances; however, the benefit of the study is encouragement for those who elect to expand the marketing potential of their programs. As the researcher, the responsibility for the study rests with those conducting the study. With a study such as this one, the preconceived assumptions that NJCAA marketing can be improved may be completely false and instead of emancipating NJCAA athletics from limited marketing, one could further draw attention to their shortcomings. There is also the risk of being personally and psychologically effected by learning behind the scenes information; nonetheless, these risks are minimal and occur with any study of this nature. All in all, the field could be adversely impacted by a study like this. Although the desired outcome is gathering information and proposing improvements, that may not be feasible. The programs may feel that they are incapable of improving were inferior thus indicating that researching NJCAA marketing is unbeneficial. This could further lower NJCAA marketing expectations. Developing a rapport with the participants by utilizing ethical practices and increasing academic rigor and trustworthiness can minimize these risks.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter includes the following sections: (a) overview of two-year college, (b) athletic foundation, (c) challenges and controversies, (d) SWOT and PESTLE analyses, (e) marketing conditions and practices, (f) consumer needs, and (g) summary.

Overview of Two-Year College

Today the NJCAA has grown to be a powerful national organization. It encompasses 24 regions, over 500 institutions, 3 divisions, 15 men's sports, and 13 women's sports. Nonetheless, the idea of junior college predates this influential organization. The delicate balance between academics and athletics are seldom reviewed at the junior college level; however, "athletics help foster that sense of community without which a community college is, well, just another college" (Jenkins, 2006). Creating this delicate balance as well as an environment for student athletes to grow is a difficult task. In addition, it also has many hindrances that must be overcome.

History of the Two-Year Collegiate Institution

Two-year collegiate institutions can be divided into two distinct subgroups: those with a technical focus, that emphasize hands-on training for immediate employment in a variety of technical fields, and those that are designed to be transfer programs to feed into degrees of higher-level learning. In the early beginnings of the two-year institution there were strong geographical ties to the mission of the various institutions. For rural areas,

hands-on training was paramount. There was less focus on extensive education and more focus on the learning of a trade for immediate implementation in low-skilled manual labor. These students desired to refine a vocational craft in order to be successful immediately in a trade industry (Frye, 1993; Hurst, 1971; Katsinas, 1999; Kennamer & Katsinas, 2011; Snider, 1999). The students at these technical institutions spent a large portion of their educational time in labs as opposed to in lecture style classrooms- this innovative approach to education led to exponential growth in enrollment (Hurst, 1971).

During the same time period, however, junior colleges were also viewed as an extension of high school. Stumpf (2013) stated the following:

When William Rainey Harper was considering the idea of... a junior college experience, to prepare students for success in the university... he viewed the necessity of junior college in relation to how he perceived the intellectual landscape in science, mathematics, and the humanities (p. 569).

Creation and Development: Academic Institutions

Creating a two-year collegiate institution requires one to take vision, purpose, and insight into the needs of the potential student. The first visionary to attempt to create a bridge between high school and four-year colleges was William Rainey Harper. A lifelong academic and educator, in 1896 Harper utilized the campus of the University of Chicago to separate entities and create a junior college. Teaching styles varied between the upper and lower classmen. The freshmen and sophomores attended the junior college where they were instructed in a manner similar to the high school format that they were familiar with. This style allowed for a smooth transition into the collegiate setting. The

classes for the upper classmen--juniors, seniors, and graduate students, were modeled after German research institutions (Erdman & Ogdeen, 2000).

Harper's idea was utilized as the model to create a completely separate entity, which is today known as a junior college, in Joliet, Illinois. Merrow (2007) promulgated the junior college ideals and suggests that junior colleges "were created to prepare deserving students for the final two years of a university...the very first public junior college, in Joliet, Illinois, was set up in a high school, as the equivalent of grades 13 and 14" (p. 2). The idea to grant a degree upon the completion of this extension was a highly debated subject area. Those in opposition stated that junior colleges were meant to be detours and not final destinations in formal education. Nonetheless, during the early years of junior colleges more students used the technical skills learned to enter the workforce than those who utilized junior college prior to entering a four-year institution (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Robinson-Neal, 2009).

From early on, the stigma associated with a junior college and the caveats that a two-year degree possesses were present. Harper feared that awarding this type of degree would reduce the value of the degree insisting that students may lose their drive to complete a four-year program and professional schools may increase the rigor or admission standards. Eventually the varying ideals came to a compromise that led to the creation of what is still today known as an Associate of Arts (Erdman & Ogdeen, 2000; Robinson-Neal, 2009). With the addition of the Associate of Arts degree and a higher demand for workforce education, the credibility and prevalence of junior colleges grew in the 1940s and 50s. State legislators began to give credence to the notion that such

institutions were beneficial and provided state funds to pay for operating costs (Harbeson, 1941; Robinson-Neal, 2009).

During the next twenty years, junior colleges continued to evolve and expand educational fields. Two-year institutions were no longer considered simply junior colleges, as there were also technical colleges. The title the institution received was based largely on its mission. During the 1970s the terms “junior college” and “technical college” to identify two-year institutions became less customary and were replaced with the larger umbrella identifier of “community colleges” for two-year institutions (Erdman & Ogdeen, 2000; Jenkins, 2006; Robinson-Neal, 2009).

Current Role in Higher Education

Since the creation of the first junior college institution, times have greatly changed. There is no longer the limitation that junior colleges are either technical in nature or an extension of high schools. Junior colleges currently serve a variety of different purposes, from vocational diplomas, two-year degrees, professional certificates, and technical certificates. Junior college is a viable option following high school. In addition to attending a junior college following high school, many advanced high school students utilize junior college to jumpstart their college career with programs such as joint enrollment. Also referred to as dual enrollment this program allows students to attend high school as well as college at the same time. Junior colleges may be public, private, or proprietary in funding. These options give students the ability to choose between almost any subject matter that they desire. They are allowed to continue their education post-high school without being thrown into a large institution.

Morrow (2007) notes how the role of the community college has expanded to encompass a more extensive curriculum. Community colleges are designed to prepare students educationally, socially, and emotionally for larger institutions. They act as a gateway. One important aspect of this experience for students is athletics. It is not only important to the athletes themselves, but sports have been proven to boost morale of the community and students as a whole in addition to at times generating funding. Nonetheless, athletics have not been around quite as long as the institutions themselves have been. Athletics in two-year college settings were designed for local and regional competition prior to strong ambitions regarding national competition modeled after the National Collegiate Athletic Association, NCAA. The roots of the NJCAA and the NCAA are more closely related than many individuals could conceive.

Athletic Foundation

What would happen today if junior colleges competed against four-year institutions? How would they fare? What would make four-year schools decide against competition with their two-year foes? Who would ever propose putting these two types of institutions on a level playing field? Well, that is precisely what happened in 1937. Krug (2012) tells a story of how “after many years of organized competition at the local level, coaches and administrators from 13 two-year colleges in California... organized a committee that sent a letter of petition to NCAA President W.B. Owens requesting permission to enter the NCAA Track and Field Championship” (p. 5). These schools felt that they had outgrown their local competitions and were capable of competing on a larger scale. After all, their athletes were the same age, participating in the same sport, as well as attending school like all the members of the NCAA; the California junior colleges

believed that NCAA should welcome the new completion and revel in the opportunity to expand. Why would they deny their petition? The NCAA rejected the request of the two-year institutions on the grounds that they were not four-year institutions and that competition at NCAA level was reserved for institutions of four-years (Krug, 2012). No one will know how the course of these two entities would have been altered had they have approved the petition; nonetheless, they did not and the two-year institutions took a bold and course-altering path. They decided to draft a constitution.

The Constitution

On May 14, 1938 the group of two-year schools banded together, approved a constitution, and elected a president. They decided that Oliver E. Byrd, Stanford University, who wrote the constitution, should be the entity's first President. The others who joined him in inaugural leadership roles were: Harry Campbell of Los Angeles City College, Vice President, and Hilmer G. Lodge of San Mateo Junior College- Secretary, Treasurer. The founding colleges of the NJCAA are as follows: Bakersfield College, Chaffey College, Compton College, Fullerton Junior College, Glendale Junior College, Los Angeles City College, Pasadena Junior College, Riverside Junior College, Sacramento Junior College, San Bernardino Valley College, San Mateo Junior College, Santa Monica City College, and Visalia Junior College" (National Junior College Athletic Association, 2012; Krug, 2012).

Despite drafting a constitution, it was not until the following year that they had their first championship of events and adopted the name National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA). The first national championship organized was for none other than track and field, the sport that just two years prior had prompted them to petition to join

the NCAA. At this event, Compton College was named the first NJCAA national champion. Organizing this event provoked the institutions to also develop and enforce rules regarding eligibility and championship decorum. In 1940, after two years of operation and two different Presidents, Hershel Smith of Compton College took on the role of President of the NJCAA. During his term, he would do something to forever change the NJCAA. Krug (2012) explains in detail how he led the NJCAA “in approving a geographic ‘regional’ membership model that still exists today... divided the United States into six regions: Region 1 (Northern Calif.); Region 2 (Central Calif.); Region 3 (Southern Calif.); Region 4 (Southwest); Region 5 (Mountain); Region 6 (Eastern)” (p. 7).

Athletic Expansion

The NJCAA continued to flourish, thrive, and expand until 1943 when all activities were temporarily discontinued because of World War II. Following 1945, they picked up right where they left off, and by 1947 a plan was developed for a basketball national championship by Earle J. Holmes and P. F. Wilhelmsen. National enthusiasm continued to grow for the NJCAA and in 1948, in Springfield, Missouri, the NJCAA hosted its inaugural national basketball tournament. This tournament made headlines in more ways than one. Not only did it create a new domain of championships for the NJCAA, it also crossed racial boundaries by allowing African Americans to compete in Southwest Missouri State’s Fieldhouse (Krug, 2012). With limitless potential, the fairly new entity’s membership skyrocketed by adding nearly 100 new institutions (Krug, 2012). Basketball was the driving force behind this expansion. Membership grew exponentially, and as a result, the regions were restructured, and the basketball national

tournament moved to Hutchinson, Kansas in 1949. Hutchinson remains as the host location today (Krug, 2012).

Early Challenges

Starting a national organization such as the NJCAA will always have contention. The economic markets of other athletic organizations were encroached upon and increased competition is often frowned upon. Other organizations were apprehensive about change and often resisted. Tensions grew. The inaugural colleges in California responded radically and created a new organization simply for the junior colleges in the state of California. These actions reduced membership for the NJCAA by approximately 25 percent. Effects of this are still present today. California's two-year institutions are still governed by the California Community College Athletic Association and barred from the NJCAA. In order to recover from this drastic setback, the NJCAA and President Swenson looked for ways to return to an upward trend of expansion. One way of doing this was to join forces with the American Association of Junior Colleges (Krug, 2012).

Restoring Order

As the prominence of the NJCAA returned, basketball continued to excel as its primary sport. Taking notes from the very institution that alienated it from the start, the NCAA, the NJCAA created a weekly ranking system and selected an All-American team. Basketball was pivotal in paving the success of the NJCAA. In 1956, the NJCAA began to embark on the arena of football. Following the successful incorporation of football from this point forward, the NJCAA was now ready to expand. A baseball national tournament in Grand Junction, Colorado in 1959 and wrestling in Farmingdale, New York in 1960 were added, as well as rifle, soccer, and swimming in future years.

Within the organization expansion was in progress; nonetheless, the NJCAA needed to establish relationships with other organizations. It was important to set up a relationship with high schools as well as four-year institutions. Communication with high schools as well as the NCAA made the NJCAA more enticing to possible participants. These connections served as a roadmap for athletes. They could come from high school and then merge into the NJCAA with hopes of continuing to a NCAA school. These presented viable options for student-athletes who could not go directly to the NCAA. The strong bonds with the NCAA continued to mold NJCAA sports evolution. Football bowl games, national championship design, and even establishing medical contacts for athlete safety were all ways in which the NJCAA took notes from the NCAA.

Crossing the Gender Line

The 1970s were filled with increased membership, as well as sport participation, with membership growing to over 500 member schools. Breaking gender constraints and attempting to balance opportunities, the perception of women in the eyes of the NJCAA was growing to be that of equal opportunity athletes within a competitive spectrum. In 1975, an official NJCAA Women's Division was created and included sports such as volleyball, basketball, swimming and diving, tennis, and track and field. Participation by women reached unprecedented levels; by the 1980s there were 490 women's division members and 574 men's division members. From this point forward, the NJCAA has continued to grow into a national powerhouse, and become a viable option for student athletes worldwide (Krug, 2012). One may never know, but what would happen if junior colleges competed against four-year institutions? How would they fare? It is evident that the NJCAA has evolved into a national force that acts as a stepping-stone in order to

provide student athletes with a foundation for furthering their athletic and academic careers.

Challenges and Controversies

The NJCAA is a unique entity that faces a very unique set of challenges and controversies. The lens that the NJCAA is viewed through is not always positive. In order to gather a true understanding of the NJCAA as a whole, it is important to examine and review the challenges and controversies associated with the NJCAA from a common athletics consumer's perspective. Attending a NJCAA institution is often a viable option that is overlooked. The spectators often do not realize that the same athletes that they are watching at the NBA level could have just as well have been NJCAA athletes. In fact, several of them are. Showcasing one's talent and desire to prove superiority is the ultimate goal no matter what level. Nonetheless, high school athletes are often misinformed about the options of continuing their education as well as athletic careers (May, 2008). Selecting a college to attend is a difficult decision for anyone; however, when an athlete has astronomical pressures from various institutions to explore his or her athletic talents, the decision can be severely compounded. Quite frequently, the opportunity to attend a junior college is often overlooked, despite the plentiful upside. There are numerous avenues following attending an NJCAA institution that are often not explored because of the various stereotypes associated with junior colleges.

Recruiting

There is an old saying amongst college basketball coaches that goes as follows: *"Recruiting is like shaving... if you don't do it every day, you look like a bum"* (Laird, 2009, p. 6). Most coaches say it and great coaches live by it. Recruiting is a difficult topic

to evaluate. The reasons why a student athlete selects a given institution vary drastically. Laird (2009) attempted to evaluate one component of college athletics, namely recruiting. Controversies in the NJCAA surrounding recruiting stem from a coach being able to persuade a potential student athlete that the NJCAA is a unique route to achieving success. The components that go into getting a potential student athlete to select an institution are complicated and intertwined. NJCAA can use the art of persuasion in order to make a positive impact on a potential student athlete (Laird, 2009).

When examining the reason that NJCAA athletes chose a NJCAA institution as opposed to a NCAA Division I institution, there are a wide variety of reasons. Persuasion is one of those reasons. With the goal of erasing stigmas of attending NJCAA schools, persuasion can play a large role in why a prospective student athlete goes to a NJCAA school. This can contradict that the potential student athlete went to a junior college due to being inferior in some aspect, whether in athletics or academics. Basic persuasion and expansion of knowledge can be utilized as effective strategies, helping to alleviate the false façade and negative perception of NJCAA athletics (Laird, 2009).

Reality of High School Athletics

Unrealistic expectations of student-athletes may lead to a misconception of junior colleges. May (2008) explains, “how average players... swallow the intoxicating euphoria of athletic success, only to choke on the reality” (p. 12). Athletics are often glorified; however, no one likes to state the reality that goes along with playing the game. Not just basketball but all sports. The reasons why a student athlete elects to play in high school vary drastically; this is a concept that people need to understand when looking at student athletes at the community college level.

NJCAA athletes tend to find themselves looked down upon by those that do not understand the system. These are all things that impact the athletic transition from NJCAA to NCAA. The literature on this transition is scarce; literature exists that examines the transition between high school and four-year schools, and reveals that many high school basketball players have unrealistic dreams of continuing their career at the next level. May (2008) identifies “of the 530,068 high school players, only 13,365 went to compete at the college level..., a 2.5% probability” (p. 31). This is the “dirty trick” of athletics. Coaches must encourage players to pursue their dreams, but the reality is that many more will fail than succeed in the game of basketball. Athletes often hang their ambitious hopes on the few and far between that are overly successful in the competitive realm, such as Michael Jordan, a basketball legend. Thus the high school transition is a rare one and can be extremely challenging, and many athletes do not make a successful transition from high school to college for athletic, academic, or social reasons. This is a point that NJCAA member institutions can use to their advantage, tying current situations to those of the past, and using the junior college setting to act as an extension of high school to ease the transition.

Financial

Stereotypes, unrealistic expectations, skewed perceptions, and difficult transitions are not the only obstacles NJCAA athletes and institutions face. Financial considerations are often the cause of limited resources for NJCAA athletic programs. Jenkins (2006) explains “when budgets are tight, as they usually are, and administrators are looking for a little extra cash, their steely-eyed gaze turns naturally towards athletics” (p. B13). This constant limited budget puts athletic programs in a bind. Athletic directors

are often looking for ways to increase revenue and funding without overly taxing the student body. State funding, student fees, and donations are typically the primary means of funding athletic programs at the junior college level. Funding may be limited; however, eliminating athletics would pose a major issue not only for the athletes but for the community as well.

Stereotypes

When students attend community colleges, there can be negative stereotypes associated with their academic abilities and performance. In the case of athletes, their athletic skills may not be viewed as competitive with their peers at four-year colleges. Junior college student athletes may be labeled as inferior. Nevertheless,, the student may have alternate reasons for selecting a NJCAA institution out of high school other than a shortcoming in a particular area, either academics or athletics. In fact, those who truly understand the competitive nature of junior college athletics understand that it is far from an easy competitive arena.

One reason this stigma exists is a lack of knowledge. Broadcasting can play a major role in increasing knowledge. Broadcasting and television coverage are rarely explored on the junior college level. There may be several reasons why, including the fact that some programs do not broadcast athletics at all, and also because of the high costs associated with television broadcasting. Instead, print and radio are frequent avenues of media coverage in the NJCAA. While these media can be effective, television broadcasting is not given the credit for its potential positive impact on NJCAA institutions. If more attention were given to the potential impact, then perhaps more schools would realize and take advantage of bettering their institution by broadcasting

their sports. Broadcasting as well as economics and publicity can play a role in recruitment. Current research has examined various aspects of sports and its association with economics. Economics as well as funding plays a large role in recruiting of high school athletes and persuasion to attend and participate in NJCAA athletics. There is no doubt that Americans have a passion for sports. NJCAA administrators are faced with the daunting task of capturing this immense passion.

Athletic Trainer Presence

An athletic trainer is a certified medical professional that works to examine, prevent, and treat sports-related injuries and illnesses of athletes (Auerbach, 2016). These medical professionals must be board certified and licensed to practice in the state in which they work. According to the National Athletic Trainers' Association (2017) "athletic training encompasses the prevention, examination, diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of medical conditions" (p. 1). In order to become a certified athletic trainer individuals must complete an accredited program and pass a national certification exam. Recently, there has been a push for athletic trainers to have a Master's of Science degree as opposed to simply a Bachelor's of Science degree. Following certification, athletic trainers must complete mandatory continuing education units to maintain their certification.

Athletic trainers work in a variety of settings. Recent data from the NATA (2017) suggests that 19% of athletic trainers work at the college or university level. Of this 19% very few work at the junior college level. Mazerolle et al. (2015) found that athletic trainers at the junior college level report working more hours per week than their NCAA counterparts. They are expected to cover more sports and work longer hours. Thus the

accessibility of to the athletic trainers for junior college athletes can be minimal. These athletes may not have access to the same level of care, training room hours, or number of medical professionals. This may lead to a compromised state of medical care. The athletic trainer plays a valuable role in ensuring the health of the athlete, and a compromised level of care could make it difficult to keep key players healthy at the NJCAA level.

SWOT and PESTLE Analyses

By reviewing the literature surrounding the landscape of the NJCAA, and researching the history of the institution, a basic SWOT Analysis Table (see Table 1) was constructed to establish a baseline for the current state of the program (Tracy, 2012).

Table 1. Illustration of SWOT Analysis and Components

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participants in this study have the power and the ability to strengthen and mold positive changes within an organization, and to provide insight into various forms of communication within the NJCAA. • Athletics provides a means of encouragement for adolescents to continue their education. • Sports have been proven to boost morale of the community and students. • The quality of athletics at the NJCAA level may be just as entertaining as NCAA and professional athletics. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpredictable enrollment. • Unpredictable funding and donations. • Unrealistic expectations of student athletes. • Limited use of broadcasting in promoting athletics. • Inconsistent medical coverage
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of baccalaureate undergraduates: 18-to 24-year-olds who have strong high school records and are moving directly into higher education full time, and who will have a strong sense of support for the school's athletic programs. • Consistent support of the family members of the athletes themselves and members of the community who simply love athletics for the love of the game. • Cultural differences in the fans. • Improving attendance by using broadcasting as a 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athletics are undervalued and overlooked at junior colleges. • Limited or inconsistent funding. • Perceptions of academic or athletic shortcomings of students. • Irregular attendance at junior college games. • High costs of broadcasting.

<p>consumer entertainment supplement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizing social media to attract and increase attendance. • Breaking gender constraints, and promoting the perception of women in the eyes of the NJCAA as that of equal opportunity athletes within a competitive spectrum. • Using the junior college setting to act as an extension of high school to ease students' transition to college. • Using broadcasting to counter negative stereotypes about junior college students' athletic abilities. 	
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Overall, it appears that the NJCAA is an organization that possesses all the pieces to be successful. They are also in the process of implementing powerful initiatives for change. By engaging the community members and changing the perception they can utilize their strengths to capitalize on their opportunities and create a more positive culture thus decreasing the stigma and improving the support of its various athletics. It is integral that the NJCAA utilizes all stakeholders to produce a quality entertainment product that is valued by consumers.

In order to create a true depiction of the NJCAA, it is important to be knowledgeable regarding internal concerns and external as well. External factors such as opportunities and threats can help to shape a strategic plan. These opportunities and threats can lead to the construction of goals to address these external factors. One means of identifying external concerns is to complete a “political, economic, social, technology, legal and environmental (PESTLE) analysis” (Athanasios & George, 2013, p. 5023) to identify factors that can impact the success of an organization (see Table 2).

In the NJCAA, there are a number of external factors that have a major influence. The first factor examined is political. Political factors that impact an athletic system can be national, state, or local. The NJCAA can see major change related to “the complexities of political systems... when decision makers attempt to balance political and public values” (Ikpa, 2016, p. 468). One prime example of the impact of politics on the NJCAA is funding for public institutions from the government. Political officials play a large role in determining how much funding each school district receives.

The next component of the PESTLE analysis is economics. Economics can both negatively and positively impact athletics. A positive economy can bring new students,

new jobs, and potentially even additional community partnerships for the NJCAA membership institutions. However, economic growth can also change the social makeup of the district, which is the next component of the PESTLE analysis. The NJCAA relies on both internal and external social connections. A change in demographic or socioeconomic status of the students attending a NJCAA member institution can alter the landscape of the student body thus potential athletic consumers.

Next the analysis attempts to explore the impacts of technology on education. As technology grows, it is the responsibility of the NJCAA to stay current and acknowledge that in order to market effectively, they must be knowledgeable about current technology. Technology “can be seamlessly and effectively integrated into” the marketing practices to reach larger audiences (Gerber & Ward, 2016, p. 23).

Lastly, there are legal implications and environmental implications that can alter the NJCAA. Laws govern several factors from immigration policies for athletes, to Title IX implications. These laws shape the NJCAA environment. It is important to be knowledgeable about these factors to understand how they will impact the institution as a whole. A new political leader may make changes in the budget, which a NJCAA policymaker must be aware of; whereas, changes in the local economy may mean more or less support for athletics as a whole. Increases in technology may mean changes in training to stay current in marketing. All of things play an important role in planning for the success of the NJCAA. Overall it appears that the external threats facing the NJCAA can all be managed if evaluated appropriately in efforts to adequately market the NJCAA and present them as a viable option for consumers of athletics.

Table 2. Illustration of PESTLE Component and Analyses

External factors identified through interview	Relative importance to school/system	Ranked significance to the organization
Political 1. Funding via federal government 2. Title XI 3. Change in demographic of elected officials	Political factors 1. Critical 2. Critical 3. Very important	Political ranked 1. Number 1 2. Number 2 3. Number 3
Economic 1. Socio-economic status of consumers 2. Revenue generating means 3. Sponsorships and partnerships with local businesses	Economic 1. Critical 2. Very important 3. Important	Economically ranked 1. Number 1 2. Number 2 3. Number 3
Social 1. Team success 2. Perception of the NJCAA 3. Marketing via social media	Social 1. Critical 2. Critical 3. Very important	Socially ranked 1. Number 2 2. Number 1 3. Number 3
Technological 1. Streaming technology 2. Marketing technology 3. Access to current technology	Technological 1. Very important 2. Critical 3. Critical	Technologically ranked 1. Number 3 2. Number 1 3. Number 2
Legal 1. Title IX 2. Player immigration	Legal 1. Important 2. Important	Legally ranked 1. Number 1 2. Number 2
Environmental 1. Increase in traffic and pollution	Environmental 1. Important	Environmentally ranked 1. Number 1

Marketing Conditions and Practices

Sport is where an entire life can be compressed into a few hours, where the emotions of a lifetime can be felt on an acre or two of ground, where a person can suffer and die and rise again on six miles of trails through a New York City park. Sport is a theater where sinner can turn saint and a common man become an uncommon hero, where the past and the future can fuse with the present. Sport is singularly able to give us peak experiences where we feel completely one with the world and transcend all conflicts as we finally become our own potential. ~

George A. Sheehan ~

Yet, at times athletics are undervalued and overlooked at junior colleges across the nation. In fact, financial considerations are often the cause of limited resources for NJCAA athletic programs. “When budgets are tight, as they usually are, and administrators are looking for a little extra cash, their steely-eyed gaze turns naturally towards athletics,” (Jenkins, 2006, p. B13). This constant limited budget puts athletic programs in a bind. Athletic directors are often looking for ways to increase revenue and funding without overly taxing the student body. State funding, student fees, and donations are typically the primary means of funding athletic programs at the junior college level. Funding may be limited; however, eliminating athletics would pose a major issue. In fact, “athletes... and fans say eliminating the programs will leave a hole on campuses and in surrounding communities... Athletics is an important component of the

community college which deserves to be continued on behalf of thousands of existing students and thousands that will follow” (Alabama Community Colleges, 2011, p. 8).

Funding and Expenses

Financing a top rate program is not a cheap endeavor. The United States Department of Education Equity in Athletics Data reveals that the expense for operating basketball programs in the year 2010 topped \$66 million. Expenses are defined as “expenses attributable to intercollegiate athletic activities. This includes appearance guarantees and options, athletically related student aid, contract services, equipment, fundraising activities, operating expenses, promotional activities, recruiting expenses, salaries and benefits, supplies, travel, and any other expenses attributable to intercollegiate athletic activities” (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Thus, generating financial sources is a pivotal part of an athletic director’s job.

Traditional means of funding for junior college athletics are as follows: student fees, donations, state and local funding. Nonetheless, in a study conducted by Williams, Byrd, and Pennington, “85% of the respondents said that they did not feel that the athletic program had a secure funding base ... and 78% of the respondents predicted that athletics would not have a secure funding source in the future” (Williams, Byrd, & Pennington, 2008, p. 457). “Utilizing funds from student activity fees, increasing other fees, or increasing the cost” are all means of taxing students to support athletics (Williams et al., 2008, p. 457). These limited resources must be maximized. Student fees are a unique component to funding athletics. Research revealed student fees are proposed based on the amount of money that the program needs to function at an optimal level. These fees are reviewed by the administration and then presented to a group of students that represent

the student body as a whole. The students then approve, deny, or modify the amount requested. The agreed upon amount must then be presented to a governing body, such as the Board of Regents, for final approval before being implemented. These fees account for large portions of the funding for these programs.

One of the major problems that exist with relying on student fees for primary funding is the lack of consistency. The money generated is based on the student enrollment, which can fluctuate. Projections can be made to approximate enrollment, but there is no precise way to know ahead of time. This means that programs must not only plan ahead, but also save money from previous years to account for years that enrollment may be down. Failure to manage can lead to huge deficits. Nonetheless, “two year colleges... are growing much faster than four-year colleges and universities” (Morrow, 2007). Despite the notion that growth is apparent it is also evident that “growth in community colleges ...has been sporadic and regional” (Byrd & Williams, 2007, p. 40).

Donations are another source of generating funding. “A \$50,000 gift to Onondaga Community College in New York will be used to support construction of the college’s planned athletic complex” (Owens, 2008). It however is also inconsistent. Donors are emotional beings. They are very supportive with success; they may see less of a desire to donate if the program itself is not successful. They may also feel a sense of entitlement and a desire to voice their input. Donations have the potential to generate lots of funding, but typically are not relied upon. Instead they are considered additional funding for either long term projects or luxury purchases.

State and local funding from the government sources varies by state. Two-year colleges receive less than 30 percent of state and local financing (Morrow, 2007). Some

states provide junior colleges with lots of funding; others none at all. In particular, North Carolina law forbids community colleges from using state money for athletics (Ashburn, 2007). In Alabama, “the schools have lost some state funding... in recent years” (Alabama Community Colleges Cutting Sports Programs as Budgets Shrink, 2011, p. 8). This creates an uneven playing field. It alters competitive balance between regions.

NJCAA Design

All American professional leagues are closed leagues; therefore, the decisions to add or remove teams must be approved by all of the owners before changes can be made. The NJCAA “consist of two year colleges and institutions accredited by the appropriate state and/or regional accrediting agency” (National Junior College Athletic Association, 2011). The members have input as to who is allowed into the league and who is not. The mission is to “promote and foster junior college athletics on intersectional and national levels so that results will be consistent with the total educational program of its members” (National Junior College Athletic Association, 2011).

The NFL is the epitome of a closed league that consists of thirty-two teams. In closed leagues, the teams have more power. Typically the facilities are state-of-the-art increasing fan experience. But the cost of these lavish stadiums increases ticket prices. The NFL has the power to limit supply, restrict access, set ticket prices, select venues, and truly have a monopoly over the market. Nonetheless, by keeping the leagues closed, the leagues are able to provide the highest level of talent in every game. Minimizing the number of teams results in concentrating the talent and increasing the competitiveness. In addition, the NFL takes other steps such as sharing revenue to maintain competitive balance. While fans may suffer from having to travel to games, it is more likely that their

team will be competing for a championship. The NFL is truly an example of a successful closed league. The NJCAA is modeled fundamentally similar to the NFL, thus some of the previous information found on the NFL can be related to the NJCAA as well.

A vast majority of sports gate markets reflect that supply is fixed and demand can fluctuate considerably. Therefore, price is dependent solely on the variations of demand, and “in estimates of the gate demand for sports events, pricing is the inelastic portion of demand” (Fort, 2004, p. 92). The product that sports teams are supplying is the competitive game between two teams. The demand is the number of individuals who desire to purchase a ticket to attend the game. Thus the supply curve is inelastic because there are a fixed number of opportunities to come to a stadium; the supply is limited. As a result of the set schedule and the established number of seats, it is a fixed vertical line on the model. Contrarily, demand can oscillate considerably. The demand curve is downward sloping and can be impacted by a variety of factors. Two things that affect demand are demand compliments and demand substitutes. Demand compliments are things that enhance one’s experience, and typically have a positive effect on demand. Whereas demand substitutes are activities that can take the place of attending a particular event; they usually negatively influence demand. Some other things that alter demand are: quality of team, quality of game, game expectations, quality of facility, time of game, population of city, and income, just to name a few. One common misconception is that change in price alters the demand curve. In actuality, changes in demand put pressure on prices. Due to the fact that supply is fixed, price is simply a function of demand. Nonetheless, there are those who believe this model is over simplified and has numerous flaws (Fort, 2004, p. 88).

The *Inelastic Sport Pricing* theory explains why Fort (2004) believes that the simplistic model above may be too diluted. Fort argues that sports price is in the unitary to inelastic demand range, while normal products are usually in the price elastic range. Demand is elastic when the change in price exceeds the change in quantity. On the contrary, demand is inelastic when the change in quantity exceeds the change in price. When elasticity is equal to zero, a profit maximizing price is reached. Organizations maximize stadium revenue at the unit elasticity point. However, broadcasting revenue produces an incentive to lower the gate prices, thus demand becomes more inelastic. Broadcasting is a demand supplement for attendance; however, additional revenue is generated from broadcasting contracts. Thus this supplement is not a negative component to athletics. A team will continue to spend money on talented players until marginal revenue equals marginal cost. During a team's period that they are not in season, administrators make decisions on payroll, which directly implicates roster quality, and in doing so they also determine prices. Consequently, the marginal cost of winning is not equal to zero, thus producing an upward sloping supply curve. Therefore, real markets with normal marginal costs produce upward sloping supply curves. This applies to professional sports, but in collegiate sports player costs are marginal. The only cost associated with a collegiate player is the cost of his/her scholarship and expenses related to the program itself such as travel. This increases the value of broadcasting contracts because revenue can be generated with fewer expenses. Nonetheless, expenditures in college sports are more difficult to ascertain, at least on a per-sports basis. For example, while the cost of a football stadium is easy to allocate to that sport, the cost of a gym could be very difficult to allocate to a sport because more than one sport uses it. Variable

costs would seem much more likely to exist in college sport than professional sport.

Allocating costs (heat, janitorial, repairs, etc.) are very difficult to do in a situation like this. In effect, it may not be possible to identify the actual real cost of such sports. For the purposes of this study, exact real cost do not have to be calculated; thus, the difficulty in finding them does not play a substantial role.

Stereotypes are often placed on junior college athletics, which lend them to being undervalued. Perceptions of shortcomings academically or athletically of those attending the institution may lead to decreased enthusiasm for athletic programs. This could lead to decreased interest in sporting events. A lack of student interest makes them less inclined to approve any student fees that are need to sustain a successful program thus decreasing the competitive balance throughout the NJCAA. Those who treasure athletics feel as if “eliminating the programs will leave a hole on campuses and in the surrounding communities... Athletics is an important component of the community college which deserved to be continued on behalf of thousands of existing students and thousands that will follow” (Alabama Community Colleges Cutting Sports Programs as Budgets Shrink, 2011, p. 8). Athletics provide more than just a favorite past time. They “meet the demand of local high school athletes who want to play in college...helps legitimize the college” (Ashburn, 2007, p. 59). The intangibles of athletics can play a large role in shaping an institution as a whole. Athletics provide a framework of success. “They... increase enrollment and retention...they enable a college to serve a wider variety of students ...they help foster that sense of community” (Jenkins, 2006, p. B13). Without athletics, the collegiate experience would take on a completely different identity.

NJCAA Marketing

The primary market segment of junior college athletics is that of current students. Although community colleges do appeal to non-traditional students, “many two-year colleges are now recruiting students who fit the traditional profile of baccalaureate undergraduates: 18-to 24-year-olds who have strong high school records and are moving directly into higher education full time” (Frerking, 2007). These are the students who will have a strong sense of support for the school’s athletic programs. They are the primary market. Zhang et al (2003) noted that maintaining the fan base included in the primary market is pivotal to successful marketing campaigns. Thus despite the busy lives of the students attending a junior college, they must be aggressively targeted in any marketing campaign. The campaign must capitalize on event attractiveness, effective promotion, and ticket prices that are within reason for their target socioeconomic class.

The junior college arena faces a unique challenge not experienced by their four-year counterparts in that their target market has a higher turnover rate. This means that maintaining that fan base may be difficult to master. Fortunately, the students are not the only consumers of junior college athletics. The family members of the athletes themselves and members of the community who simply love athletics for the love of the game are the other portions of the market segment; these people are able to provide consistency. They are going to support the athletic department regardless of success. They do not need to be motivated to consume athletics. The perception of the junior college is reflected in the statement-“If you don’t pull up those grades, you’re going to community college... [that is, colleges which are] often considered schools of last resort” (Frerking, 2007). This perception must be changed. The quality of athletics at the NJCAA

level may be just as entertaining as NCAA and professional athletics. In fact the #1 overall draft pick in the NFL draft for 2011, Cam Newton, played football in the NJCAA. Top NBA draft picks such as Jae Crowder also were part of the illustrious NJCAA. The list of these individuals is long. Furthermore, there are a number of NCAA standouts that once played in the NJCAA. The same level of play that is glorified in division I NCAA and professional athletics can be watched at the NJCAA level. The negative stereotypes that go along with community college athletics can be changed, resulting increased excitement for athletics.

Attendance varies based on several things. Success of the athletic programs plays a pivotal role. Accessibility, cost, advertising, and race and ethnicity could all potentially play a role in attendance. The diversity of the student body can be looked at based on race and ethnicity to see if one segment will possibly attend more frequently than another. A wide array of factors influences sport attendance. If the NJCAA does not have regular attendance it is hard to persuade a potential recruit to attend the institution. Although sport attendance constructs can be altered by race, Armstrong found no significant differences in the consumers' attitudes, their level of fanship, importance of event accessibility or event attractiveness factors, nor their predominant consumption patterns between patrons of color and Caucasians. Nonetheless, differences were noted in “the importance of the event culture factors such that the event's family appeal, entertainment, and promotions were more important to the Consumers of Color than they were to the Caucasian consumers” (Armstrong, 2008, p. 22), leading to conclusions that color boundaries do exist.

Schollaert and Smith (1987) take a different approach by trying to create a model. “The premise that the racial composition of professional sports teams is a significant factor in explaining paid attendance variability is tested in this article” (p. 84). They utilized general determinants of sports attendance such as percentage of black players on each team and conducted a longitudinal study on National Basketball Association teams. The findings indicated that team racial composition has no impact on attendance. Although player race has no impact, does fan race have an impact? The literature does not examine to what degree. And if a particular race is examined, could various factors improve attendance? One way to improve attendance is to utilize broadcasting as a consumer entertainment supplement. If people can follow their favorite teams through print, radio, Internet, and television, excitement will grow.

Broadcasting as a Scheme

Broadcasting can be reviewed as an alternative method of watching sports instead of attending; thus, broadcasting plays a role in athletics. Community colleges typically use limited means of broadcasting. Even some of the best programs have limited online resources. The primary means of utilizing journalism and broadcasting are website articles and services such as PSB live and iHigh for special events. This inconsistency does a disservice to the fan base. “The increasing popularity of televised sports events in the United States and Europe has had significant effects on the broadcasting sectors and sports leagues on both sides of the Atlantic” (Cave & Crandall, 2001, p. 17). Although exclusive sales by leagues violate anti-trust laws and create a monopoly, the 1962 Sport Broadcasting Act, still utilized today, establishes an anti-trust exemption allowing league sales in the United States. This legislation is only valid in the United States at the

professional level; it does not extend to collegiate level athletics. Despite minor disadvantages, the Sport Broadcasting Act remains a successful legislation today despite advances in technology (Cave & Crandall, 2001).

Supporters of the Sport Broadcasting Act are those individuals who believe in centralized, league, and sales of broadcasting rights. Centralized sales restrict supply and increase ease of scheduling. The league, as one collective entity, sells the rights rather than the individual teams. As a result of restricting supply, the league has the power to set prices and charges what it deems to be necessary, thus creating a monopoly. The benefits to this method of selling broadcasting rights are plentiful. If a centralized approach is taken then the revenue generated is equally divided among all teams. Overall, this is good for consumers because it increases the competitive balance by attempting to equalize the funds each program receives.

The Southeastern Conference (SEC) in the NCAA adopts a model similar to this by pooling funds and distributing them amongst the teams in order to promote a balance. The NJCAA could use this setup as a model for long-term goals. The NFL, NBA, MLB, and NHL all use various degrees of selling centralized broad casting rights. Nonetheless, one extremely successful example of the implementation of the Sports Broadcasting Act is the National Football League. In the NFL, the league handles all broadcasting contracts and collects all revenue. During the years of 1998 to 2005, the NFL generated \$117.6 billion or \$ 2.2 billion per year in national broadcasting revenue. Once the revenue is collected, each team receives its share of the revenue. Each share is equal to $1/n$, with n being the number of teams in the league. The NFL agrees to both national and regional broadcasting contracts. “In the United States, the professional sports league that sells all

of its matches to national broadcasters, the NFL, has demonstrated a preference for doing so to a variety of competing broadcasters” (Cave & Crandall, 2001, p. 6). High profile games are televised nationally and other games are televised regionally. Therefore, everyone is capable of seeing the primetime games, while those who support their hometown team are still able to enjoy watching them play. In addition to these broadcasting rights the NFL has agreed to several different packages with various providers that allow, for a premium price, fans to access all games. The only exception to this is the NFL’s blackout rule. Overall, centralized league sales evenly distribute revenue, increase competitive balance, and allow consumers to view regional and national games. Even though the Sports Broadcasting Act has proven to be a success, many still oppose it. “Television rights are the largest component of revenues for major sports in large, rich nations” (Noll, 2003, p. 536). NCAA institutions also sell broadcasting rights. These rights not only have financial implications for an institution; in addition, they also can increase notoriety, school pride, school attendance, and overall appeal, thus making broadcasting extremely valuable.

The NJCAA needs to increase availability and utilize social media to attract and increase attendance. Promptly posting articles to pique interest and even using webcasts are viable means of increasing publicity. These activities will lead to increased enthusiasm. Further expanding the few video outlets they have like PSB live and iHigh will also help. Community colleges might also propose to entities like ESPNU the idea of broadcasting major events such as national tournaments. This would allow ESPNU to strengthen its connection to a unique target market. Broadcasting is the primary outlet of increasing attendance and profits, while eliminating stigmas.

Consumer Needs: Motivations and Fulfillment

Maslow's Hierarchy is a theory that can give us a way of looking at junior college athletics through the motivations of the stakeholders—administrators, coaches, student athletes, donors, families, and community members. Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is included in a humanistic view of psychology, which emphasizes "personal freedom, choice, self-determination, and striving for personal growth" in people's motivations (Woolfork, 2001, p. 370). In Maslow's chart, people have basic needs for survival and safety that must be met before other needs can be addressed. Psychological needs for belonging and esteem rank in the middle. At the highest level is the need for self-actualization (Woolfork, 2001, p. 370). Fulfilling one's potential in an area valued by the individual, such as in athletics, would likely result in self-actualization.

Survival Needs

Among the fundamental survival needs is the necessity of earning a living. The adults in charge of a junior college must do their jobs well to ensure continued employment. Administrators must supervise adequate and appropriate recruitment so that enrollment increases or stays consistent. Coaches must recruit wisely, train the athletes well, and produce enough wins to maintain the school's reputation. Junior college athletics present opportunities for administrators and coaches to meet their own needs for job security and career advancement. Threats to the fulfillment of survival needs may crop up in the form of unpredictable enrollment, budget cuts at the state level, or, for athletics, irregular attendance at games. In the face of limited or inconsistent funding, the adults in charge must be innovative in attracting donors and in utilizing existing resources. Junior college athletics can attract competent students, generous donors, and

community support, which provide added employment security for administrators and coaches.

Social Needs

The need to affiliate with others and to belong is the next step up in Maslow's Hierarchy. Sports have been proven to boost the morale of the community and students, and to create a social bond. Strangers sitting on a bus or in a waiting room will instantly find common ground for conversation when they discuss shared fandom of a sports team. Junior college athletics address social needs in several ways. Athletics provide encouragement for adolescents to continue their education. Frerking wrote, "Many two-year colleges are now recruiting students who fit the traditional profile of baccalaureate undergraduates: 18-to 24-year-olds who have strong high school records and are moving directly into higher education full time" (Frerking, 2007). These students, searching for a sense of belonging in their college experience, will likely provide strong support for the school's athletic programs. In addition, family members of the athletes themselves, along with members of the community who simply love the game, are the other portions of the market segment. These people will provide consistency, continuing their team loyalty even after the student or the athlete in their family has graduated. Donors wish to be associated with winning teams and to support them.

Sometimes social needs are not met. If junior college athletics are overlooked or undervalued, attendance at games is low, inhibiting the social bonding that goes with a winning team. If there is a perception of junior college athletes as inferior in performance, camaraderie among fans may be lacking. The high cost of broadcasting may prevent adequate marketing of the team. Junior colleges that utilize broadcasting and

social media to increase attendance are bringing the power of technology to fulfill people's needs to affiliate with others and to belong.

Esteem Needs

Gaining esteem through competence and achievement is the next step up in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. People have a need to be competent, gain approval and recognition, and to realize accomplishments in an area they value. These needs can only be fulfilled by other people or groups. The junior college setting may act as an extension of high school, easing the student's transition to college. The student's self-esteem increases as he or she gains confidence and learns to function in the higher education setting. For student athletes, playing in a college-level arena presents new competitive challenges. Successful progress brings the student increased competence, approval from coaches, and recognition from family and the community. As junior college athletics continue to break gender constraints and provide more opportunities for women, the perception of women as equally competent athletes within a competitive spectrum will provide recognition for women's teams. Women athletes will fulfill their need for esteem gained through achievement.

Several threats exist to the fulfillment of esteem needs. Like the threat to fulfillment of social needs, the undervaluation of junior college athletics, coupled with the perception of junior college athletes as inferior in performance may block the realization of esteem fulfillment. Another impediment is unrealistic expectations of student athletes. Coaches must encourage players to pursue their dreams, but the reality is that many more will fail than succeed in sports. As junior college marketing strategies expand to include social media, radio, and broadcasting, the public may perceive the

quality of athletes in NJCAA schools to be just as entertaining as that found at the NCAA and professional level. For student athletes, this perception is a reward for competence and achievement.

Self-Actualization Needs

At the top of Maslow's Hierarchy is the need for self-actualization, or fulfilling one's potential. This comes in the pursuit of knowledge and beauty, and making full use of one's talents. The junior college athlete practices diligently to pursue knowledge and perfect his or her skills in a sport, utilizing his or her talents. Junior college athletics provides a means of encouragement for adolescents to continue their education and fulfill their career plans. For the woman athlete, junior college athletics may provide an avenue to develop advanced skills and compete at the college level as an equal opportunity athlete. A fan keeps coming to games to enjoy the moment of beauty of a successful free throw. A coach fulfills self-actualization by developing a successful team. Self-actualization may be obstructed by all of the threats to fulfillment of the other needs in the hierarchy. Undervaluation of the athletic program or a negative perception of the junior college athlete, unpredictable enrollment, unpredictable funding, inadequate marketing of the athletic program, irregular attendance at games, and the high cost of media can all inhibit self-actualization for the stakeholders. Self-actualization is never fully achieved; when the need is met, a person is motivated to seek further fulfillment (Woolfork, 2001, p. 370).

Summary

October is not only a beautiful month but marks the precious yet fleeting overlap of hockey, baseball, basketball, and football. ~ Jason Love ~

Junior college athletics provide ways of meeting human needs for survival, social connection, esteem, and self-actualization for the junior college's stakeholders. Marketing the athletic program through social media, broadcasting, and traditional media is critical to constructing a program that fulfills the psychological and economic needs of the organization and the stakeholders. Fulfilling people's needs as they are described in Maslow's Hierarchy depends on social relationships. A collective effort by all of the stakeholders will be needed to achieve the goals of a successful junior college athletic program.

Junior colleges are often overlooked when doing research. Traditionally NCAA institutions are more frequently evaluated. People tend not to understand that a NJCAA institution is simply a stepping-stone that an athlete may elect to catapult his or her career both academically and athletically. The ultimate goal is to give people more understanding about the NJCAA as a positive opportunity to get an education while pursuing one's athletic dreams. A significant amount of literature supports the fact that several things impact consumption of athletics, thus impacting publicity and recruitment, and decreasing negative perceptions. Exploration of the NJCAA history supports this claim. Over the course of time, the NJCAA has evolved into a viable option for potential

student athletes. Americans love athletics. There is no reason that the NJCAA should not be able to capitalize on this passion and eliminate a negative perception.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore marketing practices of NJCAA athletics as it relates to men's basketball. By exploring current marketing, this study intended to identify major challenges, issues, and weaknesses that NJCAA athletics face. The study was designed to address the following questions:

1. What are the major marketing practices in NJCAA Men's Basketball programs?
2. What are the major challenges, issues, and weaknesses in marketing in the NJCAA?
3. What are the suggested solutions to marketing challenges?

Qualitative research procedures were carried out to give an insight into the current state of marketing and draw conclusions for advancement of NJCAA athletics. In this chapter, the following sections are included: theoretical perspective, instrumentation, participants, procedures, and data analyses.

Theoretical Perspective

Pragmatism

The theoretical framework that shaped this research was pragmatism. A pragmatic approach is essentially problem solving focused on a central question(s). Typically the question is phrased using the terms how or what. Recall that the purpose of this study was to explore what marketing practices are utilized and the challenges associated with the current practices in NJCAA athletics as it relates to men's basketball.

Duer (1909) identified pragmatism as “a single criterion of truth in all... fields... the workability of the idea in a question” (p. 8). As it pertains to this study, the workability of marketing in the sector of junior college athletics. Pragmatism is a versatile theory that can be utilized on various realms of research. Creswell (2007) pointed out that when using a pragmatic approach “individual researchers have freedom of choice... ‘free’ to choose the methods, techniques, and procedures of research that best meet their needs and purposes” (p. 28).

Although open-ended in design and malleable to various domains, Creswell (2007) conveys clearly that “the individual using this worldview will use multiple methods of data collection to best answer the research question, will employ multiple sources of data collection, will focus on the practical implications of the research, and will emphasize the importance of conducting research that best addresses the research problem” (p. 29). This theoretical framework led to the utilization of interviews and document analysis as the means of data collection for this particular project. By interviewing athletic personnel including: athletic directors, coaches, sports information directors, and even a Vice President of Marketing and Public Relations from elite athletic institutions within the National Junior College Athletic Association in conjunction with gathering current marketing documents, a complete depiction of marketing practices for these given programs and cross validation of the data was performed (see Figure 1). One of the many strengths of the pragmatic theory is that it is outcome driven. The responses provided gave great insight into marketing at the junior college level.



Figure 1: Cross-Validation of Data

Research Logistics

The research was conducted with a qualitative research design while using Pragmatic Theory as the primary lens. The construction and details of the design are described in the following order: participants, methods of data collection, and a projected timeline. Due to the time constraints of the study, the principal means of data collection were document analysis and one-on-one interviews. I engaged in document analysis by evaluating the website, Twitter, and Facebook accounts for each institution. Interviews with athletic personnel provided complete perspectives of marketing methods utilized. For this particular interview, a protocol was established and used to gain insight into opportunities and the current state of marketing within the NJCAA. The interview guide is included (see Appendix A) along with how the interview questions align to the research questions (see Figure 2).

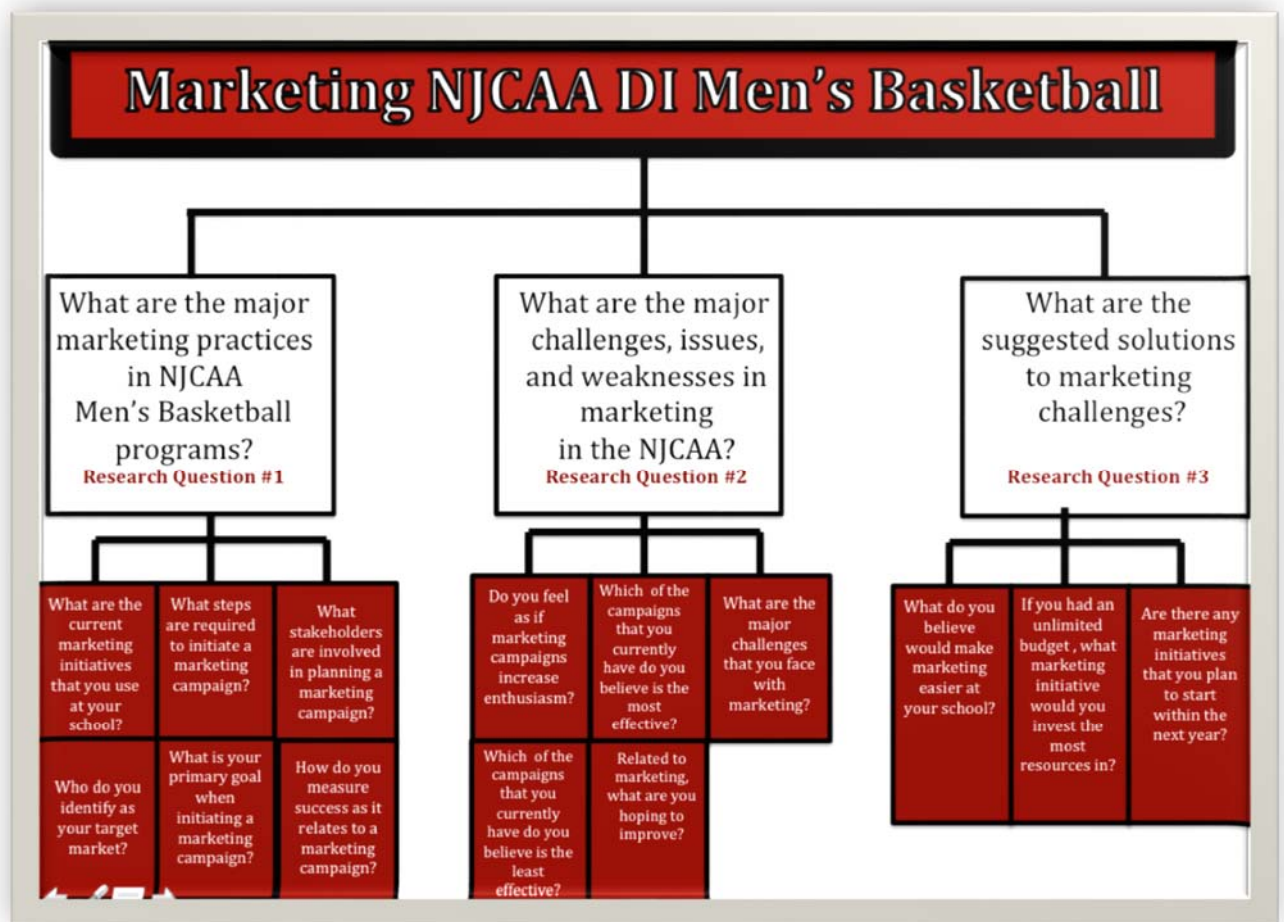


Figure 2: Alignment of Interview Protocol with Research Questions

Informed written consent was obtained from the participants prior to conducting the interviews (see Appendix B). The participants were sent a thank you letter for participating after the interview.

Data Collection

Data were gathered thru marketing document analysis and interviews to explore marketing practices used at each institution. These data provided information on the current state of marketing athletics at successful institutions (i.e. those with the most points utilizing the point system outlined above). The areas that were explored during the interviews included current state, limitations, and future desires.

The document analyses of each school's website, Twitter, and Facebook were completed prior to the interviews. The protocol utilized for the document analysis is located in Appendix C. Completing the literature review and looking into the documents gathered generated foundational information about the institution. This helped to shape the interviews with the athletic personnel. Materials needed were as follows: recording device, interview protocol, laptop with internet access to compose a list of participants that qualify over the past 10 years, addresses of participants or representatives, envelopes, paper, and stamps. Data collection took place over a four-month period (see Table 3).

Table 3: Timeline.

Time	Duration	Description
Month 1	1 month	Create an interview protocol. Contact peers to enlist their help with a peer review. Assess potential participants. Send out invitations to participate and await a response. Begin scheduling those who respond for interview session. Collect the three (3) marketing related documents from each institution. Begin analyzing the marketing documents collected from each institution. Identify trends in the marketing documents.
Month 2	1 month	Conduct interviews. Send out thank you letters to those who were initially contacted.
Month 3	1 months	Transcribe and analyze interviews. Triangulate data collected. Review the information provided and compose a summary for each participant
Month 4	1 month	Begin data analysis and construction of chapter. Utilize peer review and member checks. Complete chapter and conduct a final member check

Data Analyses

This study was designed to be an exploratory qualitative study that sought to gain insight into the current marketing practices within the NJCAA and how these practices can be improved. Constant comparative analysis of each of the participant's interviews was conducted to identify emerging themes. A theme is identified as a "pattern, a finding, or an answer to a research question" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 206). Cross-validation between the responses of different individuals involved in athletics and the data collection helped to validate the findings. Topics or phrases that are reoccurring across interviews served as the underlying basis for different categories. The content from each interview was transcribed and evaluated to identify themes. The themes were evaluated to

align them with the purpose of the study and the research question and then formulated and collected to answer the research questions.

Prior to conducting one-on-one interviews, a document analysis of each institution's website, Twitter, and Facebook was conducted. Information such as number of interactions, type of interaction, media present, and responsiveness were reviewed. The information noted from each document is outlined in Appendix C. The documents gave insight into the athletics' marketing practices prior to the interviews.

The first document that was reviewed is the program's website. Most programs have a stand-alone website that has a different URL than the school's page (n=12); if this is the case, this page was utilized. However, some of the sixteen programs (n=4) have a webpage within the school's page website. This webpage was utilized in lieu of an independent website. The website or representative webpage was reviewed to see if the following informational items were present: roster, bios, team picture, and individual pictures. This information is important for marketing in that it allows fans to identify with the team and players on the team.

The next aspect analyzed was the consumer interaction. This information is needed to determine if the website has a means for receiving input from the consumer or if the website is used primarily to disseminate information. The literature revealed that community interactions were important to junior college athletics; thus, looking at consumer interactions aided in the evaluation of community connections, which play a large role in marketing to the target market. Lastly the media present on the website was analyzed to determine if videos, pictures of event, audio broadcast, news articles, advertisements, and links to social media are present on the website.

Following examining the website, the Facebook and Twitter social media sites for the programs were analyzed. If a program did not have a Facebook or Twitter this was noted. Ideally there was a Facebook and Twitter feed dedicated to the basketball program. If such a page did not exist, then school athletic Facebook and Twitter pages were utilized. If the school did not have a page dedicated to athletics on the two identified social media sites, then a school wide Facebook and Twitter was identified. If they did have any of these options, that was noted and made as a suggestion for potentially marketing the program.

The frequency of posts and interactions of the Facebook and Twitter accounts was reviewed. When evaluating the Facebook, the responsiveness rating was noted. This is a Facebook generated metric for organizations that indicates how likely they are to respond to messages received. Facebook (2017) explained “response rate is the percentage of new messages... that are sent an initial response on the same day” while “response time is the average time it takes...to send initial responses to new messages in one day.” This metric related to availability to fans. In addition to responsiveness, the number of posts made per week and the number of posts made from fans will be accounted for. When looking at fan posts, the percentage of positive responses and negative responses were noted. Lastly the media content was reviewed. This would include pictures, audio, and advertisements.

The data analyses of the Twitter page are consistent with the Facebook analysis. However, there was not a responsiveness rating. Twitter does not provide this metric. Nonetheless, the number of followers, and the average tweets per week are noted along with positive and negative mentions, and media. The goal for analyzing these documents was to get a perception of the program. Websites and social media were used to

communicate with the fans. Thus, the ability to identify whether these documents exist and the extent in which they are utilized is a beneficial means of getting a complete depiction of the program. It also provided background knowledge prior to the interviews.

Following completion of the document analysis and interviews each interview was transcribed and common themes analyzed with the assistance of the ATLAS.ti software. ATLAS.ti was used to transcribe interviews and make comments and notations within the transcriptions that had timestamps. It was also utilized to mark direct quotes used to report the findings. Once all data was collected and themes identified, data analyses were concluded with peer reviews and member check. Peer reviews were a vital part of this process to minimize bias. Peer reviews required other individuals in the field to review the data and the data analysis to verify the material presented is accurate. Another means of strengthening the study that occurred are member checks. Member checks allowed each institution to verify the information pertaining to their institution. The information communicated was sent along with a thank you for participating that revealed the common themes conveyed throughout the interviews. Participants were given a week to respond and dispute any findings. However, no disputes were communicated. These two means increased subject confidence in the study as well as reliability in the findings.

Participants

Purposeful selection was utilized to identify participants for the study. Patton (1990) notes that purposeful sampling allows for the ability to identify and “select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under the study” (p. 169). Purposeful sampling in this particular study meant that in order to be asked to

participate in the study, the participant must have had the following attributes: be athletic personnel of a junior college whose men's basketball program ranks as the top program within their district over the course of the past decade, as established by the point system outlined. These individuals were perceived to have insight into the program that others may not be privy to. When utilizing purposeful selection "particular...persons...are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 97). If a school did not have a sports information director, the athletic director or other identified personnel provided insight into who would be the best individual at the institution to provide insight into athletic marketing. They were interviewed in lieu of a sports information director, and their current title at the institution noted in the research (see Table 4). However, the athletic director and sports information directors were the first individuals contacted. If these two individuals were unavailable, I reached out to the administrative assistant of the institution to identify the best person to speak with.

Through means of public record and the NJCAA website a list of possible participants was compiled. I utilized the final NJCAA poll for the last ten years to identify the top ten teams. If a team finished first, they will receive ten points, and as the ranking goes down by one, the point value will also decrease by one, with the team that finished tenth receiving one point. The results from the last ten years were added together to determine whom to contact.

The athletic director and sports information director for each of the teams receiving the most points in each district were identified. These individuals were selected based on this particular protocol because they have recent inside knowledge into marketing practices utilized. In order to contact potential participants' letters were sent

via the United States Postal Service and e-mail with return receipt. In order to ensure the invitations to participate were received, follow-up phone calls and emails were utilized.

One thing that may have deterred participants from participating in the interview is the fear of being honest or being scrutinized for being honest; therefore, confidentiality was a key aspect to this study. “Maintaining respondent confidentiality while presenting rich, a detailed account...presents unique challenges” (Kaiser, 2009, p. 1632). Assigning each participant a pseudonym (see Table 4) helped to ensure confidentiality. In addition to using pseudonyms for individuals, schools, and locations, various tools were used to ensure confidentiality. Interview transcripts were kept on an encrypted storage device. A password was required to access the files. In addition, participants were informed that they were free to remove themselves from participation at any point during the study even after consent was obtained and the study explained. Further, the participants were made aware that data was only be used for the means for which it is consented. These procedures were enacted with the mindset that “qualitative researchers have a dual mission: to generate knowledge through rigorous research and to uphold ethical standards and principles” (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012, p. 708).

Table 4: Pseudonyms for Participants

Institution	Pseudonym	Title
Institution #1	Ian	Athletic Director
Institution #2	Cooper	Assistant Athletic Director
Institution #3	George	Head Coach/ Athletic Director
Institution #4	Amy	Vice President of Marketing and Public Relations
Institution #5	Harold	Athletic Director
Institution #6	Chip	Head Coach

Ideally all of the sixteen (16) institutions selected would have elected to participate; however, when an institution declined, the next best team in that respective district was invited to participate. This continued until the top three (3) schools in a given district had been invited to participate. If all three (3) institutions decline, that district was not represented in the study. Thirty-four (34) individuals were contacted using this protocol. A total of six (6) districts and six (6) interviews are represented in the data collected.

The top institution in each district was contacted to request an interview of one or more athletic personnel members that would have insight into marketing men's basketball. The initial thought process outlined that this would be the athletic director and sports information director. However, after contacting the schools, it became apparent that the individuals within these athletic programs wear many hats, majority of the schools did not have a sports information director, and school level marketing representatives and coaches were often responsible for marketing the programs. In the cases where the school handled marketing, minimal funds and attention were dedicated to athletics. In the cases, that the coaching staff was responsible for marketing, the personnel felt overwhelmed to market the program and lead the team.

The completed interviews were representative of six (6) districts and the interviewees that were deemed to have the greatest insight at these institutions play a number of roles; head coach, athletic director, assistant athletic director, and vice president of marketing and public relations. One of these individuals even serves as the head men's basketball coach and the athletic director at the school. Nonetheless, even

with a diverse sample that is shy of fifty percent (50%) of the population, themes emerged within the interviews.

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are valuable assets to any study. “All research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge... being able to trust research results is especially important” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 237). Validity is composed of different subcategories. The internal validity of the study was impacted by those things within the study that can impact the outcome, credibility, mainly researcher interpretations, in a study such as this one. An overzealous researcher may read too much into things that are not truly reflective of the research in order to meet personal goals. This was a concern with a study like this where heavily preconceived notions of the outcome are already in place. The bias of the researcher was acknowledged and controlled for. This is minimized in this study by peer reviews, cross-validation, and member checks (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

External validity can be scrutinized in a study such as this one. “The extent to which the findings of a qualitative study can be generalized or transferred to other situations” is identified as external validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 265). For example who is to say that elite programs would have the same responses as other sports; in addition, there may also be a difference by geographic region, or maybe the particular recruiting coaches played a significant role. The sample evaluated was based on specific criteria and was not a random sample. All these factors decrease external validity. Further studies can be done to further generalize and increase external validity. Lastly, reliability is mostly concerned with the results and their plausibility (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam &

Tisdell, 2015). The main way this was addressed in this study was with various peers in the sports marketing arena. They are able to review the body of work in order to ensure the results are reliable.

Limitations

The following limitations are recognized for the conduct of this study:

1. This study was limited to the utilization of NJCAA poll to determine success as opposed to the NJCAA tournament results.
2. The validity of this study was limited to the level of accuracy of marketing campaigns reported in the printed or on-line reports when conducting documentary analyses
3. The researcher had limited access to marketing materials that are utilized by the programs.
4. The success of this study depended on the voluntary participation of NJCAA athletic departments; without a random sample, the findings may not adequately portray marketing practices of programs.

Researcher Subjectivity

Growing up in a gym completely changes your view on basketball. For the past 25 years I have lived basketball. It consumed my life from late September until the highly coveted “March Madness.” I am that girl that does not want to be bothered during a good game. Definitely do not ask me, “What just happened?” or I will likely be very upset with having to explain the game I am so deeply passionate about while trying to enjoy a heated contest. I love the game and know it very well. My dad was a coach at a consistently successful NJCAA institution. Due to the fact that I am drawn to sports, I was around it

all the time. I got to see the program from a unique point of view from the inside out. Prior to the merger, it became quite evident that for Georgia Perimeter College marketing was important. They invested substantial amounts of money into various forms of marketing in hopes that it would give their program an edge over other NJCAA institutions. Thus personally, I believe that marketing can severely impact athletics. Marketing is an important part of any program. Face it. People realize this on a NCAA and a NBA level, but the NJCAA level is often overlooked and several programs fail to see its significance.

My background shapes who I am; nonetheless, its implications on my research are important to explore. I have a special place in my heart for NJCAA athletics. This makes it difficult to remain objective. I want my research to validate my prior beliefs about the marketing; thus, my preconceived notions make me slightly biased. This is a challenging endeavor to embark upon. However, my passion and love for sports make me the prime candidate for this research. It takes care and compassion to be able to perform these evaluations of the effects of marketing, while realizing that, as the interviewer, it is important to remain objective.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the current marketing practices of successful Division I Men's Basketball Programs within the National Junior College Athletic Association, identify the challenges that they face, and make suggestions for potential improvements. In this chapter, I note the findings of the data collection that emerged from a thorough document analysis of the schools' websites, Facebook pages, and Twitter account in addition to one-on-one interviews with personnel within the athletic department that have insight into the marketing practices. The website, Facebook account, and Twitter account of all teams in the top sixteen (16) were reviewed and six (6) schools elected to participate in interviews.

The results are presented in three sections. In the first section, I outline and update the SWOT and PESTLE analyses that were originally completed in the literature review. In the second section, I disclose the findings from the document analysis of the sixteen district representatives. In the third section, I reveal the findings from the interviews with institutional personnel. The findings in these sections are viewed through a pragmatic lens.

SWOT and PESTLE Analyses

Strengths

Junior colleges rely heavily on the local community. Based on the interviews, all successful institutions value and extensively cultivate this relationship. Community partners are primary season ticket holders and contribute financially to the programs. This is also supported by the literature review. Recall that during the 1970s the terms “junior college” and “technical college” to identify two-year institutions became less customary and were replaced with the larger umbrella identifier of “community colleges” for two-year institutions (Erdman & Ogdeen, 2000; Jenkins, 2006; Robinson-Neal, 2009). The emphasis of community partnerships is essential at the junior college level.

According to all participants (n=6), the importance of community support was a theme in the interviews. During the interview with George, he shared that 15% of their athletic budget must come from fund raising. This is established based on the Georgia Board of Regents; the percentage may vary by state. Nonetheless it was common among all participants that community sponsorships via the booster club are instrumental to the success of the organization. As indicated by Chip, men’s basketball is an “all out community affair.”

Developing and cultivating community relationships appeared to be a strength of junior college athletics. During the interview, Ian revealed that they “certainly rely heavily on ... the businesses in our community of about 25,000 people ... we rely ...heavily on local businesses not typically your franchises... we have a lot of home town businesses that do a great job supporting us.” The athletic directors, coaches, and players make an effort to enhance the relationship with the community via community service,

sponsor recognition events, and public acknowledgement of their role as it relates to athletics. This is also noted in the literature via the conveyance of the notion that “athletics help foster that sense of community without which a community college is, well, just another college.” (Jenkins, 2006)

One means of public acknowledgement is social media. Social media appears to be the most commonly utilized form of marketing for junior colleges. The media platforms that are frequently used to disseminate information are Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and the school website. Ian indicated: “We do a lot of stuff through social media... a lot of stuff and that is something that I think since I have been the athletic director here... something I think we are very strong at ... the use of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram.” Each institution appears to be different in their utilization of social media. Some programs utilize a school wide social media (n=4); whereas, some have social media sites that are strictly for athletics (n=6), and a handful have individual profiles for each sport (n=5).

All participants in this study (n=6) reported using social media sites to share information with their fan base. Ian and Cooper indicated that sharing information quickly is a key to effective use of social media. Cooper also mentioned that they have fans that are in different countries that follow their programs, and it is important to keep them informed. The growing number of tweets and posts over the last five years reiterates the importance of sharing information through social media and “the powerful and critical nature of... social media.” (Mangold & Glynn, 2009, 359) Overall community involvement and social media appear to be an important marketing strategy for NJCAA basketball programs.

Weaknesses

While NJCAA DI Men's Basketball Programs have a number of strengths, they also have weaknesses that need to be addressed. The common weaknesses that were mentioned by participants in this study were lack of personnel and lack of funding. For example, Harold shared that despite the institutional success, they will be cutting four (4) athletic programs next year due to lack of funding. The lack of funding and resources presents a significant weakness that impacts what the team is able to accomplish in terms of marketing.

In addition to eliminating specific programs, the staff members appear to be fulfilling multiple needs for their organizations as personnel numbers are limited. This could be contributing to overextension and, as a result, marketing not getting the full attention it may need. Cooper, for example, indicated that they do not initiate true marketing campaigns because of lack of personnel. All participants (n=6) communicated that if they had an unlimited budget, they would invest in personnel expansion or hire a firm to handle their marketing and public relations. This aligns with the content from the literature review that identified that finances for junior colleges are inconsistent at best. Inconsistent finances and workload of the staff are the biggest weaknesses identified by the participants.

Opportunities

The strengths (community awareness and social media) and the weaknesses (lack of resources and heavy workload), provide opportunities to the programs to grow and run efficiently. When asked what initiatives they are looking to add within the next year, nearly all participants (n=4) indicated they hope to enhance their social media or add

additional social media accounts. Another opportunity conveyed by George was that the programs can seek donations or host promotional events where they encourage former players that are currently playing professionally or have played professionally to make donations or participate in an alumni night. This could enhance the community connection because they will have an opportunity to see their favorite former players while generating income for the program.

Threats

The primary threats surrounding NJCAA Division I Men's Basketball Programs are the removal of financial resources from the community and diminished excitement for social media. Recall, "growth in community colleges ...has been sporadic and regional" (Byrd, L., & Williams, M. R., 2007, p. 40). This is largely dependent on community support. If the community fails to support the team then the program may be cut. The community is the target market and the community is responsible for a significant portion of their funds. Therefore, if the community begins to find entertainment supplements and disengages with the program the program may cease to exist.

Chip consistently said that their program was the community's program and that they play an integral role in their success. If the community is not behind a team their existence is threatened. In addition to entertainment supplements, if the enthusiasm for social media subsides or social media begins to charge a fee, then the primary means of marketing for the programs may be eliminated causing a significant burden. This threat may cause programs to have to look for additional means of marketing to showcase their programs. By combining the information from the literature review, the document

analysis, and the interviews, Table 5 provides a comprehensive chart that reflects the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Table 5: Illustration of Comprehensive SWOT Analysis and Components

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athletics provides a means of encouragement for adolescents to continue their education. (literature review) • Sports have been proven to boost morale of the community and students. (literature review and interviews) • The quality of athletics at the NJCAA level may be just as entertaining as NCAA and professional athletics. (literature review) • The local community is heavily invested in NJCAA Division I Men's Basketball Programs. (literature review, document analysis, and interviews) • A strong social media presence allows for free marketing and fan interaction. (document analysis and interviews) 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpredictable enrollment. (literature review) • Unpredictable funding and donations. (literature review and interviews) • Unrealistic expectations of student athletes. (literature review) • Limited use of broadcasting in promoting athletics. (literature review and interviews) • Inconsistent medical coverage. (literature review) • NJCAA Division I Men's Basketball Programs have limited personnel. (interviews) • NJCAA Men's Basketball Programs have limited funding. (literature review and interviews)
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of baccalaureate undergraduates: 18-to 24-year-olds who have strong high school records and are moving directly into higher education full time, and who will have a strong sense of support for the school's athletic programs. (literature review) • Consistent support of the family members of the athletes themselves and members of the community who simply love athletics for the love of the game. (literature review, document analysis, and interviews) • Cultural differences in the fans. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athletics are undervalued and overlooked at junior colleges. (literature review) • Limited or inconsistent funding. (literature review and interviews) • Perceptions of academic or athletic shortcomings of students. (literature review) • Irregular attendance at junior college games. (literature review and interviews) • High costs of broadcasting. (literature review and interviews) • Athletics could be in jeopardy if social media policy changes.

<p>(literature review)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizing social media to attract and increase attendance. (literature review, document analysis, and interviews) • Using the junior college setting to act as an extension of high school to ease students' transition to college. (literature review) • Using broadcasting to counter negative stereotypes about junior college students' athletic abilities. (literature review) • NJCAA Division I Men's Basketball Programs can partner with local high schools or collegiate sport management programs to hire interns to handle social media. (document analysis and interviews) • NJCAA Division I Men's Basketball Programs can call on former athletes to contribute to the program. (literature review and interviews) 	<p>(document analysis and interviews)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athletics could be in jeopardy if consumers elect to find alternate sources of entertainment. (literature review and interviews)
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PESTLE

The document analysis and interviews did not provide extensive additional data for the PESTLE analysis beyond what was gathered in the literature review. The one thing from the interviews that truly stood out is that there are regulations on how much of the athletic budget must come from fundraising. George adamantly declared, "We do not have any television revenue or radio. At our level it's (fundraising minimum) 15%. So say my budget is \$1 million for everything, such as scholarships, paying coaches, athletic directors, travel, etc." the institution is responsible for raising "\$150K and on our level that's hard." These regulations are passed down from the Georgia Board of Regents.

Georgia Board of Regents (2016) outlines subsidy percentage maximums by type of institution. The institution must raise the remainder of the budget, which is not a subsidy. These figures can be found in Table 6. Taking this information into consideration and recalling the information from the literature review, a PESTLE analysis table was created (see Table 7).

Table 6: Georgia Board of Regents Subsidy Maximums

Type of Institution	Maximum Subsidy	Minimum Amount to be Fundraised
NCAA DI-A (affiliated with the Power 5)	10%	90%
NCAA DI-A	65%	35%
NCAA DI-AA	75%	25%
NCAA DII	80%	20%
NAIA	85%	15%
NJCAA	85%	15%

Table 7: Illustration of Comprehensive PESTLE Component and Analyses

External factors	Relative importance to school/system	Ranked significance to the organization
Political 1. Funding via federal government 2. Title XI 3. Change in demographic of elected officials	Political factors 1. Critical 2. Critical 3. Very important	Political ranked 1. Number 1 2. Number 2 3. Number 3
Economic 1. Socio-economic status of consumers 2. Revenue generating means 3. Sponsorships and partnerships with local businesses 4. 15% or more of the budget must come from fundraising	Economic 1. Critical 2. Very important 3. Important 4. Critical	Economically ranked 1. Number 2 2. Number 3 3. Number 4 4. Number 1
Social 1. Team success 2. Perception of the NJCAA 3. Marketing via social media	Social 1. Critical 2. Very Important 3. Critical	Socially ranked 1. Number 2 2. Number 3 3. Number 1
Technological 1. Streaming technology 2. Marketing technology 3. Access to current technology 4. Access to social media outlets is essential to marketing	Technological 1. Very important 2. Critical 3. Critical 4. Critical	Technologically ranked 1. Number 4 2. Number 2 3. Number 3 4. Number 1
Legal 1. Title IX 2. Player immigration 3. Board of Regents regulates the percentage of funding	Legal 1. Important 2. Important 3. Critical	Legally ranked 1. Number 2 2. Number 3 3. Number 1
Environmental 1. Increase in traffic and pollution	Environmental 1. Important	Environmentally ranked 1. Number 1

Document Analysis

The document analysis allowed for a look into marketing initiatives that the institutions are utilizing to gain exposure for their men's basketball programs (see Table

8). Completing the document analysis allowed for insight into the research question: what are the major marketing practices in NJCAA Men's Basketball Programs. By examining the data from these documents, current practices, weaknesses, and issues were identified, thus laying the foundation for making suggestions form improvements. The data collection was designed to be comprehensive, rich, and robust content related to marketing (Maxwell, 2013).

Table 8: Document Overview for All Sixteen Institutions

	Type of Website	Type of Facebook Page	Type of Twitter Page
Institution 1	Independent Athletic Website	School	Basketball
Institution 2	Independent Athletic Website	Athletics	School
Institution 3	Independent Athletic Website	Basketball	Basketball
Institution 4	Independent Athletic Website	Basketball	Basketball
Institution 5	Webpage within School's Site	Athletics	Athletics
Institution 6	Independent Athletic Website	Basketball	Athletics
Institution 7	Webpage within School's Site	School	Athletics
Institution 8	Independent Athletic Website	Athletics	Athletics
Institution 9	Independent Athletic Website	Basketball	Basketball
Institution 10	Independent Athletic Website	Athletics	Basketball
Institution 11	Webpage within School's Site	Basketball	Athletics
Institution 12	Webpage within School's Site	School	School
Institution 13	Independent Athletic Website	Athletics	Athletics
Institution 14	Independent Athletic Website	School	Athletics
Institution 15	Independent Athletic Website	Athletics	Athletics
Institution 16	Independent Athletic Website	Individual*	Individual*

* This institution lists an individual's Facebook and Twitter pages as the official page for athletics.

Website

All sixteen teams had some form of website. The websites are designed to share information pertaining to the team. The rosters and schedules were readily available with results and statistics related to the games attached to the websites. Team pictures, individual pictures, and action photos were available on most pages (n=14). At the minimum, the website had a team picture. These pictures can be used to allow fans to connect to the team.

The websites (n=10) that were the most extensive also included individual pictures and bios. The bios allow for a personal connection with the players. This is significant because the junior college relies heavily on the community involvement, by creating that sense of connection between the program, coaches, players, and the community, the program is likely to generate support, which is an essential component to increasing the fan base. In addition to team and individual pictures, some institutions (n=7) had action shots of their games. The common theme within the action shots was to create albums that highlight special events at the games: Team Meet and Greet, Sophomore Night, Community Night, Youth Night, Christmas Toy Drive, Military Night, Pink Out etc. Although varied in the types of events, the action shots appear to all be of home games. Sponsors are noted and given thanks on the websites; nonetheless, there is very little advertisement throughout the sites. Amongst the successful men's basketball programs, the website seems to be the primary form of disseminating information for the team.

Photos, bios, scores, and statistics are not the only information shared. News articles are available on most sites (n=14). The majority of the programs (n=14) during

the previous basketball season had between twelve (12) and fifty-three (53) articles about their program posted. There was one page that was under construction, thus archived articles were not available for frequency to be reviewed. The articles mainly recapped the games. They were most frequently posted the night of a game or the day following a home game. Later on in the season, post-season success and accolades were noted in articles. In addition to sharing information pertaining to the team and their games, most websites also had an option for consumer interaction.

Although there were a number of consumer interaction options on the websites, the contact us section, email link, and recruitment sections were the most prominent means of consumer input. Consumer interaction can serve as a means for members of the athletic market to receive feedback from the fans on the events and initiatives that they implement.

The websites of these programs (n=16) have links to all other digital platforms utilized, thus it appears to be used as the first point of contact as it pertains to sharing information about men's basketball. There are several links and contacts on the website to other media outlets (see Table 9): Twitter (n=13), Facebook (n=12), Instagram (n=8), YouTube (n=10), SnapChat (n=4), LinkedIn (n=2), and Flickr (n=1) were all represented for at least one institution. The majority of the institutions utilized their website to direct fans to their Twitter (n=13) and Facebook (n=12). The frequency in which these outlets were updated varied. One institution had a YouTube page that had not been updated since January 10, 2012. The ability to live stream audio or video of the games is sporadic. Although, ten (10) institutions had links to their YouTube pages, only six (6) of the sixteen (16) had recent content pertaining to basketball. The website plays a major role in

communication surrounding the men's basketball programs and serves as a roadmap to where additional information can be located.

Table 9: Website Links to Other Media

	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	YouTube
Institution 1	x	x	x	x
Institution 2				
Institution 3	x	x	x	
Institution 4	x	x	x	x
Institution 5	x	x	x	x
Institution 6				
Institution 7	x	x		x
Institution 8	x	x		x
Institution 9		x		
Institution 10	x	x		x
Institution 11	x	x	x	x
Institution 12	x	x	x	x
Institution 13	x	x	x	x
Institution 14	x	x		
Institution 15	x	x	x	
Institution 16				x
Total	12	13	8	10

Facebook

Facebook appears to be the oldest form of social media utilized by the programs. The Facebook pages were designed to share information with fans. However, the Facebook pages also appear to be the most conducive means of communicating and receiving feedback in a timely manner from a representative within the organization. An indication of the timeliness is the positive responsiveness rating of most institutions (n=9). The setup of Facebook pages varies. Some pages are setup similar to an individual page, whereas others are setup as business pages. Business pages may have responsiveness ratings and star ratings for the page. Table 10 outlines the type of page, responsiveness rating, and quality feedback represented by star level, and number of friends or followers.

Table 10: Facebook Facts for All Sixteen Institutions

	Type of Page	Responsiveness Rating	Quality Feedback (Star Level)	Number of Friends or Followers
Institution 1	School	Within 1 hour		9.4K
Institution 2	Athletics		4.9	1K
Institution 3	Basketball			664
Institution 4	Basketball			840
Institution 5	Athletics	Within 1 day	4.5	1.8K
Institution 6	Basketball		5.0	535
Institution 7	School	Within 1 day	4.2	7.1K
Institution 8	Athletics	Within 1 day	4.3	928
Institution 9	Basketball			856
Institution 10	Athletics		4.3	1677
Institution 11	Basketball	Within 1 hour		911
Institution 12	School	Within 1 hour	4.4	8404
Institution 13	Athletics	Within 1 hour	4.9	820
Institution 14	School	Within a few hours	4.5	9639
Institution 15	Athletics	Within 1 day		3913
Institution 16	Individual*			2698

* This institution lists an individual's Facebook page as the official page for athletics.

The Facebook accounts varied. There were five (5) programs, institutions 3, 4, 6, 9, and 11, that had their own Facebook accounts strictly for basketball. By having an account dedicated to basketball, the fans are receiving concentrated information about the program; on the other hand, these pages tend to have fewer followers and are less frequently updated than pages that incorporate all of athletics or the entire school. The number of followers ranges from 535 to 911. These pages include pictures, rosters, video footage, promotional videos, and encouragement from fans. Very little dialogue takes place on the page itself; nonetheless, fans do post words of encouragement such as "Go Team" and "Congrats." There were two programs that had multiple pages. One page appeared to be outdated, but it was not removed and appears when the program is searched for. This could cause confusion for fans.

Facebook accounts, which are dedicated to athletics, as a whole, tend to be the best means of utilizing Facebook. There were six (6) programs that relied on their athletics page. They traditionally have more followers than pages dedicated simply to basketball, are frequently updated, and respond to messages relatively frequently. They do not have as many posts as pages for the entire school, but the information is relevant to those seeking updates on athletics. The majority of these Facebook pages have an operator that post several times a day.

Facebook accounts for the institution do not particularly highlight athletics or men's basketball. These four (4) pages have thousands of followers, but the athletic information gets lost in the abundance of posts. They have high star rating, which reflects well on the institution, and respond quickly. However, the individual responding may have limited knowledge on athletics or basketball related inquiries because they are school representatives and do not specialize in athletics or basketball.

There was one program (Institution 16) that listed an individual's page as the official page for the program. This person has a significant number of followers and posts updates frequently. I could not determine their affiliation to the program. They were not listed on the staff directory. Using one person streamlines the point of contact, but could provide confusion if their role is not clearly identified to the fans viewing the page.

Although varied in type of page, the Facebook page of each institution that has an account appears to be a viable option of communicating with and receiving correspondence from fans for the programs. Each school must decide which type of page is feasible for their needs. It appears as if pages for athletics are the most beneficial

means of utilizing Facebook based on the focused nature of the content, responsiveness, and substantial number of followers.

Twitter

Twitter is the most frequently utilized form of social media by these programs. This was also substantiated in the interviews. As stated by Amy: “Obviously the social media is big.” It allows for a quick means of sharing highlights related to the program. Fans are able to interact by retweeting, liking, or responding to a tweet. Players and coaches are also active on the Twitter accounts by mentioning the account in their tweets. Programs also use Twitter to give updates on games as they occur. Table 11 outlines the type of account, when the Twitter account was established, the number of followers, and the number of tweets.

Table 11: Twitter Facts for All Sixteen Institutions

	Type of Account	Date Established	Number of Tweets	Number of Followers
Institution 1	Basketball	October 2014	2362	893
Institution 2	School	September 2009	1925	1160
Institution 3	Basketball	September 2011	1328	966
Institution 4	Basketball	September 2009	278	433
Institution 5	Athletics	November 2009	4663	918
Institution 6	Athletics	February 2016	2576	691
Institution 7	Athletics	October 2014	2496	596
Institution 8	Athletics	September 2012	4245	1715
Institution 9	Basketball	August 2012	961	498
Institution 10	Basketball	February 2014	952	769
Institution 11	Athletics	September 2012	7713	1673
Institution 12	School	November 2009	4784	2857
Institution 13	Athletics	December 2012	3304	792
Institution 14	Athletics	November 2012	12.1K	3029
Institution 15	Athletics	March 2010	40K	8062
Institution 16	Individual*	November 2011	5852	908

* This institution lists an individual's Twitter account as the official page for athletics.

The identified institutions began using Twitter as early as September of 2009 and continue to use it today. Four institutions (2, 4, 5, and 12) began using the platform in 2009. One institution (15) began in 2010. Two institutions (3, 16) began in 2011. Five institutions (8, 9, 11, 13, 14) began in 2012. Three institutions (1, 7, 10) began in 2014. One institution (6) began in 2016. Highlights are quickly shared via Twitter. The pages frequently have fans having dialogue with fans and the program via mentions. Promotions and game updates with social interactions using the hash tag option are utilized to generate enthusiasm surrounding the programs.

The majority of the programs (n=13) have either an athletic or basketball specific account. Only two programs rely on the school's account to tweet. This may be because operating a Twitter is meant to share quick highlights. It may appear as less of a burden to operate an account on Twitter as opposed to Facebook and an independent website.

One athletic program has 40,000 tweets and 8,062 followers. These numbers far exceed the number of followers that any of the reviewed institutions that utilized specific athletic page or basketball page have on Facebook. One institution identifies an individual's Twitter account as their official account. The account states that the account is that of the athletics biggest fan. This is unconventional and would not be an option for most programs, but this account appears to be current and accurate. However, it could be problematic and confusing for fans attempting to follow their team. Twitter is the most readily utilized social media platform for the programs evaluated. It allows for rapid information dissemination and personal interactions, thus aiding in the community feel that is heavily leaned upon to generate enthusiasm at the junior college level.

Interviews

The one-on-one interviews provided data on current practices, challenges, and information to suggest solutions from individuals with an insider's perspective of the programs. Completing the interviews allowed for insight into the three research questions.

Research Question #1 (RQ1): Examination of Themes

RQ1: What are the major marketing practices in NJCAA Men's Basketball programs?

Of the fifteen (15) question interview protocol, six (6) of the questions were aligned to RQ1. Questions 1-6 of the protocol were designed to provide an insight into the major marketing practices within NJCAA Men's Basketball (see Appendix A). Table 12 outlines a summary of the results from the questions that align to RQ1. Two dominate themes (i.e., mentioned by all six (6) participants) emerged from analysis of the interviews related to RQ1: (1) usage of signage and social media as the major marketing

practices within NJCAA Men's Basketball programs and (2) anecdotal information as the measure of success. Other themes included: (1) community as the target market (n=5/6) and (2) limited personnel as the primary implementers of marketing practices (n=4/6). Each is described in more detail in the following sections.

Table 12: Research Question #1 Summary of Themes

	#1 Ian, Athletic Director	#2 Cooper, Assistant Athletic Director	#3 George, Head Coach/ Athletic Director	#4 Amy, Vice President of Marketing and PR	#5 Harold, Athletic Director	#6 Chip, Head Coach	Summary
Theme 1: Limited Personnel as the Primary Implementers	x	x	x			x	Traditional signage and social media platforms that call on a collaborative effort are the major marketing practices implemented to market and promote NJCAA Men's Basketball programs
Theme 2: Community as the Target Market	x	x	x	x		x	Both traditional booster club members, business owners, and your professionals are identified as the target market
Theme 3: Community Signage and Social Media as the Major Marketing Practices	x	x	x	x	x	x	Social media and signage for the community appear to be the primary means of marketing.
Theme 4: Anecdotal Information as the Measure of Success	x	x	x	x	x	x	The current practices surrounding the measurement of success of a marketing campaign centers on the feeling and atmosphere that it leads to.

Theme 1: Limited Personnel as the Primary Implementers

Selecting a marketing initiative at the junior college level is typically a collective decision majority of the interviewees stated that a small group of individuals, typically three to four that include a coach, an athletic administrator, and marketing department representation as noted by Ian, Cooper, George, Chip. The other two participants stated that their team is much larger during planning but is minimal when implemented. The larger planning team includes the marketing department that is responsible for the institution as a whole, the coaching staff, and the athletic director noted Amy and Harold.

Once an initiative is agreed upon, the responsibility of implementation is assigned to one to two members within the athletic department to serve as the leaders and primary implementers. The titles of the individuals that were identified as primary planners and implementers were athletic director, assistant athletic director, vice president of marketing and public relations, and head coach. Implementation of the marketing initiative is added on top of other duties and responsibilities of their job. Implementation is not based on concrete data; however, it is designed to create a feeling and observations of other NJCAA and NCAA programs. Ian (2017) noted how he is “constantly on the lookout for other institutions and not just at our level but all levels of their marketing talking to other ADs ... just trying to put the best product out there.” Junior colleges seek to create a community feel and atmosphere that is inviting in order to cater to the needs of the target market.

Theme 2: Community as the Target Market

The target market identified was the community. The majority of the students at a junior college are unconventional students. Based on the study completed by Kane and Rouse (1999) approximately 67% of junior college students are not straight out of high school. These students may have jobs and families that are their primary focus, thus they are not identified as those most likely to contribute to and attend the athletic events at the school compared to traditional college students. Therefore, the target market is the community. George stated, “It’s really local for us. It’s local people. We really just try to get all the locals that we can.” Ian stated “we have a very strong community work group...we rely pretty heavily on local businesses not typically your franchise places we have a lot of home town businesses that do a great job supporting us.” The theme of community involvement and identification as the target market is consistent. Chip noted, it is “easier to market throughout the community because this is kind of their college program that they have supported throughout the years.”

The model of marketing to the community has traditionally been the booster club members and trends towards an older population. Cooper noted, “our season ticket holders... the majority of them are 65 plus.” However, a number of programs displayed a trend of continuing to focus on the community, but they conveyed that they are seeking to engage a younger fan base. Cooper referred to it as a “split focus.” The idea remains community centered, but it engages a different portion of the community. This includes adolescents and young adults. Chip conveyed, “We try and market to elementary, middle schools, and ... the high schools and try to bring them” out to the games. In addition to the youth in the community, Cooper revealed that they are “trying to still accommodate

those who have been faithful to us for years but at the same time get a younger demographic coming to the game... we are trying to focus on the young business owners, student body, young money” within the community. Keeping in mind that marketing initiatives involve limited personnel and are geared towards community engagement and interaction. Social media and signage for the community appear to be the primary means of marketing.

Theme 3: Community Signage and Social Media as the Major Marketing Practices

Zhang et al (2003) found that major marketing practices tend to focus on ticket sales and broadcasting rights. Due to limited broadcasting, ticket sales and fan engagement are the focal points of marketing campaigns at the junior college level. According to Amy, the goal of the campaigns is “trying to get them (community members) engaged to come to our campus.” The campaigns cater to previous traditions of signage while also attempting to reach the younger community demographic via social media.

A media guide, a team poster, and basketball schedule cards are posted locally and distributed to community members to create awareness via a more traditional means. Amy stated, “We do a media guide, we do posters that they can hung up at schools or businesses in the community;” On the other hand, social media is a trend that is utilized to keep up with current practices of the younger demographic while remaining cost effective; “our marketing budget for athletics is so limited that... we have ... started getting into digital” initiatives. The programs all utilize Facebook and Twitter. Four participants, Amy, Cooper, George, and Ian, indicated that the perception is that Facebook is most historic means of social media, with Twitter and Instagram being the

fastest growing. However, not all schools (n=8) have an Instagram account. Social media implementation is an approach that engages the administration, coaches, and players to create fan interaction that does not solely rely on one individual to interact with the community. As indicated by Amy, “it is a collaborative effort.” Most programs conveyed the sentiments shared by Ian that they “have been really successful (with social media) with Twitter probably being the most successful of all three of those.” One school was the exception to this revealing that since the addition of Instagram, Amy indicated that Twitter has been the least impactful form of social media. Ultimately traditional signage and social media platforms that call on a collaborative effort are the major marketing practices implemented to market and promote NJCAA Men’s Basketball programs.

Theme 4: Anecdotal Information as the Measure of Success

Upon implementation, each initiative is evaluated to see the impact and success of their efforts. The measurement tool utilized does not appear to be a concrete tool. According to the interview with Amy, overall programs seek to measure how well they were able to “generate enthusiasm and excitement of people that want to come to the game.” Amy stated, they primarily measure this success by utilizing an “eye test and anecdotal” means. They evaluate the feeling and look to see the impacts on attendance, but no hard numbers are noted as noted by four of the participants. Chip communicated the idea that overall programs are “just trying to create an atmosphere. Obviously the more people in the gym the better the atmosphere... Make it more of a not only a social gathering but also a community gathering.” In addition to assessing the environment, one institution mentioned following up on fans with social media. Amy revealed, “We will

put out things on social asking, ‘Did you all have a good time?’” Overall the current practices surrounding the measurement of success of a marketing campaign centers on the feeling and atmosphere that it leads to.

Summary

Research Question One sought to identify the major marketing practices in NJCAA Men’s Basketball programs. Four main themes emerged from the data analysis:

- Marketing teams for generating ideas may vary, however implementation is the assignment of limited personnel.
- The community is the target market when implementing a marketing campaign.
- Community signage and social media are the major marketing practices.
- Success of marketing practices relies on anecdotal information.

It is also important to understand the marketing issues and challenges faced by the programs. Data related to Research Question Two is presented in the next section.

Research Question #2 (RQ2): Examination of Themes

RQ2: What are the major challenges, issues, and weaknesses in marketing in the NJCAA?

Of the fifteen (15) questions in the interview protocol, five (5) of the questions were aligned to RQ2. Questions 7-11 of the protocol were designed to provide an insight into the major challenges, issues, and weaknesses in marketing in NJCAA Men’s Basketball (see Appendix A). Table 13 outlines a summary of the results from the questions that aligned to RQ2. Two dominate themes (i.e., mentioned by all six (6) participants) emerged from analysis of the interviews related to RQ2: (1) financial constraints as a major challenge and (2) limited personnel as a major issue. One other

theme presented itself: alternate entertainment sources as a threat to attendance (n= 5/6).

Each is described in more detail in the following sections.

Table 13: Research Question #2 Summary of Themes

	#1 Ian, Athletic Director	#2 Cooper, Assistant Athletic Director	#3 George, Head Coach/ Athletic Director	#4 Amy, Vice President of Marketing and PR	#5 Harold, Athletic Director	#6 Chip, Head Coach	Summary
Theme 1: Financial Constraints as a Major Challenge	x	x	x	x	x	x	Funding for NJCAA Men's Basketball programs comes from three main sources: government funding, student fees, and fundraising efforts. Finances serve as a major challenge when implementing a campaign.
Theme 2: Limited Personnel as a Major Issue	x	x	x	x	x	x	Limited personnel lead to marketing initiatives being overlooked or lacking complexity.
Theme 3: Alternate Entertainment Sources as a Threat to Attendance	x	x	x	x		x	NJCAA Men's Basketball Programs may struggle to find success (as evaluated by increased attendance and enthusiasm) in marketing because there are other entertainment options available to consumers.

Theme 1: Financial Constraints as a Major Challenge

Funding for NJCAA Men's Basketball programs comes from three main sources: government funding, student fees, and fundraising efforts. Merrow (2007) found that two-year colleges receive less than 30 percent of state and local financing. In addition some Board of Regents (2017) put constraints on NJCAA budgets by requiring that a percentage of their funds be generated via fundraising efforts. Finances serve as a major challenge when implementing a campaign. Amy stated, "our marketing budget for athletics is so limited... budget is always something that you want to improve." Her sentiments were shared by all other participants relaying that finances are a major limiting factor to the complexity of marketing campaigns. In addition to finances, limited personnel also pose a problem when marketing a program.

Theme 2: Limited Personnel as a Major Issue

At the junior college level, Ian mentioned that marketing is "pretty grassroots operational." The coaches, athletic administration, and even players are asked to buy in and assist in the efforts. These individuals typically have other job responsibilities and marketing is simply an additional thing added to their duties. Unlike many of their NCAA counterparts, Amy indicated her concern that some NJCAA programs "do not have a full-time sports information department." This may be due to the fact that some junior colleges do not have the vast budgets to hire additional personnel to simply focus on marketing. Someone may be assigned to operate the institutions social media to market the program; however, Ian stated that other individuals such as "coaches like to use their personal twitter accounts to utilize as well." Nonetheless, all respondents

agreed, the number of individuals that are responsible for marketing and sustaining a campaign are extremely limited. Ian identified the biggest challenge as “resources by the way of people. We work a lot of hours here and I think that everybody does at a community college, I am no different than everybody else but we don’t necessarily have those extra bodies.” Chip reiterated this fact by stating “here at a junior college you are shorthanded because you don’t have a so called marketing department... and it is sometimes handled by one or two people... that can be a frustration.” As a result of limited personnel campaigns may be overlooked or lack complexity.

Theme 3: Alternate Entertainment Sources as a Threat to Attendance

Because of the lack of complexity and limited budget the environment at times can feel lackluster. Ian, Cooper, George, Amy, and Chip expressed that campaigns are designed to generate enthusiasm and increase attendance. However, the environment at junior college athletic events may be lack luster. Amy (2017) identified it, as “the feeling you get is when you are sitting at your kids Saturday morning game.” While Chip (2017), referred to the environment as a community gathering. George and Ian (2017) mentioned that because of the feeling, environment, lack of media coverage, and entertainment competitors, they must work diligently to market their programs or attendance suffers. Amy conveyed, “There are so many other sports teams collegiate, pro, high school... competing for market share is tough.” Ultimately one reason that NJCAA Men’s Basketball Programs struggle to find success (as evaluated by increased attendance and enthusiasm) in marketing is that the experience is unappealing and there are other entertainment options available to consumers.

Summary

Research Question Two sought to identify the challenges, issues, and weaknesses in marketing in the NJCAA Men's Basketball programs. Three main themes emerged from the data analysis:

- Financial constraints pose a major challenge when attempting to market the programs.
- Limited personnel may lead to an overwhelmed staff and marketing initiatives being overlooked.
- Alternate entertainment sources may threaten the ability of a campaign to increase attendance.

Once the practices and challenges were identified, it was important to seek suggested solutions. Data related to Research Question Three is presented in the next section.

Research Question #3 (RQ3): Examination of Themes

RQ3: What are the suggested solutions to marketing challenges?

Of the fifteen (15) questions in the interview protocol, three (3) of the questions were aligned to RQ3. Questions 12-14 of the protocol were designed to provide an insight into potential solutions to the challenges moving forward the major marketing within NJCAA Men's Basketball (see Appendix A). Table 14 outlines a summary of the results from the questions that align to RQ3. Two dominate themes (i.e., mentioned by all six (6) participants) emerged from analysis of the interviews related to RQ3: (1) increasing personnel to combat marketing challenges and (2) engaging in additional social media platforms to expand marketing practices. One additional theme that became

evident was (3) utilizing community engagement and alumni as a means of generating funding (n=3/6). Each is described in more detail in the following sections.

Table 14: Research Question #3 Summary of Themes

	#1 Ian, Athletic Director	#2 Cooper, Assistant Athletic Director	#3 George, Head Coach/ Athletic Director	#4 Amy, Vice President of Marketing and PR	#5 Harold, Athletic Director	#6 Chip, Head Coach	Summary
Theme 1: Increasing Personnel as a Suggested Solution	x	x	x	x	x	x	An increase in personnel could potentially allow for more effective and extensive marketing initiatives. However this must be done in a way that does not further strain the budget of the institution.
Theme 2: Engaging in Additional Social Media Platforms to Expand Marketing	x	x	x	x	x	x	Expanding the usage of social media to include addition platforms can serve as a low cost way to extend marketing efforts. Primarily Twitter and Facebook are utilized. Adding Instagram and SnapChat are viable options for expansion.
Theme 3: Utilizing Community Engagement and Alumni as a Means of Generating Funding	x		x			x	Increasing community engagement and calling upon alumni may help to relieve some financial constraints. Alumni may be willing to make guest appearances or donate to the programs.

Theme 1: Increasing Personnel as a Suggested Solution

Due to the limited personnel and extensive responsibilities of the personnel, one solution to the marketing challenges that are present within NJCAA Men's Basketball programs is to increase the amount of personnel. When asked if presented an unlimited budget where would the resources be allocated, all participants (n=6) mentioned some form of personnel increase. Ian stated that he would immediately "hire staff and people that want to help" marketing the program. Amy (2017) echoed the need for personnel by communicating that she would "invest internally first, in a promotions team." An increase in personnel is ideal; however, budget constraints may require unconventional means of getting support.

Theme 2: Engaging in Additional Social Media Platforms to Expand Marketing

With social media being a means of marketing that is extensively utilized with limited to no financial responsibilities, all participants (n=6) indicated a desire to expand their usage of social media. Each institution consistently utilizes Twitter and Facebook, relay information. George referred to this process as the need to "stay out there and pump the information out" to their fans. However, the desire to expand usage of Instagram and SnapChat was conveyed. Social media is a low cost yet extensive means of reaching a targeted population. Other than investing time, there are no financial requirements for utilizing these platforms.

Theme 3: Utilizing Community Engagement and Alumni as a Means of Generating Funding

Community engagement and alumni can be relied upon to generate funding for the programs. With financial hardships being one of the primary challenges noted, three of the participants stated that they intended to attempt to further engage the community and some mentioned calling upon alumni for sponsorships or participation in fundraisers. George

mentioned, “We could bring them back and celebrate them.” By doing so they may be interested in making a contribution or fans may be interested in attending games to see former athletes and distinguished alumni. Capitalizing on community ties and alumni could assist in combatting the financial strains of programs and increase the fundraising revenue.

Summary

Research Question Three sought to identify suggested solutions to marketing challenges within NJCAA Men’s Basketball programs. Three main themes merged from the data analysis:

- An increase in personnel could potentially allow for more effective and extensive marketing initiatives.
- Expanding the usage of social media to include additional platforms can serve as a low cost way to extend marketing efforts.
- Increasing community engagement and calling upon alumni may help to relieve some financial constraints.

Once the practices, challenges, and potential solutions were identified, cross-referencing data between the document analysis and interview materials took place.

Conclusions

In summary, by performing a document analysis and interviews, I was able to take a comprehensive look into marketing practices that are utilized within NJCAA Division I Men’s Basketball programs. These findings and themes that emerged will allow for SWOT and PESTLE Analyses to be completed in an effort to answer the three research questions. By performing a document analysis and interviews, I was able to take a comprehensive look into marketing practices that are utilized within NJCAA Division I Men’s Basketball Programs.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to utilize documents and interviews to create a true depiction of marketing within NJCAA Division I Men's Basketball Programs through a pragmatic lens. In this chapter I outline the findings as they relate to the three research questions:

1. What are the major marketing practices in NJCAA Men's Basketball programs?
2. What are the major challenges, issues, and weaknesses in marketing in the NJCAA?
3. What are the suggested solutions to the marketing challenges?

I will seek to answer these questions, discuss the implications of the findings, and identify future studies that may be conducted.

Major Marketing Practices

Previous literature has researched marketing practices, but seldom explored the junior college level. There are typically two aspects for measuring marketing: ticket sales and broadcasting rights (Zhang, Lam, & Connaughton, 2003). Due to limited broadcasting at the junior college level the primary focus has been tickets sales and fan engagement. According to Zhang et al. (2003) a number of factors can influence attendance; one of these factors in marketing promotions which includes but is not limited to publicity surrounding the event and promotional items.

As outlined in the methodology, the pragmatic theory seeks to solve a problem as it relates to central questions. The data from this study indicate that the current marketing practices utilized in NJCAA Division I Men's Basketball Programs centers on utilizing a website and social media to market their program to the local community. Ian stated "I spend a lot of time out in our community. I ask our coaches and athletes to spend a lot of time in our communities doing community service acts in terms of me reaching out to local sponsors." The time commitment to community engagement is indicative of its importance.

Various personnel are used to make decisions surrounding the marketing of the program. This varies by institution due to the fact that junior colleges have limited staff in the athletic department. When initiating a campaign, the local community is identified as the target market because the transient student population is less likely to attend games. Chip emphasized that they seek to "make it (basketball games) more of a not only a social gathering but also a community gathering. So, as I said we have an appreciation club which we really pushed and it allows people to eat in our appreciation club room and between halves and I mean between games and half times of our games." This notion conveys the high regard for community engagement and the environment at games.

In addition, the programs rely on the community to donate funds essential to sustaining the program. The primary goal when initiating a campaign is to increase community engagement via increased attendance and increased booster club membership to generate funding. The literature suggests that many athletic administrators do "not feel that the athletic program had a secure funding base ... and ... athletics would not have a secure funding source in the future" (Williams, M. R., Byrd, L., & Pennington, K., 2008, p. 457). As a result community engagement, donations, and marketing practices that require little to no funding are utilized. Ultimately a

website, Twitter, and Facebook are used to market programs. By outlining the current practices, strengths and weaknesses of the programs could be identified. These strengths and weaknesses were noted in the first two components of the SWOT analysis; additional external concerns were documented in the PESTLE analysis.

The interviews (n=6) supported the literature review, which revealed that there are often financial constraints that junior college athletic departments are faced with. Because they do not have the financial means to do so, the staff is limited and oftentimes one member of the staff performs a number of roles. As a result, there is not one individual that handles marketing. It is often times a collective effort. They also do not have the finances to afford broadcasting slots or radio advertisement. This has led them to lean on free resources such as social media. When asked what they would invest in if given an unlimited budget, five (5) of the six (6) participants said some form of personnel. Each interview made mention of a lack of resources, the emergence of social media, and a heavy reliance on the local community.

The participants interviewed (n=6) all mentioned social media as a large part of their marketing. It is free and allows for global connections. Several of the programs have players from overseas and their families are able to follow their success with minimal expenses incurred by the college. The two forms of social media that all participants referred to were Facebook and Twitter. However, two (2) participants also mentioned that they were expanding to include Instagram and SnapChat. Because resources are scarce, free options are ideal. Nonetheless, when they do invest money into marketing it is typically in the form of signage and the athletic website. In fact, one program has hired Presto, a professional website designer used by the NJCAA, to revamp their website to give it a fresh look. In addition to social media and the website, signage such as posters and schedule cards are distributed throughout the community.

Community involvement is a key to the success of these programs. Chip indicated, “It’s just kind of an all-out community affair with posters and schedules as soon as we get them in the fall and try to get them in the business locations. We have an appreciation club with over 200 members.” Each program has some form of booster club that is used to generate money. These community members are the identified target market and frequently attend games. The community appears to have more invested in the programs than the students; thus, community events are incorporated into the basketball games. Youth Night and Meet the Team for Boosters were two examples noted. Ultimately the four themes that emerged to outline the major marketing practices are as follows:

- Marketing teams for generating ideas may vary, however implementation is the assignment of limited personnel.
- The community is the target market when implementing a marketing campaign.
- Community signage and social media are the major marketing practices.
- Success of marketing practices relies on anecdotal information.

Major Marketing Challenges

The data from this study indicate that the major challenges that are faced by the programs are related to limited funding and limited personnel. Ultimately the funding for these programs is inconsistent and relies partially on fundraising. This is supported by previous research and personnel interviews and served as a major weakness within the SWOT analysis. Recall that the literature noted “when budgets are tight, as they usually are, and administrators are looking for a little extra cash, their steely-eyed gaze turns naturally towards athletics” (Jenkins, 2006, p. B13). This constant limited budget puts athletic programs in a bind. In addition, the expectation of

fundraising is that the programs must generate fifteen percent of their budget noted in one state, this is an external constraint highlighted in the PESTLE analysis.

With the mandate in place, in certain states, stating that fifteen (15) percent be raised budgets are capped and limited by fundraising efforts. Thus the personnel that seek to market the program seek to initiate campaigns that are low cost, increase enthusiasm, and lead to donor contributions throughout the community. Twitter is the fastest growing marketing initiative as noted by Ian, Cooper, and George. Ian confidently professed, “I am a twitter guy. I think it is a great place to go find information.” Whereas, Facebook allows for more effective correspondence between fans and a representative with most Facebook accounts responding in less than twenty-four (24) hours, as indicated by the responsiveness rating of the nine (9) Facebook pages that had this metric (Institutions 1, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15). In the future, five of the six programs hope to expand their usage of social media, which is an opportunity for growth highlighted in the SWOT analysis.

In addition to limited funding, the programs interviewed have limited personnel. This requires staff members to often serve more than one role. George indicated that he was both the athletic director and head men’s basketball coach. Ian and Cooper shared that one of the assistant coaches is partially responsible for coaching and marketing. With limited personnel marketing initiatives lack complexity and are at times inconsistent. If provided with an unlimited budget the focus would be to expand staff. One athletic administrator professed, Ian, “I would immediately hire staff and people that want to help us ... I would take those dollars towards personnel.” Without expanding the staff, the campaigns may be overlooked and of lower priority levels compared to the other demands of the individual’s job. Ultimately the three themes that emerged to outline the major marketing challenges are as follows:

- Financial constraints pose a major challenge when attempting to market the programs.
- Limited personnel may lead to an overwhelmed staff and marketing initiatives being overlooked.
- Alternate entertainment sources may threaten the ability of a campaign to increase attendance.

Suggested Solutions

In order to ease the personnel constraints, encourage the progression of community relations, and expand the marketing efforts, NJCAA Division I Men's Basketball Programs can start an internship program with their students, local high schools, and sport management programs. According to the North American Society for Sport Management (2017) there are over 240 institutions with sport management programs that include bachelors, masters, and doctoral level programs. These programs provide an opportunity for partnerships. Interns can be utilized to maintain social media and expand to additional social media outlets. This can include continuing the usage of Twitter and Facebook, expanding the usage of Instagram to the eight (8) institutions that do not list it on their website, and readily posting on the YouTube accounts present and adding accounts to those that do not have them. This will provide the interns with experience while also helping to relieve the institution's personnel of some of their responsibilities. In addition, they can lean on alumni to donate to the program or participate in fundraising efforts. These suggestions are designed to capitalize on the strengths of the programs while attempting to minimize the weaknesses. Ultimately the three themes that emerged to outline the major marketing challenges are as follows:

- An increase in personnel could potentially allow for more effective and extensive marketing initiatives.

- Expanding the usage of social media to include additional platforms can serve as a low cost way to extend marketing efforts.
- Increasing community engagement and calling upon alumni may help to relieve some financial constraints.

Interpreting the Findings

The primary lens for this study was the pragmatism. Pragmatism seeks to utilize research to answer critical questions surrounding a particular content (Duer, 1909). In this study, pragmatism was applied to the three research questions. This allowed study was designed to answer the questions:

1. What are the major marketing practices in NJCAA Men's Basketball programs?
2. What are the major challenges, issues, and weaknesses in marketing in the NJCAA?
3. What are the suggested solutions to the marketing challenges?

These questions pose the problem that junior college athletics may potentially have a difficult time marketing their programs. The data from this study indicate that NJCAA Men's Basketball programs rely on their community, heavily fundraise, and utilize marketing initiatives that are free or limited in costs. By taking a pragmatic approach to the data gathered, it became apparent that junior colleges, although rarely researched, have some commonalities to their four-year counterparts in the NCAA while also having unique circumstances that the athletic administration must address. Ultimately answering the research questions identified practices, acknowledged challenges, and provided suggestions for improvements.

Ties to NCAA Research

Marketing foundations for both NJCAA and NCAA institutions appear to be the same despite the limited data collected in this study. This study revealed that NJCAA Men's

Basketball programs seek to market just as the NCAA; however, they have limited resources, thus they must use low cost methods. Previous research states that identifying the marketing mix is essential to a successful campaign. Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (2014) identify a marketing mix as factors manipulated by an entity to encourage the consumption of their product. In the case of NJCAA Men's Basketball programs their NCAA counterparts one product is ticket sales. NCAA also looks at broadcasting deals. The NJCAA institutions that took part in the study stated that their limited funding limits their focus on broadcasting. Thus, creating a community feeling and ticket sales is the ultimate avenue that they attempt to impact via the marketing mix. Although identifying the marketing mix is important to both NCAA and NJCAA, the target market for the institutions differs.

Mullin et al, (2014) note that a target market for any marketing campaign is the population that the campaign is designed to primarily focus on. NJCAA Men's Basketball programs identify their target market as the community in which the school serves. This is vital to their fundraising efforts and ticket sales. A majority of the institutions interviewed do not have housing. Because if you recall, the literature stated that they have a population that includes non-traditional students. Thus, they do not have dorms and once they leave campus may not return for a game; whereas, NCAA institutions focus on marketing to the community, alumni, and students. The student population is often highlighted at some schools by having a student section designated for seating at the games and even student only promotions. The target market between the NJCAA and NCAA vary.

Ultimately this study was able to use pragmatism to answer the three focal research questions via completing a literature review, document analysis, and interviews. Although junior

colleges are rarely studied, they do share some commonalities that can be explored by looking into their NCAA counterparts.

Implications and Future Studies

Junior college athletics are rarely studied. A study such as this fills a gap in the research while laying the foundation for future studies. Throughout the interview process three common themes emerged (i.e., the significance of social media, the lack of resources both financial and personnel, and the reliance on the local community) with the document analysis and literature review supporting these assertions. As technology and marketing opportunities continue to grow and change, studies can be done on sports other than basketball, and even crossing gender lines.

Sport marketing at the junior college level is a difficult task. However, this study noted that there are similarities with marketing between the NJCAA and NCAA such as identifying a target market and utilization of current social media initiatives to strengthen the program. On the other hand, there are unique qualities and constraints of junior colleges that must be researched to maximize the potential of these programs. By identifying the current practices and noting the challenges, suggestions for improvements can be made and marketing practices enhanced. After all, junior college athletics are “an important component of the community college which deserves to be continued on behalf of thousands of existing students and thousands that will follow” (Alabama Community Colleges Cutting Sports Programs as Budgets Shrink, 2011, p. 8).

Throughout this study, I encountered several setbacks. Ideally fifty percent of the population would have agreed to participate. Despite limiting the risks, there was apprehension amongst potential participants. This could be because a research study such as this one has not previously been done. However, by completing this study participants may be more willing to engage in future studies. Despite only having six (6) of the fourteen (14) eligible participants

agree to be interviewed, robust themes were identified. The message that they conveyed was powerful and presented clear picture of the practices that they engage in and challenges that they face.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

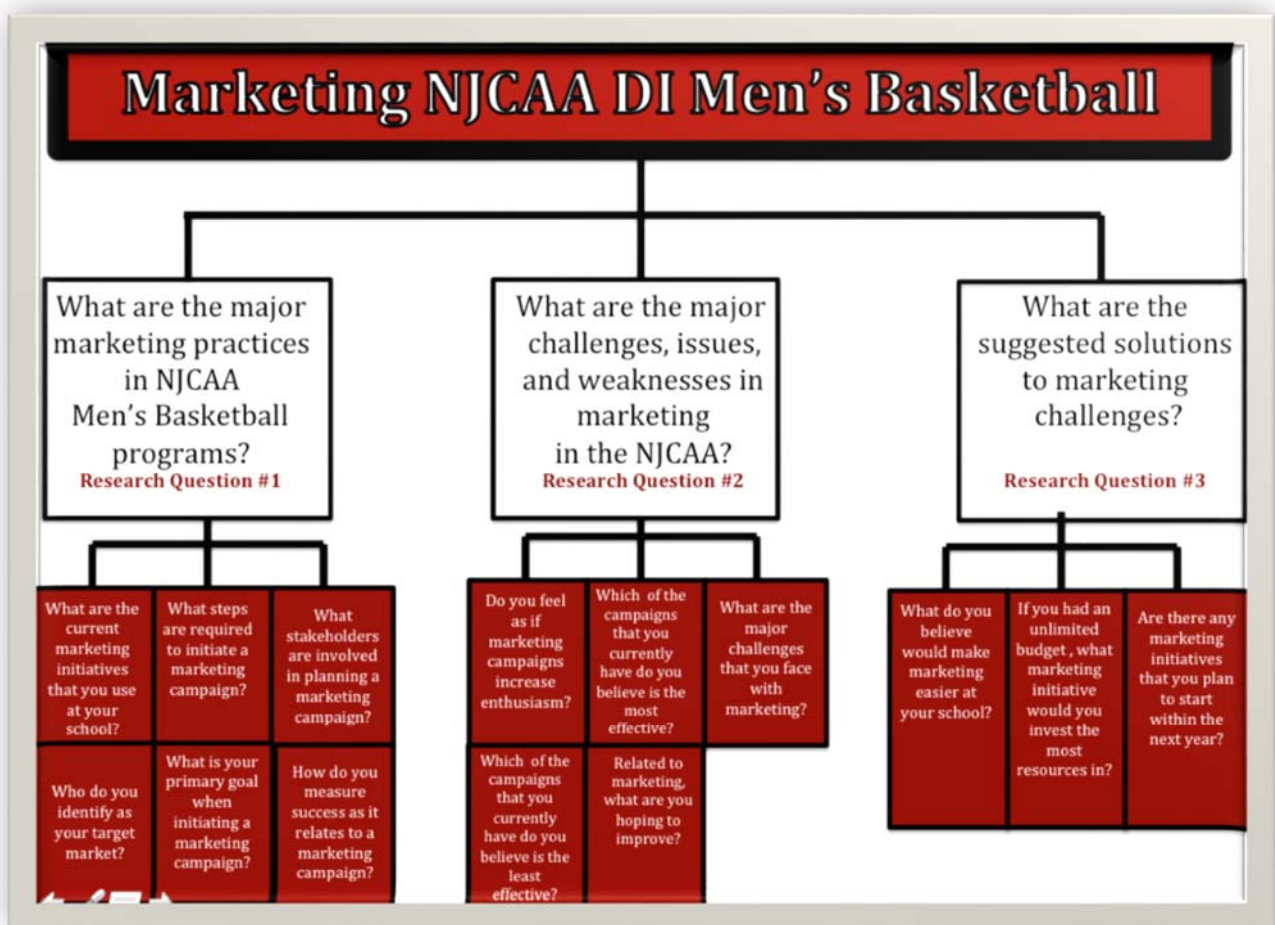
1. Who do you identify as your target market?
2. What are the current marketing initiatives that you utilize at your school?
3. What steps are required to initiate a marketing campaign?
4. What is your primary goal when initiating a marketing campaign?
 - a. Is the goal to disseminate information about the program?
 - b. Is the goal to increase ticket sales?
 - c. Is there an alternate goal other than those two?
5. What stakeholders are involved in planning a marketing campaign?
6. How do you measure success as it relates to a marketing campaign?
7. Do you feel as if the marketing campaigns increase enthusiasm related to your men's basketball program?
 - a. Explain why or why not.
8. Which of the campaigns that you currently have do you believe is the most effective?
 - a. Why do you believe it is the most effective?
9. Which of the campaigns that you currently have do you believe is the least effective?
 - a. Why do you believe it is the least effective?
10. What are the major challenges that you face with marketing?
 - a. Why do you believe these challenges exist?
 - b. How can you combat these challenges?
11. Related to marketing, what are you hoping to improve?
12. What do you believe would make marketing easier at your school?

13. If you had an unlimited budget, what marketing initiative would you invest the most resources in?

a. Why?

14. Are there any marketing initiatives that you plan to start within the next year?

15. Is there anything else pertaining to the marketing of your program that you would like to share with me?



APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM

Dear Potential Participant,

You are invited to participate in a project conducted as part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Philosophy in Kinesiology at the University of Georgia. For this project I will be doing an interview and document analysis *Marketing Practices of National Junior College Athletic Association Men's Basketball Programs* to expand knowledge about NJCAA marketing. The research is being supervised by: James Zhang, Ph.D.

The primary purpose of this study is to research the current marketing practices and marketing challenges that junior colleges face, and suggest potential solutions to the challenges. This will provide further insight into marketing initiatives at the junior college level. The information generated will be used for academic research and possible publication. All information obtained will be treated confidentially.

For this project, you will participate in a 45-60 minute interview. I will record the interview, transcribe a part of the interview, and reflect on the materials presented. You will be sent information to verify that what is reported is accurate at various points within the process. All audio taped will be transcribed, analyzed and then destroyed. No one will know your identity. All materials will be securely locked away with no one granted access but the researcher.

Please sign below if you are willing to have this interview audio recorded. You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

- ☐ I do not want to have this interview recorded.
☐ I am willing to have this interview recorded:

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

All data collected will be coded as to not use any personal identifiers. In addition, they will be locked in a secure location. Any computers utilized will be password protected with a firewall. Pseudonyms will be used to conceal your actual identity, in order to assure confidentiality.

Your involvement is voluntary, you may refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time, or skip any questions/procedures that may make him/her feel uncomfortable, with no penalty to him/her, and no effect on the compensation earned before withdrawing, or their academic standing, record, or relationship with the university or other organization or service that may be involved with the research.

You are free to withdraw your participation at any time should you become uncomfortable with it. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at 404.783.4346. I hope you will enjoy this opportunity to share your experiences and viewpoints with us. Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Y. Barney

Doctoral Candidate

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature_____

Date_____

Your Name (printed)_____

Signature of person obtaining consent_____ Date_____

Printed name of person obtaining consent_____

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least five years beyond the end of the study.

Please sign both copies, keep one copy and return one to the researcher.

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

APPENDIX C

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Document Type	Items Evaluated
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Information- Are the following items present? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Roster ○ Bios ○ Team Picture ○ Individual Pictures • Consumer Interaction- Is there a means for receiving input from the consumer or is the website used to primarily disseminate information? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Contact Us • Media- What media surrounding the team is presented on the website? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Videos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Live streaming ▪ Archived <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If so, number of views ○ Pictures of Events ○ Audio Broadcast ○ Print News <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frequency of stories ○ Advertisement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promotions ○ Social Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Links present • What is the overall perception of the website
Facebook (October 2016 to April 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the current responsiveness rating on Facebook? • On average how many posts are made a week pertaining to basketball during the 2016-2017 basketball season (October 2016 to April 2017)? • How many posts are made from fans during the 2016-2017 basketball season (October 2016 to April 2017)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What percentage is positive? ○ What percentage is negative? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is follow-up from the institution made after a fan post? • Media- What media surrounding the team is

	<p>presented on the Facebook page?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Videos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Live streaming ▪ Archived ○ Pictures of Events ○ Audio Broadcast ○ Print News <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frequency of stories ○ Advertisement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promotions ○ Other Social Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Links present <p>• What is the overall perception of the Facebook page?</p>
<p>Twitter</p> <p>(October 2016 to April 2017)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many followers does the Twitter account have? • On average how many tweets are made a week pertaining to basketball during the 2016-2017 basketball season (October 2016 to April 2017)? • How many mentions are made from fans during the 2016-2017 basketball season (October 2016 to April 2017)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What percentage is positive? ○ What percentage is negative? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is follow-up from the institution made after a fan mention? • Media- What media surrounding the team is tweeted on the Twitter page? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Videos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Live streaming ▪ Archived ○ Pictures of Events ○ Audio Broadcast ○ Print News ○ Advertisement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promotions ○ Other Social Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Links present • What is the overall perception of the Twitter account?