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An exploratory study of job satisfaction levels of athletic marketing directors at national collegiate athletic association (ncaa) division i-a institutions

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Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate the job satisfaction of intercollegiate marketing directors at 329 NCAA Division I-A institutions using the Abridged Job Descriptive Index (aJDI) and Abridged Job in General (aJIG) scale. Determining job satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) may provide insight for college athletic departments in developing systems that will enhance employee motivation and productivity in order to build a more stable and engaged marketing workforce. A total of 136 surveys were returned for a 41.3% response rate. Results indicated that marketing directors are satisfied with work on present job (96%), supervision (84%), coworkers (88%), and promotion (59%). Majority of respondents (93%) indicated they are satisfied with their job in general. However, close to one-third of respondents indicated they were dissatisfied with their present pay (33%).

Keywords: job satisfaction; intercollegiate marketing; sport management

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Introduction

The college athletic industry continues to grow at a rapid pace and represents a major sector in the overall U.S. sports industry (Industry Overviews, 2009). There are over 3000 colleges and universities in the United States and almost every campus has an athletic department (2009). It is understandable that amid the vast extent of collegiate athletics each division, conference and school operates with a unique mission (Robinson, Peterson, Tedrick & Carpenter, 2003). The disparities within college athletics are not limited to such mission statements, but also extend to financial operations. In considering just one of many examples, recent reports suggest that among Football Bowl Subdivsion (FBS) programs, ticket consumption can account for 30% of total revenue for large programs and less than 10% of total revenue at lower revenue-generating programs (Knight Commission, 2011). Additionally, bowl payouts, cash contributions from alumni and others, conference payments, and local marketing income can account for program discrepancies (2011).

The financial differences in intercollegiate athletic programs are welldocumented. However, there remains to be a scant amount of literature devoted to how such differences might impact athletic administrators, particularly sport marketers who are often involved with various revenue-generating functions. For example, many athletic marketing directors are responsible for ticket sales and event promotion, fan development, community outreach, coordinating radio/TV/print advertising, and sponsorships, all with the ultimate goal of increasing attendance and revenue. The pressure to successfully market and deliver an intercollegiate sport product (i.e. team, event) requires many long hours, forcing some to work evenings and weekends. King (2009) reinforces this concept by stating that jobs in the sport industry require long hours, have terrible pay, and present few opportunities for advancement. Robinson et al. (2003) note that "contrasting philosophies and environments have led to contrasting job designs and varied time on task" (p. 47) for many individuals within athletics. Consequently, Robinson et al. (2003) also suggest that individuals whose jobs require multiple functions and responsibilities (i.e. sport marketers) are likely to be more prone to job dissatisfaction.

One reason for such dissatisfaction may be that individuals are working for longer periods of time; as a result, there is less time to find gratification outside of work (Caudron, 1997). Other reasons might also include technological changes, increasing productivity demands, and changing employee expectations (Conference Board Report, 2005). Though dissatisfaction may be attributed to any one or a combination of various factors, it is likely to result in decreased levels of work-related motivation and productivity and increased turnover. Management Issue News (2006) states that organizations can enhance overall performance by improving employee engagement. Further, research shows a substantial relationship between highly engaged employees (those who are committed, believe in company values, and feel pride in their work) and business results (Management Issue News). Essentially, there is a strong correlation between high-involvement work practices and empowerment (Butts et al., 2009).

Though research supports that satisfied employees are likely to be more productive at work, there have been few studies dedicated to exploring satisfaction among sports personnel, an alarming fact considering sport is a multi-billion dollar industry (Sport Business Journal, 1999). Further, the Conference Board Report (2005) recently reported that U.S. job satisfaction levels keep falling among workers of all ages and across all income levels. Thus, it is critical for sport practitioners to be aware of factors contributing to job satisfaction of their employees. By being informed on areas in which employees are satisfied and dissatisfied, managers can make better decisions that positively impact job performance.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the job satisfaction of intercollegiate marketing directors at NCAA Division I-A (DI-A) institutions using the Abridged Job Descriptive Index (aJDI) and Abridged Job in General (aJIG) scale. Research findings may have implications in the sport management field relative to: 1) future sport marketing professionals, and 2) intercollegiate athletic departments. Sport management graduates may consider job satisfaction levels in organizations when applying for job positions, seeking jobs within conferences with higher job satisfaction levels. Determining job satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) may provide insight for college athletic departments in developing systems that will enhance employee motivation and productivity in order to build a more stable and engaged marketing workforce.

Theoretical Foundation

Motivation can be explained as the driving force that propels or energizes behavior (Herzberg, 1959) and is a key determinant of job performance (Nogradi & Montelpare,

1991). According to Herzberg (1959), there are two dimensions of employee motivation: hygiene issues and motivators. Hygiene issues cannot motivate employees, but can minimize dissatisfaction. These include company policies, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations and working conditions. Motivators can create job satisfaction by fulfilling employee needs for personal growth. These include achievement, advancement, recognition, responsibility, and the work itself (1959). Moreover, employees tend to have higher job satisfaction when they feel they have a sense of empowerment in their organization (Butts, Vandenberg, Schaffer, & Wilson, 2009).

From the organizational standpoint, maintaining high job satisfaction reduces costly turnover (Robinson & Dechant, 1997). Employee satisfaction also impacts effectiveness and leadership (Bass, 1990). While there are many aspects that affect job satisfaction, employee *expectation* is as a powerful predictor of satisfaction. Through the lens of expectancy theory employees tend to perform based upon desired outcomes in relation to their perceived expectations of obtaining those outcomes (Vroom, 1964). The theoretical framework of expectancy theory often drives research on job satisfaction. Researchers Isaac, Zerbe, and Pitt (2001) found that influencing others can occur by using a "pull, rather than push, strategy" (p. 224). That is, motivating employees on an individual basis, thereby aligning their efforts (expectancy) with outcomes (valence) to enhance job satisfaction (Vroom, 1964).

Considering that the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) houses over 1,300 member institutions (NCAA, 2008), jobs in marketing at the collegiate level are quite replete. However, there is a lack of literature regarding the factors that determine the job satisfaction levels among this sect; most studies that have observed job satisfaction in the sport industry have been somewhat general. One of the first studies (Parks & Perra, 1994) to examine job satisfaction in the sport industry investigated job satisfaction among graduates of a selected sport management program. In the study, job satisfaction was measured using the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) as well as the Job in General (JIG) scales. The subjects (N=254) were surveyed to ascertain satisfaction levels of individuals with jobs in the sports industry compared to individuals with jobs unrelated to sport. The results found no significant difference between overall satisfaction levels. However, the study revealed that individuals employed in jobs unrelated to sport were more satisfied with their salaries.

There are studies on job satisfaction in the sport industry using a theoretical framework. According to Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler, & Weik (1970) job satisfaction

falls under the umbrella of both content and process theories. Content theories tend to be largely external (e.g., pay, co-workers), whereas process theories tend to be largely internal (e.g. comparisons, expectations). Internal components are particularly telling with research in job satisfaction as comparisons are unavoidable in the workplace (Schermerhon, Hunt, & Osborn, 1997). One of the universal process theories is the theory of inequity (Adams, 1963). And a major branch of Adams' theory is the selection of "referent others" (Smucker & Whisenant, 2005, p. 109).

With regard to referent selection, Whisenant, Pedersen, and Smucker (2004) studied how employees determine their job satisfaction. This was examined by exploring the referent selection process. The researchers purported that "referent others are the individuals who are used by an employee as a basis for comparison when analyzing his or her perceived inputs or outcomes in an organization" (p. 369). The study sampled participants (N= 306) who were members of the Association for Women in Sports Media, and self-identified as being fulltime sports employees of newspapers. The subjects were given the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) instrument in combination with the referent-comparison scale developed by the researchers to ultimately measure job satisfaction. Findings indicated that, overall, female sports journalist were satisfied with their jobs with the exception of having limited promotional opportunities. Additionally, analyses revealed that the subjects made referent comparisons with each dimension of job satisfaction.

The process of referent selection was also seen with interscholastic coaches of girls' sports. Smucker and Whisenant (2005) surveyed male and female coaches (N = 203). The referent comparison instrument, the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) and the Job in General (JIG) were used to gauge satisfaction and comparisons. The study found that referent comparisons made by coaches were commonplace. Furthermore, female coaches, on average, made more internal referent comparisons than their male counterparts. This suggests that females tend to derive more satisfaction from internal components that perhaps fall under the umbrella of process theories.

As previously noted, the Conference Board Report (2005) found that U.S. job satisfaction levels keep falling and the decline in job satisfaction is prevalent among workers of all ages and across all income levels. Reports such as this, combined with factors such as an unstable economic climate, may result in individuals not feeling secure in their jobs as related to salary and availability. These factors help to justify the need to explore factors contributing to job satisfaction. However, there have been few

studies dedicated to exploring satisfaction among sports personnel, an alarming fact considering sport is a multi-billion dollar industry (Sport Business Journal, 1999). Further, the existing and very limited sports-related job satisfaction research has been general in nature as opposed to reviewing particular job positions such as athletic marketing director roles.

Previous research determined that employees in sports-related jobs are less satisfied with their salary compared to those individuals in jobs unrelated to sport, and that opportunity for promotion is also an issue. Given the correlation between job satisfaction, productivity, business results, and turnover rates, it is important for athletic departments to assess job satisfaction levels. The following hypotheses guided this research study:

- 1. Division I college marketing directors are satisfied with their job in general.
- 2. Division I college marketing directors are least satisfied in their job with opportunities for promotions and with present pay.
- 3. Division I college marketing directors are most satisfied with the work itself, supervision, and coworkers.
- Significant differences will exist in overall job satisfaction of Division I college marketing directors between athletic conferences.

Significant differences will exist in overall job satisfaction of Division I college marketing directors relative to salary, age, gender, and program location.

Methodology

Sample

The population for this study was athletic marketing directors at each of the 329 NCAA DI-A institutions. Contact information was obtained via the NCAA web site and each institution's web site. After obtaining Institutional Review Board approval, surveys were distributed via U.S. mail. No incentive was offered for participation and participants were ensured anonymity. A total of 136 surveys were returned for a 41.3% response rate.

Questionnaire

The Job Descriptive Index (JDI) has been described as the "most popular and widely used measure of job satisfaction" (Stanton et. al, 2001, p. 1105), and has been translated in to 9 different languages and administered in at least 17 countries (2001). The aJDI and aJIG was developed by Balzer et al. (1997). The reliability and validity of

the instrument was confirmed by Stanton et al. (2001). The aJDI measures employee's satisfaction in relation to five important aspects of their job. The five facet scales include: 1) work on present job, 2) present pay, 3) opportunities for promotion, 4) supervision and 5) coworkers. The aJDI contains 5 items per facet scale, equaling 25 items. The aJIG scale evaluates overall job satisfaction and contains 8 items, resulting in a total 33 item instrument. Participants responded to each item by indicating "Y" (yes), "N" (no), or "?" (don't know). Permission to use the abridged version of the Job Descriptive Index (aJDI) and Job in General (aJIG) instrument was granted by Bowling Green State University. A demographics section was also included to determine gender, race/ethnicity, age, athletic conference, salary, education, institution type, and location.

Data analysis

Scores on the aJDI and aJIG scales are computed by summing the points obtained from a participant's responses to the items in each scale. The possible range of scores on each of the aJDI facets scales is from 0 to 15, and 0 to 24 for the aJIG facet scale. According to Balzer et al. (2000), individual aJDI and aJIG scores do not provide information on job performance. "A distribution of a number of individual scores can provide very useful information. This distribution of scores allows investigators to look at general employee trends within an organization." (p. 24). Survey data were analyzed using SPSS and descriptive statistics and frequencies were recorded. A one-way ANOVA was also conducted to assess differences in job satisfaction of DI college marketing directors between conference, salary, age, and program location. For the statistical test, the alpha level was set at .05.

Results

Demographics

A total of 136 NCAA Division I-A marketing directors participated in this study (41.6% response rate). Respondents represented 40 different states and 30 conferences. The majority of respondents were male (73.5%). Marketing directors at NCAA DI-A institutions were primarily between the ages of 21 and 39 (75%). Fifty-five percent (55%) have obtained at least a master's-level education. Salaries ranged from \$20,000 to \$70,000+ (Table 1).

 Table 1. Provides an overview of the participants' profile.

Participants' Profile

		Ν	%
Gender			
Μ	ale	100	73.5
F	emale	32	23.5
Age			
2′	1-39	54	39.7
30)-39	49	36
4()-49	23	16.9
50)+	10	7.4
Ethnicity			
At	frican-American	5	3.7
A	sian-American	3	2.2
С	aucasian-American	122	89.7
La	atino	3	2.2
0	ther	3	2.2
Salary			
20	0,000 – 29,999	10	7.4
30	0,000 – 39,999	29	21.3
4(0,000 – 49,999	37	27.2
50	0,000 – 59,999	26	19.1
60	0,000 – 69,999	10	7.4
7(),000+	22	16.2
Degree			
B	achelors	59	43.4
Μ	asters	74	54.4
D	octorate	1	.7
Institution	п Туре		
P	rivate	48	35.3
P	ublic	85	62.5

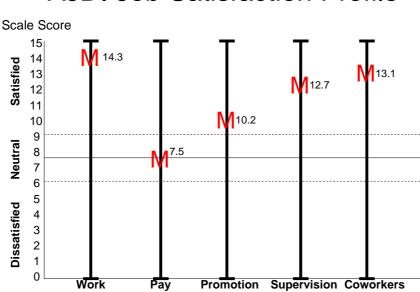
Job Satisfaction Levels

To determine whether DI-A marketing directors are satisfied or dissatisfied, one must determine whether they are above or below some neutral point on each aJDI scale or on the aJIG. "This neutral point would represent an ambivalent feeling, a balance of positive and negative feelings about aspects of the job or job overall." (Balzer et al., 2000, p.24). Without pinpointing an exact neutral point, Balzer and his colleagues (2000)

have found it to be reasonably close to the middle range of possible scale scores (0-15), or around a score of 7.5 for the aJDI. Scores well above 7.5 (i.e. 10 or above) indicate satisfaction, while those well below 7.5 (i.e. 5 or below) indicate dissatisfaction. The researchers found that for the 136 surveys returned, scores on the aJDI Work, Pay, Opportunities for Promotion, Supervision, and Coworkers scales ranged from a low of 0 to a high of 15 with mean scores of 14.3, 7.5, 10.2, 12.7, and 13.1 respectively. Respondents indicated satisfaction with Work, Opportunities for Promotion, Supervision, and Coworkers. Pay fell within the neutral zone indicating marketing directors were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (Figure 1).

In reference to the aJIG, possible scale scores of 0-24, or around 12 will determine satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their overall job. Of the 136 surveys returned, scores on the aJIG scale ranged from a low of 3 to a high of 24 with a mean score of 20.3 (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Depicts a profile presenting levels of satisfaction on the five aJDI scales (aJDI Satisfaction Profile).



AJDI Job Satisfaction Profile

Figure 2. Depicts a profile presenting levels of satisfaction on the aJIG scale (aJIG Satisfaction Profile).

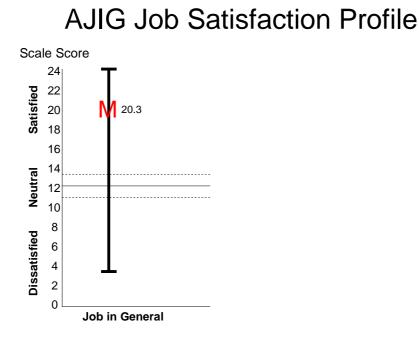


Table 2 shows the percentage of participants who responded in the upper tier of satisfied, the middle band of neutral, and the lower tier of dissatisfied. Evident from the statistics, marketing directors are highly satisfied with work on present job (96%), supervision (84%), and coworkers (88%). Close to one-third of respondents indicated they were dissatisfied with their present pay (33%). Although, 93% of all respondents indicated they are satisfied with their job in general.

Table 2. Satisfaction levels of NCAA DI-A Marketing Directors.

	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied
Work on Present Job	96%	2%	2%
Pay	32%	35%	33%
Opportunity for Promotion	59%	18%	23%
Supervision	84%	8%	8%
Coworkers	88%	9%	3%
Job in General	93%	3%	4%

Hypotheses

H1

Hypothesis one was used to determine if marketing directors are satisfied with their job in general (JIG). Hypothesis one was accepted based on results that indicated 93% of respondents were satisfied with their job in general (JIG), recording a mean score of 20.3 on a scale score of 24.

H2

Hypothesis two was used to determine whether DI-A marketing directors are least satisfied in their job relative to opportunities for promotion and present pay. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of respondents indicated they were satisfied with their opportunity for promotion and recorded a mean score of 10.2 on a scale score of 15. Thirty-two percent (32%) indicated they were satisfied with present pay and recorded a mean score of 7.5 on a scale score of 15. In relation to other subscales, marketing directors are the least satisfied in their job relative to these areas. Although pay appears to be the main concern, results suggest they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, thus, hypothesis two was rejected.

H3

Hypothesis three was used to determine whether DI-A marketing directors are most satisfied with the work itself, supervision, and coworkers. Ninety-six percent (96%) indicated they were satisfied with the work itself and recorded a mean score of 14.3 on a scale score of 15. Eighty-four percent (84%) indicated they were satisfied with their level of supervision and recorded a mean score of 12.7 on a scale score of 15. In reference to their coworkers, 88% of respondents were satisfied and recorded a mean score of 13.1 on a scale score of 15. In relation to other subscales, marketing directors are the most satisfied in their job relative to these areas, thus hypothesis three is accepted.

H4

Hypothesis four was used to determine whether significant differences existed in overall job satisfaction of DI-A marketing directors between conferences. A one-way ANOVA analysis was employed, using an alpha level of .05, and resulted in no significant differences in job satisfaction when evaluated by conference, F(29, 100) = .46, p = .99; thus, hypothesis four was rejected.

H5

Hypothesis five was used to determine whether differences existed in overall job satisfaction of DI-A marketing directors relative to the independent variables of gender,

salary, age, and program location. The one-way ANOVA revealed no significant differences for gender F(2, 129) = .42, p = .66; salary, F(5, 127) = .781, p = .57; age, F(3, 131) = .23, p = .88; and, program location, F(39, 92) = .97, p = .53. Therefore, hypothesis five was rejected.

Discussion and Conclusions

This research study aimed to provide specific information regarding how satisfied or dissatisfied collegiate athletic marketing directors were in their roles. Findings suggest that NCAA Division I-A athletic marketing directors are overall satisfied with their jobs regardless of factors such as salary, age, gender and program location. Specifically, most are satisfied with their work on present job, supervision, coworkers, and opportunities for promotion. Findings from this study are aligned with Herzberg's work, stating that hygiene issues in the workplace contribute to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction (1959). The hygiene factors mentioned by Herzberg that were reviewed in this study include the work itself in which 96% was satisfied, supervision in which 84% was satisfied, and promotion in which 59% was satisfied. Furthermore, there were no significant differences in job satisfaction levels across athletic conferences or gender, salary, age, and program location. Though findings indicated overall job satisfaction, there was one area that future sport managers could develop to foster greater satisfaction among marketing directors. This area was limited to present pay. Present pay is the only area in which majority of athletic marketing directors were not satisfied. This is notable and consistent with research from Parks & Perra (1994) which also found that sports personnel in general were not satisfied with present pay. Of particular interest is that over a thirteen-year period, individuals working in sports have continued to be dissatisfied with pay.

It is critical for sport practitioners to be aware of factors contributing to job satisfaction of their employees. By being informed on areas in which employees are satisfied and dissatisfied, managers can make better decisions to impact job performance. Therefore, results from this study should be used to highlight the areas in which athletic marketing directors are most satisfied so that sport managers can accentuate these areas and limit unsatisfying factors such as low pay. This is particularly crucial right now, as many industries are making budget cuts; thus, it is not likely that pay scales for these athletic marketing directors will improve in the immediate future. If athletic departments cannot deliver better compensation then they should

focus on motivators or intrinsic factors that significantly impact employee satisfaction levels. For example, the level of responsibility may be altered to empower the employee to make decisions and be engaged in their role. Offering opportunities for advancement such as creating a new title - for example, chief marketing officer - would provide further incentive to increase productivity and lower turnover. Additionally, building a workforce with common goals and providing a positive organizational culture and climate could enhance co-worker relationships.

Since athletic marketing directors are satisfied in general regardless of pay and opportunities for advancement, it is possible they are willing to serve in such a role for other intrinsic benefits or experiences, for example, being part of a nationally recognized winning program, meeting and greeting sport celebrities - or other VIPs attending events. Athletic departments should also ensure adequate recognition is offered to marketing directors for their contributions to the department and overall athletic program.

Additionally, considering that more than 300 colleges in the U.S. offer sport business courses, and about 24,000 undergraduates and 6,000 graduate students will major in sports administration in the U.S in 2009 (King, 2009), detailed information regarding career choices should be published. The general minimum requirement to obtain a college marketing director's job is a Bachelor's degree, with preferred qualifications of a Masters degree and some experience in ticketing sales and event management. King (2009) describes the current job market as the worst job market since sports emerged as a broadly acknowledged education and employment field. With limited advancement opportunities and lack of adequate compensation, future students may seek employment in other sectors of the sport industry.

Though the study has presented findings that are critical for individuals pursuing collegiate athletic marketing careers, it had several limitations that may have altered the findings. A comparison of job satisfaction levels in NCAA DII and DIII and even across U.S. professional leagues would provide further insight on job satisfactions levels across the entire industry. Future studies may request information on marketing budget to determine whether the support of funding, resources, and staff affect job satisfaction levels. In addition, future research should focus on identifying specific incentive strategies acceptable to the profession.

In light of the findings, college athletic departments should review their promotion policies and consider offering more opportunities for advancement and recognition. In difficult economic times and with limited budgets, athletic departments should develop an

incentive-based program, and focus on intrinsic motivators. In academia, students must be educated on the negative aspects, as well as the positive aspects, of the industry sport marketer and fully understand the realm of job scope and advancement possibilities. This further reinforces the need for practicum and internship experiences to provide students relevant insight to the real world.

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