

The Alcohol Debate: Should Division-1 Universities Sell Alcohol at Their Football Stadiums?

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Background

This study is a comparison of college football stadiums that sell alcohol and those that do not. In the article *Good Question: How Many Colleges Sell Beer at Sports Stadiums*, CBSSports.com states that “out of the 120 Division-1 football programs, just 21 of those sell beer to all fans of legal age”. This research explores the growing trend of selling alcohol in college stadiums and university concerns of curbing excessive drinking. This research will also expand on information already published on universities already selling alcohol in their football stadiums and those who do not. This information will help universities determine if selling alcohol in their football stadiums is beneficial for their program. The data collected will also help those who already sell alcohol in their football stadiums examine their alcohol policies to decide if there are changes that need to be made. According to Glassman et al, “77% of undergraduates consumed alcohol while tailgating and on average had 3.8 drinks”. We will look at a case study of the University of Colorado at Boulder in which they banned beer sales at football games due to disorderly and aggressive behaviors by fans. We will also look at a case study of West Virginia University that started selling beer in college football stadiums in 2011 to make a profit and curb excessive drinking.

Williams states that conferences and schools can each set their own guidelines for alcohol sales in stadiums, as the NCAA has no regulation over regular season games, only NCAA championships. In his article *Football Beer Taps Add Safety, \$700,000 to West Virginia University Sports*, he cites the reasons to sell alcohol in college stadiums as a way to control drinking, reduce binge drinking, reduce contraband and bring in additional revenue.

Statement of Problem

This study will explore the growing trend of alcohol sales in D1 college stadiums in recent years and whether or not alcohol sales are beneficial for the university. Glassman et. Al. (2010) explains “Alcohol continues to constitute a prominent public health challenge for university officials and community leaders.” They continue to discuss ritualistic drinking on game day and problems that arise from this behavior. This research will provide greater knowledge on the topic and insight into the decision to sell or not sell alcohol in college stadiums.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

The research question this study is examining is whether or not it is beneficial for Division-1 universities to sell alcohol in their college football stadiums on game day. This study is centered around the views of universities that do sell alcohol in their stadiums and those that do not sell alcohol in their stadiums, as well as the views of their fans that attend the games.

H1: Universities decide to sell alcohol in their college football stadiums primarily for financial gains.

H2: Universities that do not sell alcohol in their college football stadiums decide to do so for liability issues with underage drinking and safety concerns for their fans.

H3: Fans that attend college football games at stadiums that sell alcohol face more negative repercussions than those that attend college football games at stadiums that do not sell alcohol.

Significance of the study

The study of alcohol sales in college stadiums is a growing trend. Universities that sell alcohol on college game days each have pros and cons on the subject. Of the previous research we've reviewed, the biggest pro for selling alcohol in college stadiums is generating revenue. (Peterson & Register, 2011) says West Virginia expected to profit 1 million dollars in their first year of alcohol sales in stadiums. The biggest con we've seen would be the adverse effects of alcohol consumption on game days. In 2004, Colorado State University halted beer sales in their stadium following two alcohol-fueled riots and the death of a student from alcohol poisoning. The significance of this study is to shed light on a growing trend with little published information. The study will provide insight into the decisions of universities to sell or not sell alcohol in their stadiums on game days.

Limitations of the study

This study uses human participants, in which case there is always room for differences of opinion. These opinions may not be generalizable to the entire country. Another limitation of the study is that not all 120 Division-1 programs will be included in data collection. The universities chosen to participate in this study are not all in the same conference or in the same parts of the country. We cannot divide participation by college football conference because different universities have different alcohol policies, as this is not a NCAA regulation. Other factors which could affect our study include the presence and number of security personnel on game day, the time at which the survey is taken by fans and the performance record of the college football team at the time of the data collection.

Definition of terms

Game day- refers to the day that a college football game occurs

College football- refers to Division-1 programs across the country

Binge drinking- refers to the consumption of at least 5 or more drinks in a row for men or 4 or more alcoholic drinks for women

Performance record- refers to the number of wins and losses by a team in a season

College football conference- refers to the division or grouping of university athletic teams by region

Review of the Literature

Brief history

The alcohol debate among university athletic departments is a recent trend. Some athletic departments have adopted the selling of alcohol in their football stadiums on college game days and others have not. This research is designed to provide greater insight into these decisions, since not much research has been conducted or published on the growing trend that has developed within the last 15 years.

Review

Some existing literature found in an article, *Extreme Ritualistic Alcohol Consumption Among College Students on Game Day* by Glassman et. al, discusses the drinking patterns of students on game days which athletic departments would want to review when making the decision to sell or ban the sale of alcohol in their stadiums.

The author of this study identified the research problem as to be able to further explain the alcohol drinking patterns among students enrolled in a university or college, on college football game day. To be more specific, the author wanted to look at extreme ritualistic drinking in the college setting, specifically during college football season, based on being male or female, year in college (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate student), age, ethnicity, and Greek life involvement. The author did not include a theory-based argument as to why the problem is important but he did include some consequences of extreme ritualistic alcohol consumption. Alcohol related consequences included hangovers, driving under the influence of alcohol, injury, fighting, and police involvement. The author did not clearly state their hypothesis for their research. The independent variables in this study are gender, year enrolled in college, age, ethnicity, and Greek life involvement. The dependent variable for this study would be the alcohol consumed on college game day by the student or alcohol consumption by participants. The author did identify the research design by including the applicant surveys that were sent out. By including the surveys and data collected the research is a quantitative research design.

The target population the author is using is freshmen, sophomores, junior, senior, and graduate college students. The sampling plan the author used was randomly selecting email addresses of college students from the University's register between the ages of 18-24 and sending them prenotification message about the survey and three reminders in weekly increments. There were 2,083 emails sent out to the students between the age range and 740 students responded back to the email and survey. The sampling plan could be generalized to other larger universities with college football. It could not be generalized to a smaller university without college football, such a Belmont University. The authors do not state this limitation or give an explanation for it. The author assured compliance with its research subjects by having

them review and complete an informed consent process and by having The Game Day Survey reviewed and approved by the University's Institutional Review Board.

An instrument that was used in this survey was the Game Day Survey. Also the author used other surveys and information that have been used in previous studies. An instrument that had been used in previous work was the standardized Core Alcohol and Drug Survey Long Form, also the National College Health Assessment and the College Alcohol Survey were used. The final composition of the participant survey was tested and retested to provide reliability of the Game Day Survey items. The results were good reliability yielding an average of .77. The author provided reliability and validity evidence because parts of their survey have been done before by other researchers.

An Internet software program called Survey Monkey was used to collect the survey data and to analysis it. Each question on the survey was given a coded number to help simplify the data collected and to arranged it into graphs and charts. Descriptive statistics were taken to portray the sample survey and to gage the heavy drinking and Extreme Ritualistic Alcohol Consumption. The statistical analyses for the data got a Type I error of 0.05.

Another piece of literature reviewed was *The Associations Between Alcohol-Related Arrests and College Football Game Days* by Merlo, Hong and Cottler discusses the negative repercussions faced by fans in college football stadiums.

The research problem in this study is binge drinking as a common occurrence on particular days of the year, including holidays and high profile sporting events. They discuss some of the legal and medical concerns associated with excessive alcohol consumption, however they note that there has not been much research done on the subject to help promote policies against spectator-sport related binge drinking. They conducted the study to extend upon previous research.

The authors do not mention a theory based argument; however they do discuss consequences of drinking such as arrests, jail time, fines and loss of privileges. Based on previous research, their hypothesis is that alcohol related arrests are higher on high-profile college game days and holidays as compared to control days with no sporting event or increased significance.

The authors do not explicitly state the variables however those of interest include the rates of alcohol-related arrests for students and non-students in a college town with a successful NCAA Division I football program. These variables included alcohol-related arrests on home football game days, 10 control days and holidays. The independent variable would be the number of alcohol-related arrests and the dependent variable would be alcohol consumption.

The target population includes students and non-students college football fans at a NCAA Division I Football university. They specifically mention the University of Florida as the

population in the study because they had to receive approval from the University of Florida Institutional Review Board to obtain the public arrest records. The sampling plan included 10 holidays associated with increased alcohol consumption, 10 home game days and 10 control days. I believe the sampling plan will allow generalization to the target population because it includes all alcohol-related arrests on these days. However, I do not believe it would be generalizable to another university population because other factors such as success of the football team and level of security would be other factors. The author does acknowledge these limitations in their findings and discuss how the findings may not be generalizable to other locations and populations. They also note that lower arrest rates on holidays could be impacted by the number of students out of town, however they tried to control this.

As noted before, the authors did ensure compliance with the University of Florida Institutional Review Board in order to obtain public arrest records of students and non-students. This type of study did not require compliance with the human subjects since these records were already available to the public. These records were “de-identified” for both students and non-students in town on the day of the study. They do not identify the research design.

The instruments used in the study were simple collection methods of arrest records. They looked at the frequency of arrests and offenses for crimes likely to be associated with alcohol consumption including but not limited to unlawful possession of alcohol, drugs or false identification, public intoxication, driving under the influence, assault and battery, resisting arrest, burglary, theft and trespassing. They measured the type of arrest and where they took place over a 24-hr period in question beginning at noon and ending at noon on the following day.

They indicate the arrest records are relevant because high profile sporting events draw a large number of spectators, which is a major health and legal concern. The number of arrest records provides evidence for programs geared towards students and non-students at sporting events, since these programs rarely exist.

They do not provide reliability and validity evidence for the records, however they do note that the local university team was undefeated at home during the period of the study. Thus, they were unable to assess the number of arrests according to whether the team had won or lost that day.

The authors used one-way ANOVAs with Turkey’s HSD post hoc tests to compare the between group differences of the number of arrests per day. In order to calculate the distance of the crimes from the stadium, addresses were entered on an online mapping site. Then the one-way ANOVAs with Turkey’s HSD post hoc test were used again to compare the groups on the mean distance between the football stadium and the location of the crime.

The extent of the statistical detail provided by the authors includes the statistical variance of the number of arrests across the types of days, group differences across specific crimes and location of crimes across the types of days. They discuss the ranges, standard deviation and means of the data collected within these areas.

These published articles provides information for athletic departments at Division-1 universities to review when determining whether or not to sell alcohol in their football stadiums. This research, combined with our research will provide substantial information for those that are considering the addition of alcohol sales in their stadium or those that are considering banning alcohol sales in their stadium.

Method

Study Design

We will be using a mixed-methods, qualitative and quantitative, research design consisting of interviews with athletic departments at universities throughout the United States with a Division-1 football program and surveys with fans in attendance at the games. The interviews will allow us to develop a stronger understanding of athletic departments' motivations behind selling alcohol in their stadiums as well as motivations behind those that choose not to sell alcohol in their stadiums. The surveys will allow us to better understand fan perceptions and alcohol use on game days.

We have identified our independent and dependent variables according to each of our hypotheses:

H1: Universities decide to sell alcohol in their college football stadiums primarily for financial gains.

Our independent variable is the decision to sell alcohol and the dependent variable is the financial gain of the university.

H2: Universities that do not sell alcohol in their college football stadiums decide to do so for liability issues with underage drinking and safety concerns for their fans.

Our independent variable is the decision to sell alcohol and the dependent variable is the liability faced by universities.

H3: Fans that attend college football games at stadiums that sell alcohol face more negative repercussions than those that attend college football games at stadiums that do not sell alcohol.

Our independent variable is the sale of alcohol and the dependent variable is repercussions faced by fans.

Population and Sample

Our population consists of the 120 Division-1 college football programs in the country. Of these programs, we will use systematic random sampling to select athletic departments with which we will conduct interviews with the Athletic Director and Head of Football Operations. We will randomly select five programs throughout the country, of the same size, that sell alcohol in their stadiums and five programs throughout the country, of the same size, that do not sell alcohol in their stadiums. Due to the sensitivity of the subject of alcohol and personal motivations of athletic departments, participating programs will not be identified.

We will also attend college football games at these universities we have randomly selected, and we will again use systematic random sampling to select each tenth fan that enters the stadium to complete the surveys.

Ethical Consideration

As stated previously, all participating athletic departments will not be identified when conducting interviews. The selected departments will be informed and given a consent waiver for each participant to sign, so we can use the information gained from our interviews for our research design. Those selected to participate in our questionnaires distributed during football game days in the stadium will also receive the consent form to sign before completing the questionnaire. The informed consent form is attached to the end of this document.

Investigative Techniques

We plan to interview athletic departments and administer questionnaires to fans at Division-1 college football games. We will ask unstructured, open-ended questions in our interviews since the data collected will be based on opinions of the athletic departments in question. For our questionnaires which will be administered during the football games, we will ask a variety of closed-ended questions to our participants.

The interviews allow us to ask follow up questions to the Athletic Directors and Head of Football Operations follow up questions based on their responses to the questions. The questionnaires will help us better understand the perceptions of a larger, more diverse population of people that are affected by the decisions of these athletic departments.

Instrumentation

We have designed our own interview questions for the Athletic Director and Head of Football Operations for the selected universities.

Questions for universities that do not sell alcohol in their stadiums:

Does your university have a campus alcohol policy?

As an athletic department, have you discussed selling alcohol in your stadium?

Do you feel that you are missing a financial opportunity by not selling alcohol in your stadium?

Do you experience alcohol related altercations with fans in your stadium on game day?

What has influenced your decision not to sell alcohol in your stadium?

[Follow-up questions based on responses to interview questions.]

Questions for universities that do sell alcohol in their stadiums:

Does your university have a campus alcohol policy?

As an athletic department, have you discussed banning the sale of alcohol in your stadium?

Have you seen financial gains from selling alcohol in your stadium?

Do you experience alcohol related altercations with fans in your stadium on game day?

What has influenced your decision to sell alcohol in your stadium?

[Follow-up questions based on responses to interview questions.]

We have also designed our own survey questions for our questionnaires that will be administered. Informed consent form and questionnaire are attached to the end of this research document.

Data Analysis Plan

We have chosen to use interviews in order to increase the reliability and validity of the study. Small sample studies are not usually generalizable to the entire population, however we have accounted for the difference in region with our systematic random sampling of our population. We will video record all of the interviews conducted so we can go back and study all aspects of the interview that we could have missed in our original notes taken during the questioning. We will use the information we gather to come to a conclusion on why universities do sell or do not sell alcohol during college football games.

The questionnaires we will conduct inside college football stadiums on game day will help us more understand where, when, and why fans and spectators consume alcohol on football game days. By using the same questionnaires in stadiums that do sell and do not sell alcohol we will be about to identify trends between alcohol consumption and alcohol sales in Division-1 football stadiums.

After our interviews and questionnaires are complete, we will gather all the data and information received and compare and contrast the differences between the universities that do sell alcohol and those who do not see alcohol at the football stadiums on game days. By asking

the same questions during our interviews to all of our participants and the same questionnaires on game days, we will be able to determine the reasoning behind the decision of the university on their stance on alcohol sales. We will be able to provide universities with data to make a decision the growing trend of alcohol sales in college football stadiums.

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