

Implementing Nonfungible Tokens to Promote Attendance at Live Sporting Events

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Introduction

In March of 2021, a digital art piece in the form of a nonfungible token (NFT) was sold at auction for a record-shattering \$69 million (Luce, 2021). A seemingly simple image that can be found online for free set a new art market sales record. This has people wondering, “What is an NFT?” An NFT is a digital entity on the Ethereum blockchain that can be bought, sold, and traded, with each transaction and owner being verified and logged online. Imagine a virtual trading card with a limited number of official copies backed by a digital receipt system to prove that you own it.

Think of the blockchain as a banking system without the bank. Instead of having a bank to confirm the available funds of an account holder, or in this case, an NFT owner, the transaction between the buyer and seller is validated by a system of computers run by other blockchain users online (Naraine, 2019). The concept of fungibility is simply the idea that there is no standard equal exchange value for the token (Goodwin, 2021). For example, one can always exchange a \$1 bill for four quarters, but there is no exact value if somebody tries to exchange a trading card or art piece (Goodwin, 2021). The token can be anything from an image, video file, or any other entity that is uploaded onto the blockchain (Wang et al., 2021). You may ask yourself, “Why on earth would somebody pay millions of dollars for something you can download for free online?” To continue the art comparisons, anyone with a computer and an internet connection can screenshot an original Picasso, but that does not make you the acknowledged owner of the piece (Kugler, 2021). NFTs and the blockchain authentication process help prove legitimacy and add value to the work. The digital contract can also include physical items and perks that can add to the worth and functionality of the NFT.

Although NFTs have primarily been a format for artists to design and sell their creations, recently, there have been new and innovative ways of using the tokens by strategic communications practitioners in sports. Lately, sports organizations and teams have been implementing NFTs in their marketing strategy by selling and gifting the tokens to fans in an attempt to increase attendance at live events. For example, the Dallas Mavericks of the National Basketball Association, the Indianapolis 500, and the Colonial Athletic Conference have created and distributed NFTs to their guests and fans in attendance at their events (Insights, 2021; PR Newswire, 2022; Shuey, 2022). This new and cutting-edge strategic marketing concept raises the question of how sports teams and strategic communication professionals can further implement NFTs to increase live sports attendance.

Research Problem

Examining the behaviors and desires of both casual and devout sports can be the key to understanding what will bring fans to the game, race, or tournament. Sports communication professionals and marketers have always looked for new ways to get fans into the seats of their events. This research will examine the possibility of developing a new answer to a question that academics and professionals have discussed and debated for decades. By using semi-structured interviews with sports fans, much like the work of a sports marketing practitioner performing market research, fans' thoughts, feelings and behaviors relating to sports attendance and NFTs can be discovered.

The purpose of this research is to discover how sports strategic communication and marketing teams can implement blockchain media in the form of nonfungible tokens in an attempt to increase attendance at their live in-venue events. This research will add a qualitative perspective to the quantitative academic discussion of why sports fans attend a competition. This

research will also serve as a guide for active strategic communication professionals to use as a resource when examining the possibility of implementing NFTs in their marketing plans.

Literature Review

This literature review will discuss previous research on NFT technology and sports fandom. The uses and gratification theory will be defined and connected to the rest of the research. Then the relative lack of academic studies and discussion of NFTs will be covered while also defining the technology. Then, the behavior of sports fans will be covered, specifically the academic discourse over the usage and interactions of fans while using their smartphones. Then, much of the quantitative research on why casual and passionate fans attend sporting events will be covered. Finally, the application of the Interaction Ritual Theory (IR Theory) to sports fans and the religious-like energy felt by a team's supporters will be examined. IR Theory, pioneered by Randall Collins (2005), is a sociological research theory that examines how symbols and images can be used to mold group solidarity and individual emotional energy. From her study observing fans of the Pittsburgh Steelers of the National Football League, Marci Cottingham found similarly high levels of energy developed at sports-themed events when exposed to fan-favorite athletes and team symbols (Cottingham, 2012).

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The theory for this research will be the uses and gratifications theory. The theory examines what media consumers seek and how that content fulfills their psychological or social needs (Cantril, 1942). The uses and gratifications theory is argued to have been developed sometime in the 1940s by researchers looking for the reasons why people interacted with media outlets such as newspapers and the radio (Ruggiero, 2000). Early similar concepts were formed in the 1920s, from the development of "moral panic" and other research like the Payne Fund

studies examining an audience's reactions to films (Ruggiero, 2000). Now the theory examines the power that the audience has in their relationship with the media (Haridakis & Humphries, 2019). It also considers why an audience takes in certain media forms and the various needs addressed in the moment (Ruggiero, 2000).

More modern applications of this theory have examined social media usage and the gratifications one may receive from interacting with online posts (Shabahang et al., 2022). Media planning and advertising have also used the theory in practical application to most effectively develop a target audience and place their content and advertising material for the consumer looking to fulfill a need they may have (Ruggiero, 2000).

Recent applications of this theory have been applied to the research of strategic sports and entertainment communication. For example, researchers in Sweden performed a study regarding the viewership and live attendance of e-sports competitions through the lens of uses and gratifications theory (Sjöblom et al., 2020). The study found that fans streaming competitive video game contests online and fans live in a venue developed strong emotional attachment and excitement when exposed to their favorite players and the drama in the crowd, as well as the excitement generated by the match's commentary. My research will implement the theory similarly to Sjöblom, looking at spectators' emotional and social desires and the needs of a sports fan looking to attend a live event.

Factors of Sports Attendance

The study of spectatorship is a hotbed of literature in strategic sports communication. With the overall end goal of this report being a resource for increasing attendance at sporting events, it is essential to understand the perspectives that researchers have developed on what drives spectatorship in fans. Most research specifically looks at drawing in the more casual fan

who looks to attend a game in the place of another social event (Melnick, 1993). This is in contrast to the more passionate fan who will generally attend a game if they are financially able to do so regardless of factors like the success of their favorite team (Melnick, 1993). One of the most generally agreed-upon discoveries in the literature is that the financial ability to attend the game and the perceived value of the ticket price are the primary factors in sports attendance (Ross & Vargas, 2006). After this primary factor, researchers argue numerous other elements that may bring a potential fan to an event. The two main categories of the factors that drive spectatorship are “controllable” and “uncontrollable” (Shank & Lyberger, 2015). For example, a controllable factor could be the ticket price or other promotions run at the game that the attendee values (Shank & Lyberger, 2015). In contrast, Shank and Lyberger (2015) cite a nation’s poor economic conditions as an uncontrollable factor in a sports fan’s decision-making process.

Spectators considered to be “true fans” typically are the most passionate supporter and the spectators who are impacted the greatest by the emotion and passion of the event (Ross & Vargas, 2006). Therefore, they require little convincing regarding whether to attend a game or not (Ross & Vargas, 2006). This research has similar findings to the research described by Cottingham (2012) when applying the Interaction Ritual Theory to sports fans.

With that said, casual fans make up most of the attendance of live spectatorship (Hall et al., 2010).

Traditional Means of Sports Promotion

Casual fans need a reason to go to the game, often choosing to attend based on the event’s advertising and promotion (Ross & Vargas, 2006). This would be a case of controllable factors created by the strategic communication and promotion team tipping the scale in their favor to bring in those more casual fans. Sports marketers have leaned on promotional ideas and

giveaways for decades as a means to increase live attendance. Events like bobblehead giveaways and other prizes have been found to successfully drive attendance in Major League Baseball (MLB) (Boyd & Krehbiel, 2006). Bobblehead promotions and giveaways of other merchandise such as team jerseys have been found to increase attendance at MLB games by over 1,500 spectators (Barilla et al., 2008). These traditional sports promotion and marketing tactics have been found to be successful in peaking fan interest for games during on weekdays (Barilla et al., 2008).

Social Interaction Among Spectators

Another researched aspect of the event that the casual fan weighs when deciding on attending a game is the social interaction with their friends and family (Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; Fink et al., 2002; Wann et al., 2004). Laverie and Arnett (2000) support both of these findings in the same study, determining that casual fans enjoy the social element of the event and will share their experiences with their peers afterward. They also add that targeted promotional events often effectively get casual fans to the venue (Laverie and Arnett, 2000). These findings and similar conclusions are generally agreed upon amongst academics. With that said, Hall et al. (2010) add that the facilities available in the venue and the availability of parking are more significant elements in the decision-making process than what previous research has argued. Melnick (1993) reports similar findings and recommends that marketing teams create a more social atmosphere with comfortable seating, fairly-priced food, and amenities outside in the parking lots to better the experience of pre-game tailgates.

Interaction Ritual Theory as Applied to Sports Fans and Spectators

Marci Cottingham and Randall Collins are two prominent researchers studying Interaction Ritual Theory, with Cottingham specifically applying sports fandom to Collins'

original theory. Unfortunately, the rest of the literature on the theory is relatively thin as applied to sports fandom. The only other significant application of IR Theory involving sports was a study examining Florida Atlantic University (FAU) students in 2013 protesting the naming rights of the school's football stadium purchased by a for-profit dentation center (Gordon, 2018).

Cottingham (2012) argues that among sports fans, an interactive ritual involves the presence of group solidarity, emotional energy, group symbols, and a sense of morality in being a part of a group and the defense of said morality. These “ingredients” generate “group effervescence” (Cottingham, 2012). She continues to quote Collins (2005) directly, defining group effervescence as “a momentary state, embodied in sentiments of group solidarity, symbols, or sacred objects, and individual emotional energy” (Cottingham, 2012). This serves as a valuable model to build from when examining the ritualistic behavior of sports fans.

Cottingham specifically researched the fans of the Pittsburgh Steelers of the National Football League. The significant findings in this theory involving sports fans include that the highest levels of rituals, symbols, effervesce, emotion, and group solidarity were in the stadium during the game (Cottingham, 2012). These elements also exist outside the settings observed at tailgates and sports bars but on a slightly muted level (Cottingham, 2012). She found that the symbols of fandom, for example, the colors yellow and black, and the Terrible Towel, a yellow towel adopted by the fans of the Steelers as a symbol of the team, were used intensely at the sports bar and tailgates to “draw emotional energy” (Cottingham, 2012). Cottingham (2012) also finds that the elements of Collins' (2005) Interaction Ritual Theory do exist in settings outside of the live game among Pittsburgh fans, specifically researching Steelers-themed weddings and funerals.

Cottingham (2012) also explains how Steelers fans view the Pittsburgh quarterback, Ben Roethlisberger, as a symbol of solidarity for their team. The fans admire his image and heroic play and metaphorically attach their passion for the team to him (Cottingham, 2012). Similarly, there is promising literature about the fans of the Premier Lacrosse League, a professional lacrosse league with no permanent geographically located teams, and the high levels of fandom for teams based on individual players (Hakim, 2020). The research found that fans often associate with the organization their favorite athlete plays for (Hakim, 2020). This research further supports Cottingham's (2012) literature on imagery, in this case, the image of a fan-favorite player driving emotional solidarity and group effervescence. This specific area of research is promising in potentially using images of individual players in NFT form. Creating a digital trading card of a player like Roethlisberger with his picture, statistics, and a short video highlight of a great play could be a practical attempt to draw emotional solidarity and increase spectatorship at the games. Applying the findings of both Cottingham (2012) and Hakim (2020) to NFTs could be an effective use of symbols to generate fan solidarity and increase attendance.

Technology Usage Among Sports Fans

The study of sports fans' use of technology is a rather large field of research with varying ideas and discoveries. One aspect of the conflicting literature is around the concept of different mediums and media vehicles taking away users of another media class. Rynarzewska (2018) researched the potential implementation of virtual reality technology in sports media for modern fan engagement. With that in mind, there are concerns that similar technology and growing at home media engagement, like virtual reality, can decrease live spectatorship (Grenier-Hemphill, 2015). Deleersnyder (2002) suggests that media cannibalism is unlikely to occur when comparing the readership of online news websites created by a traditional print source unless the

reported content is nearly identical. This conclusion could be applied to sports viewership in an attempt to argue that new technology like virtual reality will not drive fans away from live events and back into their homes. Implementing new technology in sports fan engagement is a tricky field of study. Still, it is vital to understand the potential need to push back on the possibility of said new technologies driving fans out of the live venues and back into their homes.

Smartphone usage among sports fans is another field of study related to NFTs that is essential to understand. With that in mind, the potential explanations for why sports fans use their phones have led to conflicting findings and literature. This area of study is crucial for this research and the possibility of using NFTs to increase sports spectatorship. The most likely implementation would be through the smartphones of the guests. Understanding the smartphone usage patterns of fans is essential to know if the idea will even be possible based on how fans use their phones. Some researchers have found that interaction and sharing of their fandom is a critical element of smartphone usage, along with searching the internet for information relevant to their team (Ha, et al., 2017; Kang et al., 2015). Researchers have also found that sports fans use their smartphones for social interaction with other members of their fandom (Ha, et al., 2017; Kang et al., 2015). This digital interaction away from the venue of play is an essential element of studying sports fandom that will be explored further by Cottingham (2012). Chan-Olmsted & Xiao (2018) found similar results in fans using their phones to search for information on their respective team. With that said, they could only conclude that searching for information was the only significant use of smartphones by sports fans and not the sharing of fandom and interaction with other fans (Chan-Olmsted & Xiao, 2018).

Even though conflicting, the literature and research findings seem to provide positive potential outcomes for implementing NFTs in a live sports venue. Fans using their smartphones

for instant online searches and virtual social interactions with fellow fans of their favorite team shows that they often use their phones as a tool for their fandom (Ha, et al., 2017; Kang et al., 2015). The literature discussing fans using their cell phones for reasons relating to their favorite team is essential for this research. If fans were hardly active with their smartphones, the idea of spectators receiving NFTs on their phones while entering an event would be impractical. The NFT incentives could be any entity that the fan exclusively owns backed by the blockchain. These could be exclusive highlights from the game they attended or a digital representation of a physical object that may also be included in the digital contract of the NFT, such as autographed balls or game-worn jerseys.

The culmination of literature related to uses and gratifications, Interaction Ritual Theory and other research on technology usage in sports and NFTs, develops the questions that will guide this research. The research centers around a few common themes that will be explored through the data collection and coding processes. The first theme looks at how technology is used in the live sports experience. The second theme examines how NFTs can be implemented as an incentive system for fans. Finally, the extent that fans can be influenced by the NFT giveaway to purchase tickets to a live sports event will be researched. The research questions will guide the qualitative methods that will provide data on the feasibility of increasing live attendance and Mizzou men's basketball games with an NFT incentive program. This research will also add to the sports strategic communications and marketing research field as organizations and professional leagues across the United States face declining attendance numbers. Major League Baseball had a 5.7% drop in attendance at games in the 2022 season compared to 2019, the last year without attendance restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Brown, 2022). With the rise

of NFT usage in sports promotion and the decline in live attendance, this research will serve as a valuable contribution to the current climate of strategic communication in sports.

Research Questions

- RQ1: How do fans use technology in the live sports experience?
- RQ2: How can strategic communication professionals motivate students to attend a college basketball game using NFTs?
- RQ3: To what extent are different fans motivated to attend a game by promotional incentives?

Methods

This project consisted of a series of semi-structured interviews with a purposeful sample of undergraduate students at the University of Missouri between the ages of 18 and 24 who have some interest in attending live Mizzou Men's Basketball games this season. Each interview lasted around 30 minutes. The interviews were conducted over Zoom while being recorded through the software. There was another screen-recording software, separate from Zoom, running as a backup option in case of technical difficulties. The subjects were given the opportunity to remain anonymous. There should be minimal risk regarding the subject's physical condition or private information, as no sensitive information is required during data collection.

The decision to use a semi-structured interview process is based on similar research methods by Kang et al. (2015) on college students' use of sports-themed mobile phone applications. Their research has similar themes and goals of discovering what drives fan behavior and trying to generate rich detail and data on a sports fan's emotions, desires and their perceptions of technology usage at live sporting events. Using semi-structured interviews will also provide opportunities to adapt the interview guide and allow for flexibility in attempting to

explain a complex topic and unique responses from subjects as described by Tracy (2013). In addition, using a semi-structured interview process allows for flexibility in the interview guide that will be written (Berger, 1998). This was beneficial in leaving room for follow-up questions in the process of an interview while also allowing for further changes in the interview guide as the data collection process took place (Berger, 1998). Using semi-structured interviews gave me the best opportunity to probe for the motivations of the subjects and further understand why they may attend a live game. (Tracy, 2013). The interview style also provided the opportunity to explore how the subject might be incentivized to go to an event in the future (Tracy, 2013).

Sample

The subject sampling was a mix of purposeful sampling and snowball sampling. This method generated a subject pool that meets this research's basic requirements and restrictions (Tracy, 2013). Each subject was then asked to spread the word about this research to peers interested in sharing their thoughts on the topic. This sampling method will recruit interview subjects to confirm that they are undergraduate students between the ages of 18-24 who have some interest level in attending a Mizzou Men's Basketball game. Choosing this sampling process helps focus on students who are open to the idea of attending a sporting event on campus. This eliminated a student who may be a die-hard fan who attends every game without incentives, as well as the students with zero interest in ever attending a game. After the first three interviews from the purposeful pool of subjects, I switched to a more snowball sampling method while keeping the basic requirement of being an undergraduate student.

Kang et al. (2015) also used a similar method for their series of interviews and focus groups to generate meaningful qualitative data. Their requirements to participate in the interview process included being a college student with a smartphone and having knowledge of sports

mobile applications. In addition, to participate in the focus groups, subjects had to be enrolled in a health and physical education class at the same “large Midwestern university” (Kang et al., 2015). This research interviewed ten fans interested in attending a Mizzou Men’s Basketball game. This range stems from previous research by Benedek et al. (2021) and Mackreth & Bond (2021), who used a similar number of interview subjects in their studies on sports marketing. The sampling survey was shared by professors and students at the university. This screening survey collected over 80 responses. After weeks of emails and screening, I adapted my requirements only to be a student interested in sports, which then snowballed with subjects connecting me with more interviewees.

Screening Questions

1. What is your affiliation with the University of Missouri? (To confirm that they are undergraduate students)
2. What year are you at Mizzou? (Freshman, sophomore, etc.)
3. How old are you?
4. What is your gender?
5. On a scale from one to five, with one being no interest whatsoever and five being willing to attend as many games as I can afford to or make time for, what is your interest level in attending a live men’s basketball game at Mizzou Arena this season?
6. Do you have any knowledge on the topics of NFTs, cryptocurrency, bitcoin, etc.? If so, please provide a short description of your knowledge level (ex., I know very little on the topic, I consider myself highly knowledgeable).

7. Are you willing to be interviewed for a graduate student report? If so, you will be entered into a drawing for a \$20 gift card to Amazon or Starbucks. *Note: Answering yes does not guarantee that you will be selected for an interview*

Noting additional demographic information could be helpful for further research in the field if there is a significant disparity between groups attending live events or other similar topics that academics could research further.

The final interview subjects comprised six male students and four female students from their sophomore to senior years. The ideal case was to have every subject be around levels two through four. This shows that there is interest in attending the events and not set in stone in going to every game no matter what or having zero interest. The fans who are undecided about going to a live game are the potential spectators that sports marketers can target and persuade to attend with incentives like NFTs. Limited responses to the recruitment email caused the change in sampling. With that said, there seemed to be little difference in the quality of subjects selected by the screening survey and those who were not. It is also worth noting a four subjects work part-time for the broadcast operations department for Missouri. They agreed to be interviewed as fans, sharing their experiences at the games they attend in their free time. One used to work for the marketing department at the school before leaving that position earlier this school year.

Interview Questions that were gradually adjusted

1. What is your first and last name and if you could spell both of them out for me?
2. What year are you in school?
3. What is your favorite part of Mizzou? And why?
4. What is your favorite Mizzou athletic event to go to? And why?

5. On a scale between one and five, how much interest do you have in attending a Mizzou men's basketball game? (one being no interest at all and five being that you would go to every game you are financially able to afford)
6. What is the first thing you think of when I say, "Mizzou Basketball?"
7. How many Mizzou men's basketball games do you typically go to in a season? How many have you gone to this year?
8. Why do you go to the Mizzou Men's Basketball games?
9. Why do you not go to every game?
10. What incentives from the athletic department interest you? (Free merchandise, free food, etc.)
11. How do you use technology like your smartphone while at the game?
12. Have you heard of NFTs before? If so, what do you know about them? (May require an explanation of what an NFT is.)
13. How would you think an NFT promotional item would impact your experience at a game?
14. What would make your overall experience at the games better?
15. Have you experienced any connectivity issues online while at the event?
16. What is the iconic image of Mizzou?
17. What would you say to convince somebody on the fence about attending a game to get them to come with you?
18. Is there anything I may have forgotten to ask that you would like to share or think would add value to this research?

Each interview was transcribed and coded to find recurring themes brought up by the subjects in the interview stage of the research as well as to search for causality. Coding for local causality searched for reasons, processes and events that may have taken place in the decision-making processes to better understand why a sports fan may attend a live game or not (Tracy, 2013). These themes may be why fans do not go to every game, what incentives they would like to see, or their interest in NFT giveaways at the events. One concern was the lack of knowledge of NFTs from the interview subjects. With that said, some interviews included a short explanation of the tokens and a demonstration and examples of NFTs implemented in their marketing programs by sports teams, such as the Dallas Mavericks (Insights, 2021) and the Miami Heat (Ramil, 2021). The responses to the example NFTs and case studies can be recorded and coded based on the interest level and understanding of the concept. These questions can bring up themes that can be addressed by further research. For example, suppose a subject does not understand NFTs but is intrigued by the idea of digital exclusives. In that case, it could be insightful information to researchers and practitioners about the concept's interest by prospective spectators and fans.

Academia would benefit from more qualitative research about the behaviors of sports fans. Checking a box on a survey may not tell the entire story and explain the unmet emotional needs of a sports fan. Research on sports marketing also lacks sufficient information on what separates the behaviors of a casual sports fan and a more dedicated fan. Furthermore, there is little discourse on those differences from a marketing and strategic communication perspective. This research topic would also benefit from prior literature about promotional items involved in sports marketing. For example, is there a difference in attendance when there is a promotional

giveaway compared to when there is not one? Other essential questions would be related to the idea of adopting new technology by typical consumers.

There could also be more research on nonfungible tokens. Besides their use as digital art pieces, further analysis can be done on the developments and implementations of NFTs. It would also be beneficial to have more research on the psychological aspects of digital ownership. These research topics and suggestions for additional academic literature would contribute to the lack of professionally published discourse and future practical combinations of sports marketing and newly developing technology.

Professional Placement

My professional placement for the spring of 2022 semester will be at Mizzou Broadcast Operations, interning under Stan Silvey and Jordan Alves in Columbia, Missouri. I have worked there part-time for over a year as a freelance broadcast professional, primarily in the evenings for productions going live to the SEC Network and the ESPN family of networks. This professional placement will have me going into the office about five days a week to help with the pre-production elements of broadcast TV. This work includes meeting with the marketing department at Mizzou, building packages to show in-game and more. The placement will run from about mid-January until April. My goal after graduation is to work full-time in live sports television. This placement will give me another perspective and a better understanding of the work that goes on before a broadcast and on off days that I have not experienced yet working in sports television.

Findings

This section delves into the results and findings of the interviews conducted during the data collection process. The findings are sorted by research question and supported by direct

quotes from individual subjects and the collective summarizing and interpretation of the collective sample of current students at the University of Missouri who have some level of interest in attending athletic events on campus.

A significant finding that I uncovered was that fans were more interested in attending a game if the team was successful on the court. In 2022 the University of Missouri men's team finished the year with an overall record of 12-21 for a win percentage of 36.4% with a home record of eight wins and eight losses (University of Missouri, 2023). The average home game attendance that season was 3,399 fans per game. A head-coaching change in the offseason brought the program a new wave of on-court success. The team finished the season with a record of 25-10, a win percentage of 71.4%, and a home record of 16-3. This increase in success brought with it an appearance in the NCAA men's college basketball tournament, commonly known as March Madness. Although the university has not released official attendance numbers, Calum McAndrew (2023) of the St. Louis Dispatch reported that through the first 18 home games, Missouri averaged 11,377 fans per game. Eight of the ten subjects interviewed mentioned the success of the team's most recent season compared to the prior year as the reason for change amongst the fan community. The performance on the court seems to have led to higher attendance numbers and a more exciting atmosphere in the arena. The higher attendance gave the passionate fans of the sport more of a reason to attend, as well as the more casual fan who sees going to sporting events as a social outing with friends, a more entertaining and exciting environment with their peers. It is difficult to say whether the team's success is the leading cause of the change in attendance numbers and overall fan increase across the school's campus. Still, it is a factor outside of the control of strategic communication professionals and marketers that must be accounted for when researching ways to better the experience of fans and fill the seats of

a venue. One student interviewed for this research used to work for the marketing team at Mizzou before leaving their position and stated their beliefs regarding the success of a team and the attendance of fans:

The only way you up your fan engagement and the amount of people actually coming to your games is just by having a good team. Like when the team's winning, everyone wants to be there. That's the number one way that you increase fan involvement. You can do fun stuff like Truman from the rafters and having good music and having giveaways, but at the end of the day, no one's going to show up if your team is losing game after game after game.

While the team's performance seems to have drawn a larger and more energized crowd to the games from the past season, there remains an opportunity for marketers to develop new ideas to get fans into the venue and maintain control over the fan experience off the court.

RQ1: How do fans use technology in the live sports experience?

To understand how college sports fans connect and use technology like their cell phones in the live sports experience, it is essential to understand the spectator's mindset. For many students, attending a sporting event on campus is thought to be more than just watching the performance of the athletes for two to three hours. The experience of specifically a University of Missouri Men's Basketball game is a social and communal experience of shared emotions of joy and sometimes disappointment.

These social sports spectators rarely use technology during the event except for brief moments when the fan uses their smartphone to take a quick picture or Snapchat to share with their friends and family members who are not there with them to share in the experience. The fan may do this to share with their family members that they are attending the event or to share with

their friends, not in attendance glimpses of the experience and atmosphere they are missing, leading to a future feeling of “FoMO” or “Fear of Missing Out.” Seven of the ten subjects mentioned that when they are at basketball games, they only use their devices to send a quick photo to friends and family or to check the score of another game during halftime. Other than that, the use of technology by fans in the venue is limited. The quick dissemination of media like photos and short videos is what fans mostly use technology for. For the social sports spectator, once they use their phone to scan their digital tickets, their devices generally stay in their pockets to allow them to enjoy the pageantry and atmosphere of the game and the excitement shared with their friends and fellow squad supporters.

This finding comes with a potential external factor out of the immediate control of the strategic communication or marketing teams: the connectivity and access to suitable cellular service and WiFi. Although it was not a point of discussion in each interview, two subjects brought up the issue of connectivity in Mizzou Arena slowing down the fan’s ability to share their experience digitally with others, not in the venue. With that in mind, the occasional service issues do not hinder the fan experience. Surprisingly, one subject noted that not being able to use the internet, bettered their experience, adding that not having access to reliable service kept them focused on enjoying the social event with their friends. The lack of consistently reliable internet and cellular access would seem like a frustrating experience for a fan. Still, it potentially benefits the event by forcing the fan to live in the moment and enjoy the offline social atmosphere. It is also worth noting that two subjects also discussed how weak the connection can be during a busy football game on campus, keeping them from loading any social media and sending text messages, and not connecting phone calls in the stadium.

This research has shown that technology plays a minor role in the in-venue fan experience of sports fans. The fans in the arena are looking to enjoy the social environment and atmosphere at the game. Fans often use technology to expand that social interaction with friends and family online by sharing live photos and videos of their experience at the game. With that said, beyond the quick message to friends and the occasional score check on other games happening simultaneously, technology is only a small factor in the fan experience.

RQ2: How can strategic communication professionals motivate students to attend a college basketball game using NFTs?

Using NFTs to motivate students to attend a game requires both a personal connection and an education on the technology and the emotional value they could get from an NFT promotion and the actual function of the token. Therefore, the two most prominent topics discovered during the data collection process were the atmosphere of the game and the education around NFTs.

Seven subjects described the excitement of the in-venue experience being a memorable experience for them as a fan. Specific images, symbols, and traditions of the school often enhance the energy in the venue, creating moments that the fans in the forum describe as their favorite memories of their entire college experience. The fans describe these instances of deep emotional effervesce and connection to the team, the school, and their fellow supporters. Strategic communication professionals would have the most success in capturing these images, moments, and experiences in the form of an NFT. The atmosphere that the fan experiences in the venue frequently goes beyond just the performance on the court. One subject described the environment of the game saying:

You'll feel what everybody else in the stadium feels, whether it's the thrill of winning or the agony of losing. You're going to feel it with all the other people, and it's like you're a part of something bigger than yourself, and it's just incredible.

The energized fans in the venue see the athletes as an extension of their passion for the team. One subject described their personal connection with the players as they are just like the fans up in the crowd outside of the game, going to class with them and sharing in the college experience. These athletes become images of the program that fans bond themselves to as a respiration of their fandom. Kobe Brown was one athlete from Missouri with who fans have developed an emotional connection throughout his time playing for the school. One subject described the idolization of Brown as a symbol of the school saying:

They've gone to the school, and now they're watching athletes go to the school, play for their team, and get better and grow as people and athletes over their four years. And I think that's why people have an attachment to Kobe Brown is because he stayed at. And I think fans want to have that prolonged connection with players.

The connection between a fan and their favorite player opens the doors for strategic communication teams to use NFTs. The physical image of the athlete can draw the energy out of a fan in the venue. The functionality of an NFT combined with the possibilities from the NCAA regarding athletes profiting off their name, image, and likeness, an NFT of a star player like Brown could provide an opportunity to increase attendance at a live game while also benefiting a fan-favorite athlete for years to come. The athlete could make future income via the trading and exchanges of the token's digital contract after the game. Another way to capture the image of a fandom's energy is by minting an exciting moment. For example, two subjects brought up Deandre Gholston's halfcourt buzzer-beating basket to defeat the University of Tennessee,

ranked as the 6th best team in the country. Now he has become a fan-favorite player as a symbol of being the underdog that they appreciate. Capturing and minting the moment and player's image, much like the NBA's TopShot collection, could draw fans to the venue. The fans can now own a piece of Missouri basketball history made possible by their new favorite player on the team.

The second critical step that strategic communications teams need to complete to successfully use NFTs as a promotional item is to educate their fans on the technology. Eight of the ten subjects discussed knowing little about NFTs and cryptocurrency. However, some of them mentioned having little interest in researching the topic because of the uncertainty of the product and news reports of online scams. One subject shared that the technology is overwhelming and needs to be simplified for the average sports fan to understand saying:

I definitely think that I wish there was more what's the word that I'm looking for? Not transparency, but an easier, almost quick guide to understanding NFT and cryptocurrency and that sort of thing, where it's not such heavy information and heavy content that you're absorbing to kind of understand it, but more a little bit easier version and a more easily digestible way of understanding and kind of diving into it.

Simplifying an advanced and still developing technology is not a simple task. Still, if sports marketers could find a simple and quick way to disperse information and education on NFTs, most likely as some form of digital attachment to the promotional item, it could ease any fear of the often overwhelming technology. Doing so would also potentially reduce the firmly held doubts about the tokens held by fans which will be discussed later in this report. Multiple subjects then wondered what do they do next. What can they do with it? Sharing why the NFT exists and the emotional or physical value the fan gets out of it would answer those questions.

Informing the fan that their NFTs financially benefit their favorite player's name, image, and likeness value could spark interest in the token. Marketing teams could also have the NFT come with physical perks like food discounts, upgraded seats, and better parking, topics that the interviewees mentioned they disliked about the in-venue experience, which could satisfy the fan's desires and unmet emotional needs. Solving every problem for every fan may be an impossibility, but finding a way to connect the deep sense of pride and emotion felt at a game with some practical element would help NFTs become valuable promotional items to increase fan attendance.

RQ3: To what extent are different fans motivated to attend a game by promotional incentives?

Researching if NFTs can be used as a practical and motivational promotional item uncovered four distinct types of fans and their feelings towards incentives and giveaway items. It required me to examine what drives the fan to the game and find what piques their interests as a casual Missouri basketball fan or a die-hard sports lover. The first type of fan is the "Open-minded NFT Novice. The second is the "Outspoken Scam Skeptic. The third is the traditional "Tangible Token Attendee." The fourth is the "Pass on the Promotions Person." Each category of fans was found to have different motivators in attending a game and had their thoughts of NFTs as incentives from subjects who believe that implementing the new technology could be a creative tool to the interviewees who were actively against the concept. Some groups overlap as some subjects acknowledged that the idea could effectively persuade fans to attend, but they still may have little interest in the token.

Four of the ten subjects fall into the category of the open-minded NFT novice. These subjects all shared little to no knowledge of NFTs and cryptocurrency while sharing the general

sentiment that a personal and limited image of the team or school could be an interesting and memorable item to receive at the game. These fans may have heard about NFTs through social media outlets like Twitter or word of mouth of friends and family and understand maybe the basics of a limited digital entity while not doing copious amounts of research into the topic. These fans typically enjoy saving and scrolling through past pictures they may have taken at the game and the fun events outside of play, such as a halftime performance or the school's mascot. These open-minded fans are the most likely to be influenced to attend a game by an NFT promotion. That is possible even without having a deep understanding of the technology behind it. One subject who fell under this category described their perspective on the concept stating:

I think just the aspect of having a keepsake just to have a memory of the game or have a memory of your favorite player or something. I think that would be cool because I'm a very sentimental person where I'm just like, oh, I'll be on my phone, I'll just look through old pictures or something and I'm like, remember that time?

A strategic communication professional could see success in increasing attendance among these students by tapping into their emotional attachment to the school and their openness toward a new promotional giveaway like an NFT of their favorite player or image of the team or school. With 40% of the total subjects interviewed falling into this category of the fan, it makes them the largest single group generalized in this research. Ten total fans amongst a campus of over 23,000 undergraduate students at the University of Missouri (Facts and Figures, 2023) may not entirely represent the rest of the fandom. However, the sample of male and female students of various grades at the school still provides a solid base of potential audience members to which a marketer can gear their possible NFT promotions.

In stark contrast to the open-minded NFT novices that a sports marketer can effectively target, there is the “Outspoken Scam Skeptic” group of fans. Although my sample includes just two subjects I interviewed who fall into this category of spectators, they were by far the most outspoken for or against the idea of an NFT promotional giveaway compared to the rest of the pool. This group of fans is firm in their distrust of NFTs and was open in sharing how an NFT promotion could be a bad look on the university as it could be considered as a way to tell fans how to invest their money. One subject in this category added their concerns of the technology stating:

I think if that did happen, if that was a promotion, I think that it would get a lot of flack, and I think that it wouldn't be valued the same way that a lot of other promotional items would be. And I think that if that did happen, I think it wouldn't be a good look on the university because in a sense they would be sort of endorsing a specific investment, sort of saying, hey, this is how you should use your money. Because that's sort of the stigma, if nothing else, that NFTs have sort of gained at least from a lot of news websites and stuff like that that I see every day.

The Outspoken Scam Skeptic also note that the idea of an NFT promotion could leave fans scratching their heads and questioning the practices of the marketing team. One subject expressed their concerns saying, “I don't think people would stop coming to games, but I think people would be like, why are you doing this? And it would probably lower people's opinions of the marketing team or whatever entity is doing that.” That fan instructed me to tell the Mizzou Marketing team not to do this idea, adding that it would alienate many of the fans of the team, leading me to clarify that they did not commission this research and was for academic purposes. The other subject said that if the idea were to happen, they would publicly use word of mouth

and social media to express their disapproval and distrust of NFTs. Although this is a smaller category of fans interviewed, their opinions on the topic were the strongest. They were firm in their willingness to share their views against the promotion. Promoting NFTs to these basketball fans would be impractical. While not being able to convince them to attend a game with an NFT, the more prominent barrier would be the word of mouth and social media discussions these fans would lead against the idea and the marketing department. The power of social media could spread concerns about the promotion, warranted or not, and it opens the door to a public relations predicament online.

The third and tied for the smallest group of fans is the “Tangible Tokens Attendee.” This fan would rather have a traditional physical giveaway such as a t-shirt, a mug, or other items. Only two subjects interviewed fell into this category which made me hesitant to categorize them as their own group, as both subjects mentioned that an NFT giveaway could be interesting for other fans, just not for them. With the sample size in mind, it would be challenging to consider the opinions of two fans unique to them. However, with a sample size of hundreds or thousands more basketball fans, there would be enough shared sentiment to consider them their own unique group of fans. These fans are not actively against the idea of an NFT promotional item like the skeptics mentioned earlier, but they may have little interest in the concept. They would rather have a tangible item to take home after the game. One subject in this category expressed their opinions in having a physical item over a digital entity saying, “I think it’s more important to me than a digital item because it’s something where you can wear this shirt around and show that you’re invested in the school, and you’re participating in the athletic events and supporting the team in that way.”

This group of fans would rather have a physical item as a giveaway to help them display their fandom to others and show their support and connection to their favorite team. To the Tangible Token Attendee, nothing concerns them about an NFT giveaway. Still, a digital entity does not fill their underlying desire to show off their fandom and connect with other fans compared to a t-shirt, hat, or other physical items. This fan group would be a challenging target audience for strategic communication professionals looking to implement an NFT promotional item. The overall lack of interest in a digital item combined with their goal of displaying their fandom to the public would make them a complex group to appeal to using NFTs. Making an NFT shareable and easy to display would give marketing teams the best opportunity to motivate these fans to attend a game. With that said, the odds of successfully convincing this type of fan to attend a game in that manner would be difficult.

The final group of fans is the “Pass on Promotions People.” These fans have very little interest in any promotional events or giveaways. Three subjects were sorted into this category, with one of those fans also considered an open-minded NFT Novice. That subject overlapped categories by mentioning not being persuaded by incentives while still thinking the idea is a unique promotional opportunity. This group attends the games for several reasons but is not persuaded by the efforts controlled by the marketing and strategic communication teams. A spectator who falls into this category may have been convinced to come by their friends or family members as a social experience, or they may be a passionate college basketball fan who attends purely to enjoy the sport or the atmosphere of the student section. Social pressure or the love of the sport drives them into the venue, where they may pick up a giveaway at the venue’s entrance. Still, their interest in the item is very low as they attended the game for other reasons beyond the scope of control of marketing teams. This group of fans represents a more significant

theme discovered during the research: the team's success. This idea for this research topic was developed between the 2022 and 2023 NCAA men's college basketball seasons.

The significant increase in fan attendance at Mizzou basketball games in the 2023 season compared to the 2022 season limits the ability of market research to determine the extent to which NFT promotion items can increase attendance. With that in mind, this research did outline the divisions of fans who would be more receptive to NFT giveaways compared to those who would be openly against the idea and those who may have little interest in digital entities compared to tangible handouts. The quantifiable objectives regarding attendance amongst communities of people, demographics, and psychographics set by a strategic communication professional can determine the extent of NFT promotion's success. Through interviewing a pool of potential audience members, there exists an opportunity for marketing teams to use the technology as a promotional item to convince a group of fans to attend a game. The open-minded NFT notices are the largest group of fans found in the research, showing the potential for fans to discover the emotional value of an NFT while enjoying the experience of a University of Missouri men's basketball game. The best opportunity for a successful NFT promotion would be to combine the atmosphere and school spirit felt in the arena by the fan to some physical value. Doing this would serve the needs of most fans looking to attend a game. Some fans will attend a game without any incentives, and there are fans with a strong distaste for NFTs who will make their voices heard on the topic. However, with the proper education, a significant number of potential fans could see both the emotional and physical value of an NFT giveaway, drawing them to the venue.

Discussion

The findings from this research contribute to the academic discussion regarding the communication and social interaction of sports fans, the technology they use, and how strategic communication professionals can draw information on their unmet emotional needs to increase attendance at live sports events. While this research includes relevant findings to theory and broader academic discussion, much of the results offer practical implications that can be used in strategic sports communication.

Theoretical Implications

This research found similar results to Sjöblom (2020) regarding the uses and gratifications theory applied to live venue fans. In the data collection phase of this research, they shared their stories of the strong emotional sentiment among live audience members when fans were exposed to their favorite players and the crowd's excitement at a basketball game. While no subject may have discussed elements like a game's commentary like in Sjöblom's research, similar emotional gratification was described by the subjects I interviewed when exposed to a live sports venue, fan-favorite athletes, and the drama on the court. The application of uses and gratifications as it pertains to social media interaction is another point found in my research. Although a relatively minor theme, sports fans spend minimal time interacting with other media types besides occasionally checking social media outlets or sending a quick message to friends and family. These findings differ Shabahang's (2022) research in that the social media posts made by fans in the venue are not generating the personal gratification suggested in their findings. To the fans at the game, their social media posts are unrelated to any personal fulfillment. The findings on the technology used by fans relate similarly to those from Ha, et al. (2017) and Kang et al. (2015), where fans use their phone to connect with other fans. With that said, Kang's research was centered around a broader area of fandom in everyday life, rather than

specifically researching fans who are watching a live game in the venue. My findings differ from Chan-Olmsted & Xiao (2018) who found that fans primarily use their smartphone as a means to search for information, rather than for social purposes. Furthermore, my findings show little evidence of the existence of media cannibalism and the fear that developing technologies like virtual reality could lead to a decrease in live spectatorship as suggested by Grenier-Hemphill (2015). From my research, the most common reasons for a fan not attending a live game stemmed from prior academic or social commitments and the fear of attending a game alone without their friends.

This research found that the atmosphere and school spirit felt by fans in the arena is significant in the decision-making process of a fan potentially attending a game. The pride and energy felt in the stands described by the students match the emotional effervesce described by Cottingham (2012) in her application of the Interaction Ritual Theory amongst sports fans. Cottingham's discovery of the emotional solidarity shared by sports fans was what the subjects of this research craved as a fan of the University of Missouri. The school spirit and pride found in the venue at a basketball game was the favorite part of the college experience of multiple subjects interviewed in this research. This energy was drawn from similar imagery as described by Cottingham, like that of the star player, Kobe Brown, and the mascot, Truman the Tiger. With that said, most of the subjects specifically described the student section of the games as the source of that emotional energy. Cottingham's (2012) research found the emotional effervescence throughout the entire fandom of the Pittsburgh Steelers, both at the games and away from the venue. This contrasts my findings in that those emotions were more limited to a smaller faction the student fan section of the arena at the game.

There is something to be noted about the lack of online group emotional solidarity in this digital age. This research examined the connection between the digital world and the physical sports experience. The previous literature describes a passionate in-person sports fan, and my findings discovered a similarly devoted, temporarily disconnected fan when at the games. The balance of digital fandom and in-venue experiential spectatorship would be a unique research opportunity for future discussion. As the goal of this research was not to find the gratification of sports social media uses, there still is an opportunity for future research on the trend I found of fans rarely using their phones while at a game. When they do, it is to send quick messages to friends and family. Further research into the emotional gratification a fan may get from sharing their experiences via smartphone could prove significant to this area of academic discussion. Future exploration of the uses and gratifications of the passionate fan online would also be insightful to future theoretical applications and potentially practical research in the professional field of strategic sports communication.

Practical Implications

This research found similar findings as Melnick (1993) in that the more casual fans will often attend a sporting event with friends and family as a social activity instead of maybe going to a bar or a restaurant. I had similar findings as Melnick in that the more passionate fans will generally attend every game if they are financially able to do so. With that said, instead of financial restrictions being the primary reason the dedicated fan skipped the game, several of the college students interviewed cited academic reasons such as having homework to do, an exam the next day, or a recurring club meeting. This slight difference could be caused by multiple subjects having an “All-Sports Pass,” a system allowing students to pay a single discounted payment to attend all sporting events at the University of Missouri for the entire school year. Many subjects

mentioned having the pass, making it easy for them to attend a game, while having friends who did not purchase the all-inclusive ticket. This often made it more difficult for students to attend games without their peers, leading them to watch the game at home with them.

Ross & Vargas (2006) discussed that the perceived value of the ticket was one of the most critical factors in deciding to attend a game. While some students mentioned they may have paid too much not to sit in the student section, most subjects hardly talked about the value of the ticket prices as a part of their decision-making process. Ross & Vargas also wrote that casual sports fans frequently need a reason to attend the game, being influenced by advertising and the game's promotion. My findings did show similar results in that fans cited going to a highly marketed game against a top-ranked opponent. The subjects frequently mentioned attending games against the University of Kansas, ranked #4 in the country during the 2022-2023 season, and Auburn University in the 2021-2022 season, ranked #1 ranked team in the country. With that said, my findings uncovered that friends often convinced a casual fan to attend a game, including going to those highly touted matchups to avoid the fear of missing out in case of an upset victory. Many subjects interviewed said they would rather stay home with friends and watch the game or partake in other activities than attend alone, showing the power of social interaction. Advertising and promotion might not have the persuasive abilities that Ross & Vargas argue.

Sports marketers have found previous success in using physical giveaways such as bobbleheads and team jerseys to increase spectatorship, often by the thousands of fans (Boyd & Krehbiel, 2006; Barilla et al., 2008). While this research used qualitative methods, the findings showed many casual and dedicated fans who had little interest in giveaway items. The passionate fans would attend the game even without the promotional item, and the casual fan would frequently go with their friends to avoid the fear of missing out on the social event. These

findings could further dispute previous research showing a casual sports fan's interest in promotional giveaways.

Prior research discussed the importance of social interaction with friends and family to a fan considering attending a live game (Dietz-Uhler et al., 2000; Fink et al., 2002; Laverie and Arnett, 2000; Wann et al., 2004). My research findings add to this concept, as subjects often said they would rather stay home and watch the game with their friends who may not have tickets rather than go alone. The social interaction continues digitally but in a more reserved manner than discussed in prior research. My findings differed from those of Chan-Olmsted & Xiao (2018), who discussed the fans primarily using their phones to search for information on their team. While the settings of the fan using their phone are different environments between our studies, I found that fans would only occasionally use their phone to find information about the team or game. My finds aligned closer to Ha (2017) and Kang (2015) in that the subjects I interviewed frequently discussed the enjoyment of the experience with their friends while sharing photos and moments online and over text with their friends who were not at the game and their families back home. The importance of the social experience at the game brings into question the strategic communications team's ability to persuade casual fans to attend based on giveaways. This allows sports marketers to explore new ways to add to the communal experience and take back some of their influence to bring fans to the venue.

The practical implications of this research show that a fan base could respond positively to an NFT incentive if the token can tap into the fandom's emotional and social elements while possibly providing some practical use. A strategic communication professional could create an NFT campaign that draws the attention of the open-minded NFT novice if the balance of practical and emotional benefits is met. My findings regarding the fan's limited use of their

phones may not be conducive to a promotion that would most likely involve fans using and interacting with their smartphones. That said, the in-person social atmosphere in the venue turning digital via a fan's phone could open up space for shareable NFTs to make their way into a fandom if shared in ways similar to Ha and Kang as a form of social interaction with other fans. That is possible if they are easy to share and draw emotional energy, whether it is of a fan-favorite player, a captured moment of the game, etc., like the energy described by Cottingham. While some fans may not be excited about an NFT promotion, there is some potential for the cutting-edge campaign concept in which elements of the fandom are used, adding to the social aspect of the environment and capturing the atmosphere of a college basketball game.

Conclusion

This research process looked to bring a cutting-edge perspective to the evergreen goal of getting people into seats. I started looking into this question in the fall of 2021, near the beginning of the college basketball season. Throughout that season, I watched Mizzou Arena bring in fewer fans every game due to a lack of fan excitement and dreadful performance on the court. The nearly empty arena partially inspired me to apply my idea of NFT promotions to Missouri basketball games. It may be easy to sell tickets to a championship team, but what can the strategic communication professionals for a losing team do to fill more seats? With that said, the stark difference in the basketball team's performance added a layer of complexity to the research process as fan excitement on campus and attendance at home games skyrocketed during the data collection process. With that said, I did learn how sports marketers may have less influence than what decades of prior research and hundreds of sports promotion ideas may suggest. It was interesting to see how much of an impact winning has on attendance and how a

team's success can dramatically increase student supporters' overall spirit and morale on campus.

Another interesting note was how multiple subjects described going to athletic events to avoid the fear of missing out. Some fans cited the feeling of almost needing to go to say they went as a part of the college experience. Others described the fear of missing out on a highly anticipated matchup against a highly ranked opponent for the "what if?" factor. What if Missouri can pull off the underdog victory? This is another point where strategic communication teams lose control over attendance. Professionals in the field can promote and advertise the upcoming game, but promotional items and giveaways may have little influence on a fan's decision-making process in that circumstance. The fan's impulse to not miss out on the excitement and potential moments of devout emotional effervescence can be viewed as the primary factor for fans attending those games rather than an NFT or bobblehead night.

In terms of NFTs, it was interesting to see how firmly against NFTs some students are. Concerns of NFT scams and cryptocurrency pump-and-dumps soured the opinions of the technology in the eyes of those fans. Their sentiment against them was strong enough that they would be pushed to speak out openly against the idea online and through word of mouth. If a strategic communications team was to implement an NFT promotion, they should be prepared to face a bit of backlash from that sector of fans. They can counter this by reassuring them that the technology will not be used as an investment tool to fund gambling or influence students on how to spend their money. PR teams can further back these statements by promoting the social element of the product, the potential physical benefits that may come with them, and the possible funding they may provide to the fan-favorite player through future name, image, and likeness opportunities.

While there is no surefire way to fill the seats of an arena that is in complete control of the strategic communications and marketing teams, there seems to be some potential for NFTs to be implemented into the fan experience that can benefit the attendees and even the players on the court. Through garnering deep fan devotion by implementing images of the team, fandom, and the social atmosphere of the game, NFTs can provide a unique opportunity to gain the attention of potential attendees, who will further contribute to the excitement of the shared experience in the venue. The team's success on the court, field, or ice, paired with the potential of some fans expressing their concerns regarding NFTs, are the two most significant barriers to the success of the potential promotion. With that said, if the technology is used to better the fan's social involvement and provide some form of emotional value or physical benefits, NFTs could be a tool for strategic communications professionals. The technology would allow the industry to go beyond the stale bobblehead night and give their fans a unique and memorable experience.

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Appendix

Interview Transcriptions

Interview 1

Cunningham

All right, so just for interview purposes, could you give me your first and last name and spell both of them out for me?

Subject #1

Absolutely. Connor Shaw. C-O-N-N-O-R S-H-A-W

Cunningham

And what year are you here at Mizzou?

Subject #1

I am currently a junior.

Cunningham

All right. So, Connor, I want to ask, how many Mizzou two men's basketball games do you typically go to in a season?

Subject #1

So, this is my first season actually being able to participate in the basketball games. I've gone to two so far, and the two I have gone to oh, God, what was it? One was back in January. I can't remember who we played against. And then the one before that was in December.

Cunningham

Did you go with friends? You go by yourself? What caused you to go?

Subject #1

So I went with friends. One of my buddies actually had someone who's been going for the past few years. They're alumni, so I tagged in with them, bought myself a ticket. I actually don't have a student pass, so I paid full price for my tickets. But yeah, I went with a buddy who had alumni friends. So we went as a group of three to five.

Cunningham

Do you consider yourself a big Mizzou basketball fan?

Subject #1

Yeah, Mizzou is definitely my home college now, so I support them any way I can. And being that we're kicking butt right now, it's really fun to be a part of something that big.

Cunningham

So the team being good is helpful, right? I'm assuming?

Subject #1

Oh, always. But it's also helpful in arguments and banter with buddies, especially ones from Illinois.

Cunningham

Is that where you're originally from? Chicago area, I'm assuming.

Subject #1

No, I'm St. Louis. Born and raised. But I got a lot of buddies from Chicago, especially here at Mizzou.

Cunningham

So you said you've only been to two games. Why is that? Why only two?

Subject #1

So, like I said, I mistakenly didn't buy the sports pass. I thought I wouldn't be going to as many or be as involved with the sports as I am. Nowadays, they are a little bit more expensive. Forty five dollars to one hundred dollars per ticket can limit a lot of people, especially someone who's working part time while going to school full time. Money is definitely a tighter issue. Availability has never been an issue. The time of the games are always put out way in advance for anyone working as well. But it's more of the if you're not a student section or having bought into the student pass for tickets, it's a lot harder to get a hold of them. And the discretionary spending is a little bit more as opposed to going to, say, Harpos or somewhere downtown that's already broadcasting the game, you still feel a part of it, but you're not there. But being there, it's definitely a different atmosphere.

Cunningham

You said you've only started going to games this year. Why didn't you go to games last year? Out of curiosity.

Subject #1

So last year, actually, fall semester was my first year here at Mizzou beforehand. I was a transfer from community college back in St. Charles, just outside St. Louis, so I didn't really have access to a whole lot of games. I didn't know a whole lot of people that went to Mizzou at the time that were actually going to games. It was more of they were here doing their college thing, getting out at the same time. Now that I'm here making more connections, I'm finding out that there's a lot more to do that I missed out on beforehand.

Cunningham

It sounds like it's more of a social event for you. You mentioned, like, going to the bars instead. It seems sort of like you go with friends instead of being a die-hard Mizzou fan, I guess.

Subject #1

Yeah, it is definitely a social thing and getting behind definitely not die hard, but I'm well versed enough to know some of the players and know point average and just keep a conversation going with my friends who are actually die hard basketball fans. My cousin, for one, huge Mizzou basketball fan, he's been falling in Mizzou for, like, past 10-15 years. College basketball, march madness, everything. It's his life, essentially. So being a part of that now is actually pretty cool with me. Now.

Cunningham

Do you remember if there were any promotional events or handouts items, incentives that were at the basketball games that you went to earlier this year?

Subject #1

Off the top of my head, I can't actually name any. I think there are a few giveaways. Every time there was intermission or anytime there was a pause in the game, I'd usually go back and grab some snacks with some buddies or something like that. It was more if I was there, experienced the game when the game was playing, and then everything else was outside my kind of purview. Like, I didn't really pay much attention to it, so sorry about that.

Cunningham

Do you typically look for promotional items or handouts before the show or before the game? Be like, oh, that could be interesting, whether it's like free T-shirts being promoted, or the other day they gave out little Mizzou Arena like figurines almost.

Subject #1

Absolutely. Yeah. That's definitely a huge incentive to go. It makes it more memorable. You'll try to rush there a little sooner, you'll try to buy tickets a little sooner. It's a great incentive. One of the things too, I think it was back in the fall semester, there was an outdoor basketball court that people were just shooting hoops at or playing ball toss and trying to get student passes sold and promote the men's basketball team and women.

Cunningham

Do you use your phone or other technology when you're at the game in the arena?

Subject #1

Absolutely. Snapchat Instagram stories and all that stuff. I'll broadcast kind of where I'm at and what I'm doing, and a lot of people start talking out of that. They ask me where I'm sitting, how much tickets are, stuff like that. They'll ask me to try to help them get tickets next time, sometimes as well.

Cunningham

And just out of curiosity, have you heard of NFTs before? And if so, what do you know about them?

Subject #1

Those are the nonfungible tokens, right? Like the whole drawings of them. To be honest, all the extent I know is that it's a digital drawing that people are buying for millions. That's about it.

Cunningham

Just the fact that you knew what NFT stood for was impressive. So the center of my research is potentially using NFTs as promotional items instead of an actual physical item. You could be the first, like 1000 people at the door and you can be sent a link to a digital entity on your phone and maybe that comes with a physical perk as well. Sorry, what were you going to say?

Subject #1

Oh, no, honestly, I've never bought into it. I never knew how to. The fact I know the name is path to extent, to my knowledge, but jumping into something new like that, that possibly has

value for people in the future, be it a gamble or just say you have something that's pretty cool, incentive.

Cunningham

Would you think that would maybe be a persuasive promotional tool for you or anyone else?

Subject #1

If you're definitely talking about my little brother, absolutely. He's big into that stuff. NFT trading, cryptocurrencies, kind of stuff like that. Someone like me who has no knowledge of it, it could be one of those things like a rally towel. It's really cool. I got it. I don't know what to do with it after the fact. I'd say if there's a little more education out there about the NFTs, like, you guys want to partner up, like telling people about that and promote like what it could be or stuff like that, or just give people insight. I think you could go a little further with that too. But someone like me who knows nothing about it, I'm just going to be like, all right, this is cool. What next?

Cunningham

What would you look for to make it for? You said, oh, it's cool, but I'm never going to use it again. Or I don't really have any other interest besides like a rally tower or whatever. What do you think would take it to that next level that would maybe persuade you? Like, oh, they're giving away NFTs. I kind of want to go to that now.

Subject #1

Just like the rarity and exclusivity of it. Like, everyone likes something that they can't always have. So like, if you know more about that, like, I'm one of a thousand or on one of 5000, and you graduate with Mizzou, say you're renowned for this, renown for that, maybe what you have is not worth more. What group has your alumni has, stuff like that. Like, you don't know the future of it, but it's kind of cool to hold on to. Like, if you know what the potential value of it could be, I guess would be my answer or just in general what it is.

Cunningham

That was really insightful. I appreciate that. Is there anything that you would like to tell me that I may have forgotten to ask about or something that you would think would contribute to my research in any perspective?

Subject #1

So you're saying your research is mainly based around the incentive of NFTs, right? Honestly, yeah. Just getting the word of what it actually is. Again, I'm completely novice to the idea. The concept for me is all I see is a picture of a monkey in my head holding some kind of thing. That's

the general NFT joke I've been hearing. But yeah, no, if you just want to get awareness out about it, like what they all are and just educate people just in the slightest, I think that could be pretty cool. That could help out a lot, actually.

Cunningham

It's funny that you say you're pretty new with it because I'm actually fairly new with it as well. I didn't really know anything about NFTs before I started this research and I also get the joke of it's just a picture of a monkey and I want to see if there's any further application to it and I'm not a crypto bro" or anything like that.

Subject #1

Yeah, not me either. What are you going to say? I work a blue collar job and I'm in the military and everything else is just someone a lot smarter than me doing something on the internet that I never thought of.

Cunningham

Exactly. Well, I appreciate your time. Like I said, quick, easy, painless. I just wanted to pick your brain and get a few of your thoughts.

Subject #1

Absolutely. Yeah. I'm completely open to helping out any way I can clarify anything in the future. Go for it.

Cunningham

And again, thank you for your participation. I'll throw your name into the raffle for the gift card. It'll just be for whatever. If you are a winner, I'll contact you and I'll be like, hey, what do you want your gift card to be? And I'll send it over to you.

Subject #1

Sounds good, man. I appreciate you.

Cunningham

Thank you so much.

Interview #2**Cunningham**

And there is that. So just standard routine. If you could tell me your first and last name and spell both of them out for me.

Subject #2

Okay. Anna Carpenter. A-N-N-A-C-A-R-P-E-N-T-E-R.

Cunningham

Perfect. And what year are you here at Mizzou?

Subject #2

I'm a senior.

Cunningham

Perfect. So we're going to start very easy. What's your favorite part of Mizzou? What's your favorite parts of it?

Subject #2

Like the whole college experience or, like, Mizzou, like academic as a school?

Cunningham

Both are perfect.

Subject #2

Within education, I'd say all the hands on experience that we get. Like, actually working with clients and stuff because it gives a lot to talk about, interviews, and I feel like it prepares you really well for the real world. And then I just like Columbia as a town. I think it's like, a great college town. Everything is super close together. Downtown is fun.

Cunningham

What are your favorite locations or aspects of Mizzou? Like Jesse Hall or whatever.

Subject #2

I like the union the most, probably.

Cunningham

What's the union like?

Subject #2

Memorial Union?

Cunningham

Yes.

Subject #2

Like that huge building. I go there to study a lot because it's peaceful and pretty and they have Starbucks in there and Wheat stone, and it's close to me.

Cunningham

How closely do you follow sports in general and Mizzou sports, out of curiosity?

Subject #2

I follow Mizzou sports pretty close. Not super closely, but I feel like I know what's going on in general. I know when the basketball games are in the football games, but I don't care that much. I don't know. I don't really care that much. But it's, like, fun to watch. And especially when we're good this year in basketball. I know we keep winning and losing, but it's fun when there's some enthusiasm behind it. Like, we're actually good. Football this year, I guess I didn't follow that closely besides watching when they were on. But other than football and basketball, I don't really follow any sports.

Cunningham

I guess you'd say football and basketball are your two favorites here.

Subject #2

Yeah.

Cunningham

Do you go to a lot of the games?

Subject #2

No, I wish I did. I don't. I've been to two basketball games this year and probably like, four in total. And then I've only been to one football game. But I was here, like, prime COVID years, so I know, like, sophomore year I couldn't go to any. But yeah, not a lot, I guess.

Cunningham

Why is that? Why do you not go to so many games, out of curiosity?

Subject #2

I don't know, really, because they're always fun when I go. I don't know. Probably just, like I'd rather watch them on TV at my apartment or go out to a restaurant or bar and watch them. I feel like football, the first few years, I just enjoyed the Columbia life, so I never went to an actual game. And I think it was like, freshman. And weren't we bad last year?

Cunningham

It depends on your definition of bad.

Subject #2

Yeah, I feel like our freshman year and junior year, we weren't very good. So that also made me not want to go because it was like, we're probably going to lose. And I didn't have a student ticket or anything, so I would have to pay for them.

Cunningham

Were you saying that the basketball team or the football team were bad, so you just didn't want to go?

Subject #2

The football team? I think that was if I remember right, I remember thinking that last year. Was it basketball last year? Yeah. I didn't really go either.

Cunningham

Sorry, you can finish your sentence there.

Subject #2

No, that's all.

Cunningham

Can you tell me about the two basketball games you went to this year? And did you go with friends? When were they what were you doing with that?

Subject #2

I went with my friends both times, and I'm trying to remember who they played. I guess I could check if you want to know.

Cunningham

It's not like the end of the world.

Subject #2

Okay. Yeah, they were both game. They were both supposed to be, like, really good games, so that's why we went. I think we won one of them and lost one of them. We were just sitting in the nosebleeds. It was a good time. And we ended up being kind of upset because we spent, like \$50 on the tickets, like, all of us, \$50 each. And then they didn't even check them when we went there at all, so we were like, wow, we could have just, like, walked in.

Cunningham

They didn't check \$50?

Subject #2

I know. So yeah, but yeah, they were both really fun.

Cunningham

So you said earlier that you kind of prefer just to stay at home or maybe go to a bar and watch the games. Do you do that typically by yourself, or do you go with friends or go to the bar with friends because you said you went to the game.

Subject #2

Yeah, friends usually just get a group of us and go hang out.

Cunningham

And what made you decide to go to those two basketball games instead of in the venue, instead of going to a bar or whatever to watch it?

Subject #2

I think my friends just kind of had the idea and got me on board. And they were both supposed to be, like, good games against higher ranked teams, so we were like, it'd be fun if we were there and something crazy happened. We can say we were there.

Cunningham

Do you remember if there were any incentives or handouts, like promotional items given out when you went to those games?

Subject #2

I don't remember.

Cunningham

Does that kind of stuff interest you or promotions, like cheap food or anything like that?

Subject #2

Yeah, that would interest me because the food is really expensive there.

Cunningham

Do you typically use your phone when you're at the game to do anything with it? Like, are you on it at any point?

Subject #2

I know the last game we were at, none of us had service, so that game I really wasn't because I couldn't go on it. But I did take a few pictures and I took a video of the halftime performance because it was that cute little dog that does the tricks.

Cunningham

Yeah, I was in the control room for that. I saw that.

Subject #2

Yeah. So I took video of that and sent it to my family, and I probably took a few pictures just to capture the memory. But other than that, none of us had service. And it might have been because we were, like, so high up, but yeah, it was fine, though.

Cunningham

If you had service, what would you be doing?

Subject #2

Probably just like, I don't know, like, texting my friends that aren't there or just, like, maybe posting a Snapchat or story somewhere of the game. But it was probably better it was out because then I couldn't go on it. Got to enjoy the moment.

Cunningham

So you had a better experience without having, like, self service and without being on your phone?

Subject #2

Yeah, probably no distractions.

Cunningham

So you mentioned that those two games that you went to were, like, really hyped up and, like, you you heard a lot about it. Where did you sort of hear about that excitement and that information?

Subject #2

Probably social media. And my boyfriend is a huge Mizzou fan, so I always hear it from him, what's coming up? And just feel like the businesses here promote that when there's a big game coming up, especially the bars. And being in the journalism school, I always just see what's going on at Mizzou, like, through their social media and Twitter in classes.

Cunningham

So it seems like you hear a lot about it on social media and word of mouth and talking with your friends instead of hearing about the promotions that they may do or like, the marketing that goes behind it.

Subject #2

Yeah, probably more from word of mouth and social.

Cunningham

Do you enjoy those promotional and marketing tools that they use? I know they try to experiment with that, and I'm just curious what your thoughts are.

Subject #2

What are some specific ones?

Cunningham

I know for the Kansas game, they gave out those little "Beat KU" flags or towels or whatever.

Subject #2

I guess I'd enjoy that. I never saw those, so maybe I don't see them a lot or something.

Cunningham

Like a really high priority for you.

Subject #2

Yeah, but I mean, if I walk by, I might probably take one or pay attention to it.

Cunningham

And I'm curious what your knowledge of NFTs are like in cryptocurrency.

Subject #2

Not very much at all.

Cunningham

Like, absolutely nothing.

Subject #2

Yeah, not really. Honestly. I know it's, like, big right now. I know a lot of people are buying it, and I know you can potentially have a very big payout from it if you know what you're doing. But as for what it is or how to do it, I know nothing, honestly.

Cunningham

What is the first thing you think about when I say the words Mizzou athletics?

Subject #2

I don't know. Competitive energetic, disappointing sometimes.

Cunningham

Is there anything I may have forgotten to ask you or something you'd like to share that may add value to this research?

Subject #2

I don't know, what's your question that you're trying to get out of, so.

Cunningham

I'm sort of looking at first of all, I'm not a crypto bro or anything like that. I just thought the idea is kind of interesting and looking at how sports teams and athletic departments could maybe use like digital promotional tools and handouts and promotions and maybe give to fans if they enter the arena. And that could be something as simple as a little download on your phone and it could maybe come with a physical perk as well. So you could get something like your little token on your phone and it could maybe come with upgraded seats or an autograph basketball or something like that.

Subject #2

Got you. It's pretty cool.

Cunningham

If you have any thoughts on that, I'd gladly take them.

Subject #2

Well, if it was involving like, cryptocurrency, I probably wouldn't get involved at all because I, again, have no idea what that's about and stuff, but it sounds like a cool idea and I know a lot of people are using that right now, so it probably would be beneficial.

Cunningham

The idea isn't to make a bunch of money off of it. It's supposed to sort of be like the new age, like Bobblehead Night or whatever. That's sort of what my idea was.

Subject #2

Yeah.

Cunningham

It's interesting that you aren't really sort of into those like you don't really hear about them either. Like those handouts or giveaways that they do at Mizzou Arena for the basketball games or whatever.

Subject #2

Yeah, maybe I just don't pay attention. I don't know, maybe I miss them every time.

Cunningham

Well, that is all I have. If again, if there's anything you'd like to add just about any Mizzou Athletics or going to games or going to bars and watching the games or anything like that no.

Subject #2

If you have any more questions that I can help you with, let me know.

Cunningham

I appreciate it. I may have to ask you for some names of people who also may be willing to be interviewed, if that's okay.

Subject #2

What's, like the screening? Just college student?

Cunningham

Yeah, for the most part. I sent out that survey to a bunch of people and I got a bunch of responses and I tried to pick out like the best, most eligible people and I'm not getting a whole lot of emails back. I don't know if people just don't check their emails nowadays or what.

Subject #2

Yeah, well, I can definitely get you some people. I'll try to think of maybe some, like because if I just gave it to my friends they'd probably all say like almost the exact same thing as me. So I'll tell my boyfriend, he'll definitely have a different point of view and then I'll try to think of some other people.

Cunningham

Yeah, that would be excellent.

Subject #2

I can definitely do that for you.

Cunningham

Just shoot me an email with those names and emails. As a token, token of my appreciation, I will gladly put your name into the entry for the \$20 gift card. If you win, I will contact you and it'll be to wherever you want. I'll get you a gift card for that.

Subject #2

Great. That'd be awesome.

Cunningham

I'll go ahead and stop the recording.

Interview #3**Cunningham**

And I will start. So first off, if you could just tell me your first and last name and spell both of them out for me.

Subject #3

My name is Daniel Partamian. It's D-A-N-I-E-L-P-A-R-T-A-M-I-A-N.

Cunningham

Perfect. And what year are you here at Mizzou?

Subject #3

I'm a fourth year senior in my second semester, but not going to be graduating this year.

Cunningham

There's nothing wrong with that.

Subject #3

Yeah.

Cunningham

So first question, very simple but open. What's your favorite part of Mizzou? What are your favorite elements of the school?

Subject #3

Favorite part of Mizzou is definitely just coming together. Just seeing once every week there's just like everybody in one single place. And I don't know how many thousand people live here, but especially like the college kids just come together and there were like one unified everybody's on each other's side just to beat another team. Literally, there's just nothing better to me. Yeah, there's a lifestyle, there's parties, there's a bar scene. I love all of that. But when it's like Saturday on a football night or whatever, game day, because the game days, I feel like have been kind of weird with basketball. Whenever I just see everybody single handedly coming together and if we lose, we're all just pissed off together. And if we win, we're all just like stoked together. That is without a doubt my favorite thing about this college.

Cunningham

You said game day for basketball been a little weird. What do you mean by that?

Subject #3

Oh, I don't know. Maybe the days I feel like I'm just so programmed into football, like Saturdays. So it's just kind of weird when I get like we get a Saturday basketball game and then we get in the same week turnaround on a Thursday or a Tuesday sometimes. I remember that Auburn game, which was gross, I hated that. I remember looking and I was like, I didn't even know we were playing Auburn that day. I thought it was way later on in the week, but it was just a turnaround game. So I'm just programmed to Saturdays in football.

Cunningham

Makes sense. What's your favorite Mizzou athletic event to go to and why?

Subject #3

As much as I love football, I don't think there's really anything like a basketball game. I just love the basketball games. Maybe it's because I don't like being cold that much, but I love being indoors. I love being in the student section. It's just like no holds barred. I love the basketball games and that kind of comes with the territory of the season. Like the season has been so just such a roller coaster ride and it's been so fun to watch. For better or for worse, there's always energy in the stadium. Unfortunately, the only game that I really felt like the level of atmosphere that I wanted to feel probably my entire four years of being here at a Mizzou football game was that Georgia game, which we should have won. We were winning. We won for three and a half quarters and then we just let it go at the end. But basketball games for sure.

Cunningham

Yeah, I remember that Georgia game. I was working for that. That was wild.

Subject #3

That's how a D1 SEC school football stadium atmosphere should feel like all the time, I think.

Cunningham

What's the first thing you think of when I say Mizzou basketball?

Subject #3

The first thing I think of. All right. With recency or in totality?

Cunningham

Both. Doesn't matter.

Subject #3

Well, this is for bringing in more fans. I don't want to say it, but I just think heartbreak recently, it hasn't been like the Tennessee game. That was like, the first time I've ever seen something like that happen. And I'm a young kid, I'm only 21, but I remember the Norfolk State game. I remember that game as a child. I remember watching Phil Pressley shot hit the rim, like, off the backboard. Like, I remember all of that. And it's just like just pain. But with recency. I feel like an insane amount of hope. It's just like 50-50. Because if you would have told me that Golston was going to make that shot against Tennessee, I would have called you a liar ten times out of ten. But it went in and then it was like, oh, my God, we're doing it. We've done something we haven't done. I don't know how long. We got a top six win. That's insane. And then something like that two game stretch to Auburn and A&M happens, and it's like, where'd that happen from? How do you come off one of the biggest wins we've ever had in recent program history and then go to that and it's like, what's going on here? But then they give you more hope when you pull out a gritty win against Mississippi State. In recent history, before Dennis Gates, we were not known for pulling out those kind of wins. That was a game we would drop if Cuonzo was here or another coach was here. That's what we would do. And now we're turning it around. We're turning it around with a team that we haven't even had. There's no recruitment, really, with this team. It's a bunch of guys that Dennis just brought in and they're playing as hard as they can possibly play. So there is a lot of hope. I only said heartbreak just because I just remembered all the years of pain. But nowadays there's a lot of hope. There's a lot of hope that's what I would use, actually, instead of heartbreak is hope.

Cunningham

How many basketball games do you go to in a typical season, and how many have you been to this season?

Subject #3

How many have I been to this season? Probably over. Sorry about the music being here, that my roommate just walked upstairs. This season probably been to a good amount of the home games, but no away games. So I'd say I couldn't give you an exact number, but like in the five to ten range in a normal season, probably not that much. I got to be honest. I remember I'd go to the big ones, like when Auburn was ranked number one, when Cuonzo was our coach, I went to that one. Any top 15 team, I'd really try my hardest to go to. Like, the big ones was the ones I would go to previous years. This year it's been like, let's go to the let's go to these games. Let's go to the Mississippi State game, which was a huge game. It was a huge game, especially just for tournament play. And the KU game hurt. But if you didn't go to that game, come on, what are you doing? But I try to make it to as many as I can. A little busy, but still I try.

Cunningham

To you seem like someone who's pretty passionate. Why don't you go to every game? Typically.

Subject #3

Life works out that way. I work I'm a bartender, so sometimes I work on game days. Sometimes I have three tests in a week. It just works out that way. Sometimes it comes down to something as lame as money, which always sucks when you're just like, I can't spend the money on this ticket, but usually I can make it. But whenever I can't, it's just life. It's really nothing much to it.

Cunningham

If you're not at the game, are you watching it somewhere or are you just like at work or are you just studying?

Subject #3

Oh, yeah. Even if I'm studying, the game will be on in the background and I'll tune in. Or if I'm working, I work at I'm a bartender, so we have TVs all over the place. I try my absolute hardest to watch the games, and I usually do. I haven't really missed that much of a game this season. I think the most I missed was that Auburn game, which was just sad.

Cunningham

Do you typically pay attention to the incentives given out in the promotions of the basketball games? Whether it be free merchandise, discounted food or whatever?

Subject #3

I'm sure a lot of people do find those incentives, pulling them to the games. I'm sure that is something that people like personally, and especially like the casual fan or maybe a county. I can totally see how that would like bringing your kids to the game. I could totally see that. Me, personally, I'm more of just a hardcore fan, so I'm going to see my team win and to see it in the atmosphere. I'm not really looking for those incentives at all. If they brought the price down on stadium beers. Maybe we have something to talk about, but right now that's a different subject. The prices are a little high on that. But I still think that personally, me, I'm not really going for the incentives. I'm going for the love of it.

Cunningham

If you're given something you mentioned you went to the KU game. What did you do with that rally towel that they gave you?

Subject #3

I haven't pinned up that's actually at my buddy's apartment, but that's because they lost theirs. And so we just pin it up and it's the tiger and says, Beat KU. So we like to keep those. We always try to keep things that we get. It was awesome when Drinkwitz was there and holding up a sign, but yeah, every time we get one of those things, we keep them.

Cunningham

How do you typically use technology like your smartphone when you're at the game?

Subject #3

Honestly, just texting my friends. And the thing is, you got so many people packed into one spot, I'm sure you've been to multiple games. The service always isn't that great. I'm a diehard Chiefs fan too. Every time I go into that stadium, the service is terrible just because so many people I get it, but if I'm on my phone, it's because I'm about to have a panic attack and I need to just text my friends like, this is great. It's something like that. But that's the only reason. Maybe if a huge game is going on and we're at halftime, I'll check the score of that. But other than that, I'm not really on my phone a whole lot at all.

Cunningham

Do you typically go with friends to the games, or do you go by yourself?

Subject #3

Yeah, I always got to find somebody to go with. You could 100% go by yourself. That's a totally viable option. Or go by yourself and meet your friends at the game. And that's a good thing. If you are one of the people that just want to go to the game by yourself, maybe your friends have some occupations that they just can't bypass. The great thing is you're going to go to the game, and especially if you've got a seat in the student section, you're going to be with however many hundred people that just feel the exact same way you do. It's not hard to make friends when you're in there, but I always go with friends.

Cunningham

Have you heard of NFTs before? Any cryptocurrency? And if you have, what do you know about them?

Subject #3

NFTs, I've heard of them. I know it's like a picture based thing, and I know things about crypto. I'm really not big into it personally, and that's just purely off of lack of me finding out, like, lack of research. I haven't really put in the time, haven't really put in the money, don't necessarily want to. I know some people. I know a guy I had in class like two years ago, a year ago, he's like, got some serious money going off of crypto, and he showed it to me, and I'd be like, that's

awesome, man. I really don't know anything about it. And he'd be like, dude, you got to get in on this. And I'd be like, you know, I don't really know much about it. I'm sure I could learn, but I'm just going to do with what I'm doing now seems to work and it's safe, but I know it exists and I know it's making people money. I'm just kind of steering clear of it.

Cunningham

So what I'm looking at for my research is taking NFTs instead of like an investment item and making it more into a promotional tool like giveaways at games where you can easily access it on your phone and maybe it can come with a physical perk as well.

Subject #3

I'm sure that would do really well, especially like a good large community here at Mizzou. They would definitely yeah, I can 100% see that being something that would be successful in like an incentive program, for sure.

Cunningham

How do you think it would impact your experience at a game?

Subject #3

Personally? My experience, I don't know if this is what you're looking for to hear, wanting to hear. Personally, it wouldn't do anything for me just because, like I said, I'm not a huge incentive guy. It's really cool to get the towels. It's really cool seeing people come out to the games, especially if it's because there's an NFT thing or drinks and food is cheaper. But like I said, I've always just gone to any game, no matter what. Whether it's the Tigers or the Chiefs, I have gone to a game or the Royals. I go to the game for the experience of the team playing in the atmosphere of the fans and the energy of the stadium. And if incentives bring more of that, then again, there's absolutely nothing. I love the incentives for other people. Just for me, I'm just kind of there for the game.

Cunningham

It sounds like you're thinking more of a targeted towards like a more middle ground, someone who isn't going to every game like you.

Subject #3

Yeah, I've been the person that's been the middle ground. You know what I mean? I didn't go to a lot of games especially, it sucks to say, but when you're really bad, it's hard to go and root on cheer on your team. That's just the way it is. Or incredibly mediocre. It's just hard to get. I don't know how old you are, but I'm sure you've seen in the Cuonzo years, I mean, the stadium has never felt like this in the years that he was there. It's just a fact. The highest amount of points we

would score is like 50 to 60 points, and then we would lose all the heartbreakers and we wouldn't have an offensive game plan and we wouldn't have this feeling of hope that the program might actually be on to something. But now it's totally different. There's a serious energy in the stadium, so that alone is going to attract a middle ground fan in, but with the added incentives. If I was just like especially a family man with a few kids, and I look at my phone, and I'm like, well, they got, like, however many dollar hot dogs, and they got this NFT thing. I could totally see that drawing in more people. It's good for the program.

Cunningham

It's funny that you comment on previous years, because I went to undergrad at a different school, and I came here last year. It was my first year here.

Subject #3

Okay.

Cunningham

And you mentioned the Auburn game from last year, and I worked that. I was on the court for that, and I saw that, and that was like, a one time thing. It felt like for all the energy, but now it's just flipped completely.

Subject #3

Exactly, dude. Thank you. The fact and it's the exact same thing with the Georgia game in football. Everybody was just like, oh, that was one game, and now we have an entire season of that energy, which is what it should be. There's no excuse for why it shouldn't be that in football and basketball. There's absolutely no excuse. In my eyes, at least.

Cunningham

I should probably should have cleared it up. I work for the athletic department, but this research is not for it, by the way.

Subject #3

Oh, no worries. Yeah, no fun. You're fine.

Cunningham

I'm actually underneath the student section of the basketball arena right now. That's where my office is.

Subject #3

Nice. Yeah, no worries, man. That's cool.

Cunningham

Is there anything I may have forgotten to ask you that you'd like to share or think would add more valuable information for me?

Subject #3

I don't know. I could go on like a passionate rant. I might go on like a 30 second one, but I don't want it to come from a place of anger. But if I was going to but I stopped myself, what I was going to expand myself on in the no excuse department. And this is why it's so amazing for basketball just to see this hope. And it's so amazing to see this from basketball, from this team, not to downgrade the team or diminish the team at all, but let's be realist. Let's be honest here. There's not even one four star, five star. These are Cleveland State. Just playing for Dennis. These are just kids playing for Dennis. We don't even have a recruiting class yet. So to see this from those guys is incredible, and it gives you so much hope for the future. On the flip side of that, I don't even know if we're supposed to be talking about football, but the no excuse part comes from that. There's no excuse. There is absolutely no excuse that we leave the Big Twelve for the SEC. We have more money, better facilities, better recruits, and yet we're worse. I don't understand it, and I can't fathom it. It doesn't make sense. And I get so fired up about it to the point where I want to believe in Drinkwitz. But, I mean, Bill Snyder over in K-State never had a five star recruit class. Four star recruit class. And he did what he did over there. And K State is doing great in basketball and football. They have less money than us. They have less recruits. I don't get it. So I think it boils down to coaching. I think that there just needs to be a level of care and commitment. Everybody sees now that everybody at Mizzou, like the kids, they want to root for us. We're packing the stadiums for Mississippi State. That's what we want to do. We want to go to every single Mizzou football game and just pack the stadium, even if we're playing Louisiana Tech. But there's something missing, and I don't know what it is because, like I said, it just doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense how we leave, how we get more money, how we get better recruits, and we're somehow worse. But that's it. That's just what I had to throw out there, because it just fires me up thinking about it.

Cunningham

I had one more question that popped into my mind. What would you say to somebody to convince them, somebody who's on the fence to convince them to come to a game with you?

Subject #3

Just try it out and you won't regret it, especially a basketball game. The energy in that stadium, the passion that we all have, if it's with me, you'll get to laugh at me, because I'll go absolutely crazy. I'll get really fired up. If you're hanging out with me, you'll be with my friends. We're not

going to just brag, but we know how to have a good time. We know how to have a good time. We can 100% give you that feeling of that energy. You just have to try it at once, because one, it's not going to kill you. Then it's not going to hurt you. So why not just go for it? And you'll feel what everybody else in the stadium feels, whether it's the thrill of winning or the agony of losing. You're going to feel it with all the other people, and it's like you're a part of something bigger than yourself, and it's just incredible.

Cunningham

Well, that's all I got. I appreciate your time. And token of my appreciation, I will put your name in a drawing for a \$20 gift card when I'm done with all my interviews I'll do. If you win, I'll email you and ask you what gift card you want, and I'll send that over to you.

Subject #3

Yeah, awesome. That's sweet. Thank you.

Cunningham

Your answers have been very helpful and.

Subject #3

Beneficial, so I appreciate yeah, for sure, man.

Cunningham

I'll go ahead and stop the recordings.

Interview #4**Cunningham**

Okay, so if you could just say your first and last name and spell them both out for me and tell me what year you are here at Mizzou?

Subject #4

My name is Raquel Ribold. That's R-A-C-Q-U-E-L. Ribald is R-I-E-B-O-L-D and I'm a senior.

Cunningham

Perfect. So, an easy question to start off with. What's your favorite part of Mizzou?

Subject #4

Honestly, I really like how beautiful our campus is and just how nice, how many resources we have as far as it just being like an SEC school and just like a nice all around. I like feeling like I'm at the best at the journalism school.

Cunningham

Do you go to many Mizzou athletic events? And why is that?

Subject #4

Okay, I was going to say do I need to elaborate? So I really just don't have the time, it seems like, and I don't always know about them, so sometimes I feel like I'm out of the loop because all these other people oh yeah, like Saturday night and I'm like, oh, I had no idea. And at that point I can't plan my schedule around it, but I did buy a sports pass. So I went to football games this season, finally as a senior. But I really bought it because I like watching basketball, actually. And I haven't been able to go to any of the basketball games because they've always been on the evenings that I have obligations.

Cunningham

So it sounds like you've had issues with your scheduling and a lack of just knowledge of when the events are going to be.

Subject #4

Yes, exactly.

Cunningham

Have you been to any Mizzou basketball game since you've been here? Or this year for that matter?

Subject #4

Not at all, which is why I'm so bummed.

Cunningham

Do you consider yourself to be a big Mizzou fan or are you just a fan of basketball or do you just like hang out with friends?

Subject #4

Honestly, back in middle school, I followed Mizzou basketball very closely, interestingly enough, but I think it's because my older brother was so then I was paying attention. But then they had a really tough loss against I think it was Kentucky, and it was like during March Madness. And we were both really bitter about it. So then I stopped watching it. But then coming here to Mizzou, that was one of the things that I was really looking forward to. But honestly, I guess I couldn't really consider myself a Mizzou fan because they haven't been paying close attention to any of it. So I'm more of like an observer and participant. Like, I'm just kind of here it would be because I really like basketball and then I would be like, Mizzou hurrah, but just because I go here.

Cunningham

What are you typically doing on days where you want to go to a game but you can't?

Subject #4

I'm actually involved in a lot of college ministry stuff and I noticed that there's a tendency for games to be on Wednesday nights, which is actually when I lead my Bible study stuff.

Cunningham

And what about on weekends? Because I know there's a lot of weekend basketball games. Just out of curiosity.

Subject #4

Sometimes I have to travel home to St. Louis. I've had a lot of stuff happening in my family within the past six months, so I've had to go back for that. But other times, it's like, my friends and I just make plans, like not even going out. We'll make plans like, oh, let's go out to eat, and then we're going to go home and watch a movie and stuff. And then my roommate will come home from the basketball game and I'm like, oh my God, I had no idea that there was a

basketball game. And I probably would have rather us done that. But I think a couple of my other friends that I hang out with on the weekends, they don't actually have a sports pass, so that would have been jumping through a hoop to get them to go.

Cunningham

It kind of sounds like you would almost like it to be like a social event with your friends instead of going out to see a movie or whatever, you say, hey, let's go out to the movie basketball game.

Subject #4

Yeah, I definitely wouldn't show up by myself. I'm not dedicated enough to do that. I would rather be in solidarity with some friends and make it like, a fun thing. But yeah, so definitely a social event.

Cunningham

Tell me about your experiences with going to the football games this year.

Subject #4

Going to the football games is a lot of fun, but it can be overwhelming. Just like, getting there with the sheer amount of people. But I've noticed I don't know if it's because I walk all the way there from my apartment downtown, but by the time halftime strikes, I'm already tired and almost wanting to leave. So unless it's like a really active game, I'm almost ready to blast. But it's fun, like tailgating and all of that. I think, honestly, tailgating is why I was tired. Not just the walk, but in my head, I'm like, oh, I have to walk, like freaking 30 minutes back to my apartment. So I'm like, maybe I should just leave now before the traffic is insane. But as far as the actual game goes, it's fun to be in the student section in the Bleachers, standing and cheering and feeling like I'm part of this big Mizzou thing. I definitely feel like I'm making core memories every time I go, which is kind of fun.

Cunningham

What do you initially think of when you think Mizzou athletics can be anything?

Subject #4

I normally think of football just as a summary word, just because football is the one that gets all of the attention and it's the biggest field as far as, like, you see the stadium. And I think just because it's been around forever and I also had someone in my family played for Mizzou football way back in the day, so I think I just automatically associate it with that since that gets more of the valor and recognition. But personally, if I'm thinking of Mizzou Athletics, I actually probably would project more towards basketball just because I actually understand basketball. I still don't really fully understand football, and I hate that it seems like they're, like, pausing, like, every 10

seconds or something. I'm like, just play the game. So I love basketball because it's fast paced and just a lot of fun. So if I am actually am thinking of athletics, I would much rather think of I think of football automatically just because that's always in my head, because it's always what's getting all the attention. But when I actually think about it for myself, I'm thinking basketball.

Cunningham

How many football games did you go to this year? You mentioned you finally went to at least one of them.

Subject #4

Yeah, I went to probably like five or so, I want to say. Not too much in comparison to other people, but I had to go out of town a few times in the fall, so I missed out, which was a bummer. I never got to go during hoodie weather, which I was really sad about. But, yeah, I think I probably went to about five.

Cunningham

That's about most of the home games.

Subject #4

Yeah, that was the other thing. I was like, I bought the sports pass and I didn't realize how few home games there would be. And of course, they gave us all of the terrible times since we're not as good.

Cunningham

So it was like anyway, those 11:00 A.m. Kickoffs are kind of brutal, aren't they?

Subject #4

Yeah. No, because I had to wake up so early because they wanted to tailgate, and I'm like, oh, I hate that. But then I was like, oh, I have to make memories because I'm a senior. So then I would get up with them anyway, even though it was like seven or 08:00 a.m., and then sit there and drink a beer. And I don't even drink alcohol, let alone beer, but I'm like sitting there early in the morning with strangers. But anyway.

Cunningham

So what caused the change? You didn't go to any sporting events, any football games your first three years here at Mizzou, and then you suddenly went to nearly every home football game.

Subject #4

So the change really was just because I'm a senior and I wanted to be able to make those memories, and I felt like I was missing out. I'm like, a huge FOMO person. So it was, like, triggering me that I was missing out. And I just wanted to feel like I was more a part of Mizzou on a more real sense, though, I feel like I was hijacked because freshman year, you're just starting out and you're just getting settled. But it was March of my freshman year when COVID struck, and so I missed this huge gap of time where that wasn't even really offered. I only started to feel like a college student again junior year because we finally got on campus again. So I just never really felt fully settled into Mizzou from freshman year to junior year. And finally, junior year, I'm, like, walking around campus, finally feeling like M-I-Z-Z-O-U. Like, oh, wait, I go here. And not just like, I'm trying to figure out my classes on my own, because then it's like, classes are in person and you finally have the professors that you've been wanting this whole time. So I think it just couldn't have been the biggest priority for me because I was just trying to get settled as far as my academics went, and I didn't even really have the opportunity to until then. So I knew senior year I wanted to make a point to get involved in that stuff because I felt like I was missing out. And it even triggered me that I had friends. I grew up in St. Louis, so I had friends that were flying in or driving in from out of town to go to Mizzou games. I'm like, this is my school. This is not your school. And yet I hadn't gone. So I was like, I bought my sports pass, thinking that that would make it really easy for me to just show up. But one of the things that happened to me with the basketball games, I was going to go to one of them, but like I said, I can't go on Wednesday nights. That's like a night that's completely blocked. So there was a big game, I guess it was, against KU, and I didn't get to go because my roommates explained to me that because they knew that everyone would go to that game, they were making you do go to all the other games. And so even if you had a sports pass, you couldn't go to the big game without having gone and at least checked in to the other games. So I was bummed because then in my head, I was like, Well, I'm just going to go because I have my sports pass, and I would have had to pay out of pocket. And after spending that much money on a sports pass that has barely been used, no. So I just didn't go. I don't know if I answered your question. I feel like I went in so many circles just now.

Cunningham

No, that's absolutely perfect. That's the beauty of what I'm doing. I'm doing semi-structured interviews and I'm just letting people talk and hearing what they're having to say, and then I'll summarize it and see what I'm trying to am I answering my questions or not? Backtracking a little bit to the football. Do you remember if there were any promotions or incentives to go to the game, like free shirt night or whatever?

Subject #4

I believe one of the times there may have been a free shirt, maybe, but I'm thinking in my head that I don't have one, but it may have been because I left it there on accident. I think maybe there was a free shirt at some point. The other one was homecoming, and it's just kind of illegal to not go to homecoming. But I don't really remember there being strict or not strict. I don't really

remember there being incentives besides maybe that T shirt, like I said. But no, I was really just showing up for the pressure of the FOMO.

Cunningham

Sorry about that. My calendar notification. So do those promotions or incentives even remotely interest you?

Subject #4

I know that it interests some people. My friend Caleb showed up to my Bible study with, like, a Mizzou bucket hat that he got from a basketball game that he was really pumped up about. But I guess to some degree it would because, again, trying to assimilate myself into Mizzou when I feel like I haven't in so long, if I could show up and get a Mizzou T-shirt, I actually would be happy about that because then I don't have to spend it costs money to breathe on campus. So I don't want to necessarily have to spend money on Mizzou T-shirts when there's opportunities to get them for free and still identify with the school. So I think that is a good incentive. But for the most part, I would not show up because of an incentive. I would show up because my schedule allowed me to and my friends were already going. If my friends are already going, I will make a point to go. If they're not already going, then I don't want to go alone. I wouldn't do that.

Cunningham

That's really insightful on that one. Did you use your phone at all? What technology were you using when you were at the football games?

Subject #4

Oh, yeah, I'm on my phone. Like, that one time I was reading a book on my phone because I was on the lawn and it was like the sun was beating down on us. It was like one of those really early morning ones. And I was like, Guys, this is just boring. Because it was whatever, Christian school me just like, torn to shreds out of the gate. And so I'm like, this is boring. So, yeah, I definitely use my phone and I take Snapchats and stuff like that. But that time I was, like, full blown reading a book. So it's like, I'm so bored.

Cunningham

What are you typically doing on your phone when you're at the game?

Subject #4

I usually am just like, taking Snapchat videos for my memories and selfies with friends or just random people in the bleachers right next to me tend to end up in them. But yeah, for the most part I'm just like one night there was an amazing sunset. I'm a huge sunset person, so I have the perfect picture of the sunset over Forugh Field right as the stuff was going because they scored a

field goal or whatever, I don't know. So I have the best picture from that. But yeah, for the most part I'm not trying to socialize I'm not on social media for the sake of trying to connect with people. I'm normally just on it. If I am on it during the game, it's just to be on Snapchat so that I can be more in the moment of the people around me and capture those moments than it is for me to have something to do while I'm there.

Cunningham

That makes sense. Have you heard of NFTs or cryptocurrency before?

Subject #4

Yes.

Cunningham

What do you know about them?

Subject #4

I don't know much about them, to be honest. I know that everyone was like hyping it up and getting involved and crypto became a big deal. But then I thought that I heard that crypto was like almost a scam and that it tanked or something and that people lost money on it. So I don't know. I really don't know much.

Cunningham

Okay. Because what I initially thought of when I was thinking about my research topic was because you see a lot of crypto scams and NFTs online and I sort of thought there's got to be more to this and the idea of digital ownership. Is there any way sports marketing people or strategic communication professionals can make it instead of a cheap investment opportunity? Can they make it like a lasting memory for a sports fan as a promotional tool? Almost. You get a digital trading card when you go to the game, not to invest in or make money, but just to have for your own memory instead of maybe a T shirt or a bobblehead.

Subject #4

I feel like I don't know enough that I feel like I can't fully speak to the value of that and if people would be interested in it, but before you explained it more. And I'm just thinking in terms of stock and having some sort of way of being invested in them long term like that. I think the idea of being invested long term would get a lot of people interested. Because if you think about it, there's people from all walks of life, all generations showing up to honor and participate with Mizzou on their sports and stuff. So I think there could be an appeal in that aspect. And I think if it was a stock, which is what I thought the direction you were going was, I think there would definitely be people interested in that. But I don't know enough about the crypto or whatever you

just said to even know if people would per se be interested in that. But I think anything that would be long term. Yes.

Cunningham

Okay. That's a different answer than what I've usually gotten. Like I said, I'm not like a crypto bro, I'm not an investor. I'm just looking for ways to get people into a stadium, and you've talked about making memories with your friends and that's sort of what I was going down the path of instead of a get rich quick scheme or whatever.

Subject #4

Yeah, I could see there being like a few older men type that graduated from here that would maybe want to stock, but I think for the most part, people would just want to be invested long term in Mizzou because they already are. I mean, they're showing up, they have their spot for homecoming to park. They got everything laid out. They have the routine. So I think there's something there as far as, like a long term way, a long term incentive to kind of celebrate and honor, that would attract especially the older generation.

Cunningham

That was very insightful, that answer. What would you say to somebody on the fence about attending a game to get them to come with you? You mentioned that you don't want to go without your friends. How would you convince your friends to go to a game?

Subject #4

I think I would just pressure my friends and be like, listen, you got to make memories. You can't just miss out on this because it's such a big part of Mizzou's identity, is sports. So I think I would just motivate my friends by saying, listen, you have to go at least once if they haven't gone. But I think if I'm being more specific, I would probably just say, listen, it'll be a lot of fun. We'll get to be in the student section with everyone and cheer and celebrate all together in solidarity, basically get some food, I don't know, just have fun watching it. If I was talking specifically about basketball, I would say you don't realize how entertaining it'll be until you're there. And I think sports in general, that's kind of a rule of thumb, is like it's more like, I think baseball is boring as hell to watch on TV, but if you're there in person, you can get into it because you're like a part of it. Basketball, I don't think that's the case at all. I could watch basketball on TV the same way that I could watch ice hockey on TV because it's so fast paced and there's not necessarily heavy body contact in basketball, but it's not like they're avoiding each other. It's just that they're not necessarily going to tackle the same way that they would in football. But I think it's entertaining because it's so fast paced, it has an easy turnover. So I think I would probably speak to that aspect of it if I had to go in more detail. If they aren't as familiar, I'd be like, listen, I get with football that you feel like you're standing there forever and it's exhausting and it's like the sun, but in basketball, you're indoors and it's loud and it's fun, but it's like, fast paced, so it'll actually be entertaining. And it's not a complex sport. It's pretty easy to figure out. Okay, three

points, two points in or out? There's really no complexity with it that's making it hard to understand and hard to follow and engage with.

Cunningham

That's a very nice answer. I appreciate that. Is there anything I may have forgotten to ask or anything you'd like to share that you think would add any value whatsoever? It doesn't matter. Anything you just want to tell me?

Subject #4

Yeah, I think the only thing is I heard people recently talking about how just like the social awkwardness of not wanting to show up alone. I forgot what context this was in, but they were talking about freshmen specifically not wanting to show up alone. But I think that there's still a pressure that exists there. So I think part of what would help Mizzou with their sports and getting people engaged with them is to make sure that there's a way for groups, I guess, to make individuals more comfortable. But I don't really see that fully happening because I think you also have to be dedicated to the sport to show up. But yeah, I don't know. I was reading some article the other day about that and I thought of this interview because I knew that you would be talking about that stuff, but I can't remember what it said, so there's really no point in bringing it up. But yeah, I do think that that's a big thing. In general, though, it's just people feeling socially awkward and so not wanting to show up alone and so they'd rather just avoid it altogether when in reality they feel like they're missing out and like they could have fun showing up to these things.

So just a thought, but other than that, I don't think that there's anything else I could speak to. I think the only thing that I've been bummed about is like, I don't know, Twitter, I guess there's an Instagram I could probably follow, but for the most part I feel like I don't actually hear about our sporting events until they're just happening that day. And I'm always so annoyed. I mean, if it's like an email, I'm definitely not going to read that email, so I wouldn't want one. But if I somehow could even get like a text update or something, I don't know, I just thought that that would have been nice because then I could have planned ahead accordingly, but I just always kept missing out. So I guess I'm going to be showing up post grad to finally get the experience.

Cunningham

No, everything you brought up just now is really interesting just to read about. If you wanted to know, the last basketball game of the season is Saturday at 02:30 p.m..

Subject #4

This Saturday?

Cunningham

Saturday.

Subject #4

Oh my gosh. At 230. Okay, I may be out of town. I'm going to be so pissed if I have to. My cat is like, I think my cat's dying. So it's like I got to see Jasper before he kicks the can.

Cunningham

It's kind of sad, but sorry to hear that.

Subject #4

Yeah, I know. It's so weird when you have a pet that's like leaving because they've been around for so long and you don't fully appreciate it. But anyway, thank you for telling me. 2:30. Okay, I may have to make a point to go to that.

Cunningham

I have no idea how to get tickets, but that's what I know.

Subject #4

Can I not just use my sports pass?

Cunningham

Oh, yeah, then that should work.

Subject #4

Okay, see, this is part of my complication with this crap is that I never know for sure because when they did the Ku thing, it was like, yeah, you can use your sports pass, but you have to show up multiple times for it to even count. And I'm like, well, why the hell am I paying \$180 or whatever it is for Sports Pass if you're not even going to accept it? So anyway, just my rant rants are perfectly welcome here. Anyway. Well, I'm glad I could help you out, even though I never go to any of them.

Cunningham

You don't even have to be like a number one fan or go to every single game just to help me out with my research. Everything you brought up was actually super helpful, so I appreciate that. And to say thank you, you'll be entered to a drawing to win a \$20 gift card. So at the end of my interview process, I will put everyone's name into a hat and I'll pull a name out and win a gift card of their choice.

Subject #4

Awesome. And I meant to I brought it up to my friends the other day, but I didn't formally be like, hey, would you be willing so I can talk to a couple of my friends, though? If you still need people to interview that actually did show up to the.

Cunningham

Game, that would be wonderful because I have a spreadsheet of like 80 people because I made it like an initial survey to get people and I've emailed basically like 75% of the list and I think I've gotten like five responses.

Subject #4

That's so funny. Yeah, well, I'm just thinking, like the one kid that showed up to my Bible study with the bucket hat or whatever, it was like a weird looking hat. It didn't match his outfit at all, but he was really into it. He'd probably be a good one to talk to. And then my roommate Haley, this was part of the FOMO, was that it was my roommate and one of my best friends that they kept going to all of the games. So I would get home late at night and then they would get home maybe just as late as me, if not a little bit later, and they just got back from the game and I'm like, oh, again, I get that I'm a Christian and I love Jesus, but this is, like, really starting to screw me over. But anyway, I can probably talk to them and get one of them at least, I'm sure.

Cunningham

Yeah, that'd be awesome. I can pass along the recruitment information in the little calendar link I sent you as well.

Subject #4

Yeah, send that to me again. I don't know why I lost the email. Look how crazy my hair looks right now. I think I lost the email where? Because I knew that I signed up for Tuesday, and leading up to this, I kept going. I have an obligation Tuesday. I'm like, I don't know what it is, but I know that there's something. And I tried checking my email, and I couldn't find anything. And then I realized I'm like, oh, it's with Patrick. And so I was, like, searching your name in my email, and there was zero record. All I had was, like, the calendar one where I could sign up for it, but it didn't send me an email of like, hey, you signed up for such and such time. Here's the link. So I was like, oh, no. That's why I was like, I got to make sure that I text him so that I know what time I have to get up for this thing, because I was going to sleep.

Cunningham

Thanks for that, because I don't know what it looks like on the other end. I've never used calendar before, so it's good that you told me about that for future interviews.

Subject #4

Yeah. All right, awesome.

Cunningham

That's all I got. I will end the recording now. Bye.

Interview 5

Cunningham

So if you could just give me your first and last name and spell them both out for me.

Subject #5

My name is Joseph Meiser. J-O-S-E-P-H-M-E-A-S-E-R. Or I also go by JJ, and that is just two J's.

Cunningham

And what year are you here at Mizzou?

Subject #5

I'm a sophomore.

Cunningham

Perfect. Simple question to start off with. What is your what is your favorite part of Mizzou?

Subject #5

My favorite part of Mizzou has got to be just athletics as a whole, going to sporting events, especially because as students, we get them for pretty cheap. Yeah, I would say athletic events.

Cunningham

What is your favorite Mizzou athletic event to go to, and why is that?

Subject #5

Football versus Georgia? No, I would say my favorite is probably football, just because I think football is just a really fun sport to watch in general. But obviously basketball is a close second.

Cunningham

On a scale of one to five, how much interest do you have in attending Mizzou men's basketball games? One being zero at all, and five being I would go to every single game if I was able to afford it.

Subject #5

Five, because I did go to every home game this year.

Cunningham

How many games was that, just out of curiosity?

Subject #5

Oh, God, how many games did I get the whole season? It must have been around, like, 15 games or something, right?

Cunningham

That sounds right.

Subject #5

That might be a little high, but yeah, around ten to 15 games, I would say.

Cunningham

Did you go to the home games during breaks?

Subject #5

I did not. I didn't go over winter break. I was out of town. That's true.

Cunningham

What was your favorite game?

Subject #5

Um, controversial one, but it's gotta be KU, even though we lost horribly. But, yeah, probably KU. The atmosphere is just unlike anything I've seen before.

Cunningham

What part of the atmosphere was memorable to you?

Subject #5

Oh, I just say just how packed that arena was. I think it makes the whole experience even better when every single seat is full. I say atmosphere very loosely because it was, like, a really good

atmosphere for, like, the first three minutes of the game, and then it kind of tied down a little bit, but before the game started, it was amazing.

Cunningham

What's the first thing you think of when I say the words in the Mizzou basketball?

Subject #5

Dennis Gates.

Cunningham

Did you go to a lot of games last year as a freshman?

Subject #5

I went to no games last year.

Cunningham

Why the shift?

Subject #5

Dennis Gates, I would say, just offered a lot of excitement for Mizzou basketball. And I think back with Cuonzo Martin, I didn't really pay attention to basketball that much. I wasn't as interested in it as I was football. But I think when they hired Dennis Gates is when I started to actually pay attention to Mizzou basketball just because it was something else to do.

Cunningham

Did you watch the games from home last year or anything like that?

Subject #5

Did you just not follow I just didn't follow it at all.

Cunningham

Do you have what's it the student pass this year?

Subject #5

Yeah, the all sports pass. Yeah. And I had that last year, too, which is surprising that I never even went to a basketball game, but last year I mainly used it on, like, football and softball, I would say, in wrestling.

Cunningham

So you had tickets, but you chose not to go.

Subject #5

Yeah.

Cunningham

Why do you typically go to the basketball games this year, or why did.

Subject #5

Well, for the first half of the year, I was actually shooting for Mizzou athletics and that was mainly why I was going, was to shoot video. And I think just through doing that, I just fell in love with the environment, and I really liked the team, and I think the players are really the players are cool guys to follow, and I care about what happens in their lives, so I just wanted to see them win.

Cunningham

I didn't realize you shot for Mizzou athletics. That's pretty cool.

Subject #5

I did. I don't anymore, but for the first half of the season,

Cunningham

I work for the broadcast department.

Subject #5

Yeah. Are you on camera, or what do you do?

Cunningham

I do mostly camera, but the last couple games, I was in the control room, so I was in the control room for the KU game and actually located underneath the student section so we could hear everything going on. It was crazy.

Subject #5

Yeah, I bet. I was shooting video for the KU game, which was really cool.

Cunningham

That's pretty neat. By the way, this isn't for the athletic department. This is purely just to graduate. I'm technically an employee. Yeah. What incentives from the athletic department interest you? Like free merchandise, free food, giveaways, et cetera?

Subject #5

The mini stadium that they did for women's basketball really incentivized me, even though I was not able to make it to that game. I really wanted to get one of those mini stadiums. I thought those were really cool. And shirts, I feel like well, the bucket hats the bucket hats were really cool. I don't even know if they've done. I've seen, like, when they throw the T shirts into the student section. I've seen some of those shirts, and they look pretty cool, and I've always wanted to get one of those. But I'd say my top two incentives were the bucket hats and the mini stadium.

Cunningham

I think the bucket hat was the Mississippi State game. Did you go to that one?

Subject #5

I did, but I didn't get a bucket hat. I was very sad. My roommate got one, but I was too late to get one.

Cunningham

And you said you liked the mini arena. Why weren't you able to go to that game? Or why didn't you?

Subject #5

I think I had to go shoot for something or, like, class or something. I don't really know what got in the way, but I had something going on that evening.

Cunningham

Do you build your schedule around going to Mizzou men's games, or do they just have to work out just fine?

Subject #5

I would say just when it works out, me and my roommate are very last minute people, so if he's just like, hey, do you want to go to this game tonight? I'll be like, oh, yeah, I got nothing on my schedule. We'll go. I don't really think I rarely plan in advance unless it's like I think the wrestling meets just because there's so few of them, those are the ones that will actually block out time. But there's so many basketball games that if it works out, I'll go pretty much.

Cunningham

What are you doing when you're not going to a basketball game?

Subject #5

Well, honestly, sometimes it's just like hanging out with my girlfriend because she's not a sports fan, and if I don't have anyone to go with me, she won't go with me. She doesn't have an all sports pass, so I'll just hang out with her, or I'm just working, doing something else, shooting for something else.

Cunningham

Are you and your girlfriend watching the game when you guys aren't going?

Subject #5

I'm watching it. She's not watching it. She's doing her own thing. But yeah, I'll pull it up on my computer and watch it.

Cunningham

You said you'd like to go with friends. Do you ever go by yourself?

Subject #5

I think I showed up to one game by myself, actually, and just kind of sat there and watched it. But it was just like, I feel like I just went to one game, but for the most part, if I don't have anyone to go with me, I probably won't go. Just go do something else.

Cunningham

How many friends do you typically go with?

Subject #5

One to three. I've never gone with a big group. I have my roommate who I go with and then one of our friends, and that's kind of it most of the time.

Cunningham

Have you guys ever just decided to be like, no, let's go watch the game at a bar, or let's watch it at home, or whatever?

Subject #5

If we're all free, we always go, yeah.

Cunningham

Do you use your phone when you're at the game for any reason?

Subject #5

No. I know they want me to do the light show, but it just never works.

Cunningham

Are you on it during half time or during breaks or anything like that? Are you chatting with your friends?

Subject #5

Not really. I don't have social media, so there's not too much for me to check up on. I guess I'll answer a couple of text messages, but for the most part, I actually enjoy some to most of the halftime shows. But yeah, I'll just kind of sit there and look at the environment and see what's going on.

Cunningham

What's your favorite halftime show?

Subject #5

Oh, my God. It's got to be that dog that ran up on the guy's feet while he was upside down. That was probably or the baby race that they did at the Ole Miss game. Yeah.

Cunningham

So I've heard from people that you have very difficult time getting even cell phone service in the arena. Is that a common thing for you?

Subject #5

I would say more with football. I noticed that I never would really stream anything while I was in the stadium. But I've been on phone calls and I've texted people and I don't really necessarily notice a difference too much in the stadium, in the basketball arena. But the football stadium is a different story.

Cunningham

What's your experience with the Internet in the football stadium?

Subject #5

It just never works. You can't even get a call off with someone at the Georgia game. I couldn't even send a text message. There's just so many people there.

Cunningham

Have you heard of NFTs or cryptocurrencies or anything like that before? And what do you have?

Subject #5

NFT is a non fungible token and they were sort of used as like a hype thing to trade and make money off of. Did you ask about cryptocurrency or tokens? I know that NFTs and tokens could also be used for more logistical reasons. Like the main thing that I think about is like ticket sales or something. You can use non fungible tokens to make sure no one is transferring tickets and stuff. But besides that, mainly I've just heard what's it called, the board ape thing.

Cunningham

You seem to know a fair amount.

Subject #5

About them a little bit just through the news and everything.

Cunningham

Yeah, you even mentioned like, ticketing sales. That seems like pretty deep stuff.

Subject #5

That was a shot in the dark. That was just something that I like. When you think about a nonfungible token like cryptocurrency, I don't think they were created as a way to make money. Like cryptocurrency wasn't created as this way. Buy early and make money over time. So I think it serves much more use in a logistical format rather than this hype beast. Buy it and let it appreciate sort of thing.

Cunningham

It's funny that you mentioned that because that's sort of what I was thinking with this research. Is there to make it something like NFTs that seem to have a lot of utility in them. Can you make them something more than a common pump and dump scheme that people have been seeing? So my initial thought was, what about NFT promotional tools, digital trading cards, like little experiences or clips from big moments in the game that the fan could own. Not necessarily as like, oh, I can make money off of this, but just like I was there, that's my moment. I remember that forever.

Subject #5

I would actually go a different direction with it. I would suggest something the main thing that I think about is those food lockers that they have at the stadium, obviously at basketball and even more over at football when you actually use those things, you have to send a message to the locker to tell it to open up, to say that you're here. When I think that they could have you order your food and it sends you a non fungible token to your phone, and you can go up and scan that on the locker and that's how you open the locker. Because it's non fungible, it can't be duplicated and no one can rip it off of you and get your food. So something like that. Or ticketing. I mean, it seems like they have ticketing pretty much figured out. I don't know if there's any problems with people like making fake tickets somehow on the phone, but NFT definitely seem like a way to stop that from happening. Sorry about that. I don't know why I have a timer.

Cunningham

No problem whatsoever. How do you think an NFT promotional item would impact your experience?

Subject #5

I don't really think I would care too much. I definitely wouldn't spend any money on it because I just don't really see the benefit of having owning something on your phone. I don't really see that there's not really too much innate value in my eyes of owning a digital piece of something. I think it would be cool, but the most that you would ever do with it is just show your friends and be like, oh, look at this Kobe Brown trading card that I have, or something like that.

Cunningham

How would you convince somebody who's on the fence about going to a basketball game to come with you to the game?

Subject #5

It's a tough one because I've been doing that to my girlfriend this whole year, so I don't know if I'm the right guy to ask. But if they care about basketball, I mean, if they actually care about the sport, I think it's pretty easy for someone like my girlfriend who doesn't have an all sports pass. I would just be like, look, I will pay for your ticket. I'll buy you a ticket and you can come and just see if you like it. And then if you do like it next year, just get the all sports pass and we can go to a lot of games. But yeah, I think for most students at least, the main thing is if they don't have an all sports pass, I don't think they're going because it's easy. With all sports pass, it's basically free. I mean, you pay like \$100 begin, you forget about it, and then you can go to any game you want.

Cunningham

It seems like something like convenience is really important to you and ease what's something that could be improved and streamlined in your eyes?

Subject #5

Well, the parking situation. I live off campus, so I have to drive to the games or catch a ride with someone to the games. So I would say having a more streamlined parking situation where it doesn't take as long to get out and it's easy. Like the Truman Land Truman's Landing thing has been working pretty well. But I think they ought to have more buses going back and forth because they only have like two buses. So it takes especially after a game, you're waiting in that line for a long time to get onto that bus to go to Truman's Landing. So I would say the whole just the parking situation in general, I would say maybe even opening up taps so people could either park at Truman's Landing or taps and they got like five or six buses going between all two of those parking structures would just make it a lot faster. But that's with any sporting event, there's always going to be traffic afterwards and it's going to be annoying.

Cunningham

Like I said earlier, you seemed really informed and well knowledgeable about NFTs and cryptocurrency. Where have you gotten information from, just out of curiosity?

Subject #5

Probably the news, mainly from the news or like YouTube. Just all of the crazy shenanigans that have been going on, like the social media sphere around cryptocurrency is how I sort of learned about all of it. I've never messed around with buying cryptocurrency or NFTs or any of that. Also

my dad too, I just talked to him because he's 100% like a real estate guy. So I always joke with him like, oh, you got to get bitcoin, like it's going up. And he seems to know a lot just because he's got a master's in economics, so he's into that whole side of things.

Cunningham

What type of news are you reading and what YouTubers are you watching?

Subject #5

Oh God, this is a tough one. Put me on the spot here. News is anything I'm pretty bad. Even though I'm a journalism student, I'm bad with staying up to date with the news. I would say mainly my roommate. He follows New York Times and Wall Street Journal on Twitter and just kind of we end up talking about what's going on in the news a lot. As far as like YouTubers, it's not a specific YouTuber that I watch. It's mainly just like those people who do video essays talking about certain topics and I've probably watched a couple of video essays about board apes or whatever or bitcoin.

Cunningham

No, I was just curious where.

Subject #5

Yeah, I also just heard about the Logan Paul thing with his like I think he was trying to make a video game or something with NFTs, so I heard about that, but I never actually watched any of his videos about it or really what the idea was about it.

Cunningham

That's an interesting story. I would recommend watching, unrelated, the research coffee Zillow I've made like a three part YouTube series on I would recommend.

Subject #5

Watching that on the Logan Paul story. Okay, yeah, those are like the type of videos that I'll end up seeing every once in a while.

Cunningham

Is there anything I may have forgotten to ask that you'd like to share or think would add any value of research. It can be anything.

Subject #5

I did want to ask about the Hartford Whalers poster in the background because are you from Connecticut or something?

Cunningham

No, I'm from North Carolina. I don't know how you see that all the way in the corner.

Subject #5

It just kind of caught my eye because I drive my dad's old car and he went to Yukon, and there used to be this old Hartford Whaler sticker on the back. So it kind of caught my eye. What's the story behind that?

Cunningham

So I'm from North Carolina originally, and I'm a big Carolina Hurricanes fan. I'm a big hockey guy. And that poster is from one of their kind of pointed out on the camera. There we go. They wore, like, a Whalers jerseys to, like, one or two games a year, and they have, like, a big Whaler steam night. So everyone wears their jersey. They play the old Goal song. And that was one of the poster giveaways from it interesting.

Subject #5

Yeah. So why the whalers? I mean, I don't know too much.

Cunningham

About hockey, but oh, so the Carolina Hurricanes became, or were originally the Hartford Whalers.

Subject #5

Oh, I see.

Cunningham

In 1997, they moved from Hartford to Carolina.

Subject #5

And they became the Hurricanes. Interesting. That's cool. It's like my beloved Chargers. Yeah.

Cunningham

You're a big Chargers fan, Philip Rivers.

Subject #5

Always have been. Yeah. Sadly enough, I've spent 19 years of my life cheering for them. Never.

Cunningham

That's a rough one.

Subject #5

Yeah. But we're on the up and up, man. Justin Herbert is going to take us to the Super Bowl.

Cunningham

Are you primarily pro, or are you mostly college? Like is mazoo number one?

Subject #5

So that's an interesting story because I never followed I grew up in Broomfield, Colorado. I was born in California, but I grew up in Colorado. I was never a Broncos fan. I was always a Chargers fan, and I was like, pro for most of my life, I guess I went to a couple of CU Buffs games. But it wasn't until I came to Mizzou when I really started to get into college, and I would say, just after being here for two years, I'm 100% a college fan now, and that has to do with my team sucking. But, yeah, it's just fun. I just really like college. I like the traditions, mainly. I think they're really cool.

Cunningham

What kind of traditions at Mizzou do you like?

Subject #5

Oh, the Mizzou traditions. Mr. Brightside. I like the Big Mo thing. I think that's something that we have that's very unique to our school. And this new tradition with Truman from the rafters is pretty cool. I hope they keep doing that. I don't know if it's, like, totally draining their pockets, but yeah, Truman from the rafters is cool.

Cunningham

I have no idea how they afford that, but I know from deep down it's actually like a firefighter.

Subject #5

Who it's got to be? Yeah. Someone who's trained or something.

Cunningham

I see them walking up and down the court, like a couple of hours before the game and they're all up already and then they can switch them at the back.

Subject #5

Yeah, it's cool. I think the marketing team, I mean, obviously, I'm a little biased because I used to be a part of marketing in some way. I think they've done a pretty good job with promoting Mizzou basketball. I think there are things that could be done to make it even bigger, mainly like outreach and reaching a certain sector of the population, knowing who they're targeting with all their advertisements and understanding the mindset of a lot of the students to really get that arena, like, packed. And then also something that Dennis Gates has done really well is connected with locals in Columbia who aren't students. But I think that could be carried over with the marketing team and just doing stuff that's less social media focused and more based in the real world and getting to that population who are like the true fans of Mizzou, who live in Columbia, Missouri, who went to school here 50 years ago and getting them excited to come back to games. They have a large focus on growing the social media side of things. And that was sort of where I was at within athletics. But I definitely think they could target the older audience a little bit better.

Cunningham

You also said that they could do better at understanding the mindset of the students. What do you mean by that?

Subject #5

Yeah, well, I think of people like my girlfriend and her roommates who have no want or no interest in really going to a Mizzou basketball game. And I get that most of that is just because they don't have an all sports pass, but I don't know how I mean, I'm not a Strat-Comm student, so I don't really know how they would target that sector of the population who are a little interested in sports but don't really care about the sports aspect. More of the social aspect of going to a basketball game. But I think ticket sales would increase if they found a way to really target that sector.

Cunningham

You think events like a basketball game, do you think of it as like a social event? Like going out with your friends?

Subject #5

Yeah, definitely. I mean, like I said, I've been to one basketball game alone. I don't think I'd ever do it again. It was pretty boring going alone. It's much more fun doing the whole experience with your friends, for sure. I did want to add the whole the way you claim tickets this year with your all sports pass. I understand that that was like a Dennis Gates idea to sort of tally up points towards that KU game, but I think the actual act of claiming tickets was just so backwards and confusing on how you have to go to the certain link that was like, at the bottom of an email that they sent. So that definitely could have been approved on. I think if they just made it streamlined like all the other sports where you just go on your Mizzou Tigers app, they probably would have had a lot higher attendance because for some games, like the first few games, if I wasn't working, I just wouldn't really go because I couldn't figure out how to get a ticket. It's like, really confusing to find where you actually claim your tickets.

Cunningham

Can you explain the process that was supposed to be planned? I'm unfamiliar with it and then what actually happened and what should have happened.

Subject #5

So from my knowledge, and I'm not sure if this was 100% correct, but when Dennis Gates came in, the biggest thing was KU was coming to Mizzou this year. And that was sort of like their big focus for those first eight games, was getting ready for KU. Because we had a lot of smaller teams before Ku, so they implemented a point system where you would get points for going to games, right, but the way they had to tally up those points, they had to use a different link and a different website you had to go to claim your ticket. They couldn't just do the normal, like, go on your Mizzou Tigers app, find the game, and claim your ticket, because I guess there's no way to track how many tickets you've claimed and used. So they originally sent out an email that was just one of their promotional emails. And way at the bottom, like, you had to look through that whole email and at the bottom they said, claim your student tickets here. So that was for the first eight games. That was how you had to claim your tickets. You'd have to go to that email, go all the way to the bottom and claim it, and then you would gain points towards that KU game. And they were called like, priority points. So if you went to all eight games before KU, you'd have like, first pick on getting tickets towards Ku. So I just thought it was always just way too confusing to figure out that whole system, and they ended up doing it throughout the entire year. You had to find this link that was sort of like hidden and go to it to claim your ticket.

Cunningham

Even after the KU game?

Subject #5

Yeah, they continued it on, but I don't know if you've ever had an all sports pass, but with any other sport, even football, you just go on to the Mizzou Tigers app and you go to events and it says the Event, and you click "Claim your ticket," and then you add it to your apple wallet. But

for some reason, basketball was different and it was pretty confusing. I definitely think they would have had more students come if it was just like a normal basketball claim your ticket thing.

Cunningham

Did they still continue on the point system after Kansas? I don't know.

Subject #5

I don't think it was points anymore. You claimed your ticket the same way, but the points didn't add up towards anything else. I mean, it was just like a regular season after that, just with a weird way of claiming tickets.

Cunningham

What do you think about the theoretical idea of, oh, if I go to these games, I get better access to it?

Subject #5

Yeah, it was a great idea, and I could tell it was sort of an idea by the coaching staff. My intuition tells me it was an idea by the coaching staff that the marketing team just kind of fumbled. Like they had the right idea, but the execution wasn't really there by the design of the infrastructure, because theoretically it's a great idea because if they didn't do that, they would have had no fans at those early games and everyone would have just been waiting for the KU game. And I think it really helped it probably helped the team a lot to get to see the fans and the fans to get to know the players before that big KU game.

Cunningham

You said that you would struggle to get the app to work or the link to work and just wouldn't go. How did you get tickets to the KU game then?

Subject #5

I was working, so I didn't even have my ticket. I just used my press pass to get in.

Cunningham

Makes sense.

Subject #5

Yeah. But honestly, I probably wouldn't have been able to get tickets to the KU game if it wasn't for the fact that I was working, just because I couldn't figure out which website to go to. And then after the KU game, once I started to go more as a fan, I would just keep losing that email. I don't know, I would delete it or something when I wasn't paying attention. And then I'd have to get my roommate to text me the actual link that I'm supposed to use to get my tickets, and it was just all confusing.

Cunningham

I know this is strayed a lot and we're a little over 30 minutes, but that's all right. Anything else you want to add about?

Subject #5

No, that's kind of it. I really enjoyed this season, and the season helped me realize mainly that because I was part of marketing, they try to up the fan experience so much, and they put a lot of work into it. But the only way you up your fan engagement and the amount of people actually coming to your games is just by having a good team. Like when the team's winning, everyone wants to be there. That's the number one way that you increase fan involvement. You can do fun stuff like Truman from the rafters and having good music and having giveaways, but at the end of the day, no one's going to show up if your team is losing game after game after game. Like last year, no one was going.

Cunningham

To those games just for. Disclosure. Are you still working with marketing, or did you leave?

Subject #5

No, I left. I actually work with Gary Pinkle now, so I just got a new job.

Cunningham

That's pretty cool.

Subject #5

It's cool. Yeah. He's a great guy.

Cunningham

All right, well, that's all I got. I appreciate you. It's been a major help.

Subject #5

Thank you.

Cunningham

I'll put you in a drawing to win a \$20 gift card of your choice.

Subject #5

Awesome.

Cunningham

So, at the end of my interview process, which hopefully will be done by the end of next week, I'll pull a name out of a hat, and if it's you, I'll send you an email and I'll ask you where you want your gift card.

Subject #5

Sounds good, man. Well, I appreciate or good luck, really, with graduating and everything. I know it's a stressful time, so good luck.

Cunningham

Thank you so much.

Interview #6

Cunningham

So if you could just tell me your first and last name and spell both of them out for me.

Subject #6

Yes. Olivia Holler. O-L-I-V-I-A H-O-L-L-E-R

Cunningham

And what year are you here at Mizzou?

Subject #6

I'm a senior.

Cunningham

Perfect. So, simple question to start. What's your favorite part of Mizzou and why?

Subject #6

Okay, so I would definitely say the atmosphere, just because I came from a smaller high school, so it really didn't have much of an atmosphere, but then I came to Mizzou, oh, my gosh, there's so many people, and there's so many different aspects of college that really just made it.

Cunningham

What do you mean by the atmosphere?

Subject #6

Just the people, the activities, the professors, all the above.

Cunningham

Do you go to Mizzou athletic events as a fan?

Subject #6

So I don't because some of the events aren't accessible.

Cunningham

What events are not accessible to you?

Subject #6

Football games. The aisle to get to the accessible spot is, like, super narrow, and then you're not in the student section, you're above the band, and that's not very enjoyable to me. So I kind of feel like, excluded, I guess, from those things, and I don't feel like I'm a part of something when I should be. And then the basketball games, I just haven't gone long on the trek to the Mizzou Arena.

Cunningham

On a scale of one to five, how interested would you be at attending a game at Mizzou Arena? Men's basketball game, with one being no interest at all, and five being I would go to every game if I could afford tickets.

Subject #6

Probably like a three.

Cunningham

Have you been to any event basketball games here?

Subject #6

I don't think so.

Cunningham

Do you watch them on television?

Subject #6

A little. Not that much, but a little bit.

Cunningham

Do you watch by yourself, or do you watch with friends, or do you go out to a bar and maybe.

Subject #6

Watch it with friends. And then I go out to a bar and watch it. It's more like a social thing.

Cunningham

More of a social thing. What else do you do when you're hanging out with your friends, watching the game?

Subject #6

Just drink, eat food. I don't know, just all that fun stuff.

Cunningham

Are you typically on your phone when you're watching the game?

Subject #6

Yeah, probably.

Cunningham

What are you doing on your phone during the game?

Subject #6

Probably just scrolling through Instagram or, like, TikTok or just something to multitask, I guess, while watching the game.

Cunningham

Are you maybe on a social media fan page or something like that during the games?

Subject #6

I don't think so. It's just random, like, oh, I'm liking my friend's post, or just Tiktoks or something like that.

Cunningham

Is accessibility the only reason why you don't go to the Mizzou basketball games?

Subject #6

Yes. I would just say I feel like it probably would be the similar situation to the football game where it probably wouldn't be as included as everybody else, just as far as where the accessible spots are and things like that. If that makes sense.

Cunningham

Have you talked to somebody about that? Have you tried to ask them, like, hey, what's the handicap accessibility like?

Subject #6

Yes. So, I actually had talked with somebody about it freshman year for the football thing, and they're like, yeah, the stadium is like an old stadium. There's really not much we can do for that. And the thing is too, I don't know if I was just going in the wrong way or what it was, but there was a lot of miscommunication between staff and just on where the student accessibility thoughts were. So I don't know if they were just like I don't know, it just was very frustrating to me, especially being a freshman and wanting to go to games and stuff like that. It just was like, why don't you know where your spots are and stuff? It's kind of ignorant a little bit.

Cunningham

How do you typically hear about when games are?

Subject #6

Probably through my friends or just either on sometimes social media.

Cunningham

What social media pages are you following?

Subject #6

I get that information from Twitter and Instagram.

Cunningham

Have you heard of NFTs or cryptocurrency? And if so, what do you know about it? What experiences do you know?

Subject #6

So I've heard about cryptocurrency. I really don't know much about it, but my uncle talks about it all the time and so he's like, you should invest in cryptocurrency. This is like the greatest thing ever. And I'm like, oh my gosh, I don't even know what it is.

Cunningham

Okay, that's interesting. What about NFTs? They're a little bit different, but I'm wondering if you've ever heard of them. Okay, so the basis of my project that I'm looking at is turning NFTs, which can be easily explained as like a digital trading card. Almost a lot of people are currently using it for investment purposes to try to make money. But I was looking at it as more of a personal keepsake. Not investing it, but, like, you walk into a game and maybe you scan your phone in and it's used as, like, a promotional item instead of maybe a free hat, you get a digital card of your favorite Mizzou basketball player or maybe get a little clip of a big shot from the game before.

Subject #6

That's cool. I think that would be a good idea.

Cunningham

What about that would be a good idea? Just out of curiosity.

Subject #6

I think just the aspect of having a keepsake just to have a memory of the game or have a memory of your favorite player or something. I think that would be cool because I'm a very sentimental person where I'm just like, oh, I'll be on my phone, I'll just look through old pictures or something and I'm like, remember that time? I think that's probably why I would find it interesting.

Cunningham

It seems like there's a little bit of connection there with being on your phone during the games and maybe having something on your phone to remember or show your friends when you're watching the game for maybe the next week or whatever. What would make the overall fan experience of being a Mizzou basketball fan better for you in the arena or outside of the arena?

Subject #6

Probably just maybe a little bit more promotion, because I feel like I really don't hear about it unless I'm with my friends. I'm not really a big basketball fan as it is, so I rarely really pay attention to it. But if I do, it's like, oh, I'll hear about it from my friend, I won't really see it. It's hard to see sometimes on social media. You have to really be looking for it, I guess. So maybe it's a little bit more promotion.

Cunningham

What do you think would be the best way to get that information to somebody like you?

Subject #6

I think paid ads, sponsored ads on social media. I do see their stuff, but I don't see it, I think, often enough. I mean, even like a creative, like, TikTok would be fun or just something that's more engaging than a graphic or something.

Cunningham

So something beyond just a picture that says "Game tonight" on social media?

Subject #6

Yes.

Cunningham

What's the first thing you think of when I say the words Mizzou Athletics?

Subject #6

Football. Black and gold, tigers. The student body just being active and supporting their team.

Cunningham

What's your favorite aspect of watching the games?

Subject #6

Probably just like the spirit of the spirit of the sorry. The spirit of the teams and just the spirit of the students and how supportive and excited they are.

Cunningham

When I asked you the question before, what you first thought of when I say Mizzou athletics? You instantly said football. Why football and not basketball if you don't attend either game?

Subject #6

I don't know. Maybe just cause I feel like football is kind of a little bit more popular in the sense of Mizzou. I know basketball has gotten a little bit more popular, especially this year, but I don't know, I just feel like everybody's so heavy on football. Eager.

Cunningham

You said that basketball may be getting a little bit of a bump in popularity. Why do you think that is?

Subject #6

Because we're a little bit better than we haven't in the past. So I feel like that's kind of like put a thing in the middle of it just because I've heard people getting argue about tickets and stuff about basketball games and I just don't think that ever has happened before. I feel like it's a little bit more of a thing now to go to basketball games. I don't know.

Cunningham

Have you found yourself watching more games with your friends than you have previously since you've never been to an actual basketball game here?

Subject #6

Yeah, I would say that I would probably be watching them a little bit more than I have in the past.

Cunningham

How many of you watch this year compared to previous years? Just a rough guess. You don't have to give me a specific number.

Subject #6

I would say I would probably used to watch one or two, and I was probably like four or five. I've watched.

Cunningham

That is all. Interesting. And just to confirm, you may have said this before. You haven't been to a game here at Mizzou before, and that's because of accessibility reasons.

Subject #6

Yeah. Really, I just think more if it's just because it is a long trek for me to go from the downtown to the Mizzou Arena. I haven't tried. I probably should, but ever since the football game thing, I just haven't really I was like, I just don't have any interest to go.

Cunningham

That totally makes sense. I just wanted to make sure I reported on that properly. What would you say to somebody so you're going to go watch the game with your friends at a bar or at someone's home, and you have a friend who may be a little apprehensive on coming to watch the game with you. What would you say to them to get them to come with you to watch the game?

Subject #6

I'd be like, there's free food, there's drinks, it will be fun. I don't know, just something stupid just to be like, get over here and hang out with us and just have a good time. Watch the game with us.

Cunningham

It is there anything I may have forgotten to ask you that you'd like to share or do you have anything at all that you think would even potentially add to my research?

Subject #6

I don't think so.

Cunningham

Well, if that's all of you, that's all you have? That's all I have. I will go ahead and stop the recordings now.

Interview 7:**Cunningham**

So, Jared, if you could just tell me your first and last name and spell both of them out for me.

Subject #7

Sure. My name is Jared Rubenstein. J-A-R-E-D. Rubenstein. R-U-B-E-N-S-T-E-I-N.

Cunningham

And what year are you here at Mizzou?

Subject #7

I'm a sophomore.

Cunningham

Perfect. So it's very simple question to start out with first. What is your favorite part of the zoo? It can be anything.

Subject #7

Oh, favorite part of Mizzou? It's either the J school because there are just so many opportunities, like MBO, KOMU, all that stuff, or the campus. I really love the campus here.

Cunningham

What's your favorite part of the campus?

Subject #7

I just like how walkable it is. It's really short. I don't have a car here. It's really small. It's all contained in like one square mile, they say. And it's all flat, but there's the quad. It's all green too. All that fun stuff.

Cunningham

You appreciate good urban planning, I can tell.

Subject #7

I do appreciate good urban planning. You're so right.

Cunningham

How many Mizzou Athletic events do you go to as a fan? What do you go to?

Subject #7

Last semester I went to last year I went to a lot more since I had the all sports pass. This semester. I've been to a few football games, but mostly tailgates. And then for basketball, I've been to two basketball games, once with friends and then once with my dad because he was up here.

Cunningham

What basketball games did you go to, out of curiosity? If you can't remember.

Subject #7

I think it was Arkansas and then Ole Miss.

Cunningham

What was your most memorable experience? The one with your friends or the one with your father?

Subject #7

My dad, because my friends really did not know what basketball how basketball worked. My dad does.

Cunningham

And which game was that, out of curiosity?

Subject #7

Which one did I go to with my dad? Ole Miss? The one on March 4.

Cunningham

Okay. Pretty recent.

Subject #7

Yes.

Cunningham

On a scale of one to ten, how much interest would you have in attending Mizzou basketball games in general? With one being no interest at all and five being I would attend every single game if I could afford it.

Subject #7

Did you say on a scale of. one to ten or one to ten to five?

Cunningham

One to five.

Subject #7

If I had the all sports pass, and even if I didn't, as long as I had people to go with, I would do it. So five.

Cunningham

Who do you typically go with?

Subject #7

Friends who enjoy basketball in the future. Like I said, I haven't really gone much this semester, but that's who I typically go with.

Cunningham

If you're not going to a game, do you typically hang out and watch the game with your friends?

Subject #7

Yeah, I'll watch the games if I'm not there.

Cunningham

And why do you go to men's basketball games? I know you work for MBO, so why do you spend your free time going to a basketball game? That would you typically be working at?

Subject #7

I think it's just really enjoyable being there. The environment. I love watching college basketball, and especially if I'm hanging out with friends who like basketball while doing so. It's just a really fun experience. And MBO, I just like the technical side of things, and I get to watch basketball while getting paid, so it's a win win.

Cunningham

What's your favorite part of college basketball? What makes it different from pros?

Subject #7

I have a team to root for, really. I don't really care about the NBA since I don't know, I've never really cared about many professional sports. I've always cared a lot more about college sports since they seem a lot more localized. And the fan base, like you're living with the fan base, whereas in the NBA, they're spread out across the entire country or whatever. But at college, it's fun to come together with people and root for the same team, if that makes sense. NBA also doesn't have March Madness, and March Madness is the best time of the year.

Cunningham

I would agree with that. March Madness. You said college basketball is a lot more localized. Where are you from originally?

Subject #7

I'm from Georgia.

Cunningham

Where in Georgia?

Subject #7

I'm from, like, 40 minutes north of Atlanta. Johns Creek, it's called.

Cunningham

Okay, yeah, I've heard of that. I'm from North Carolina.

Subject #7

Oh, cool.

Cunningham

We're both a little far from Kansas, aren't we?

Subject #7

A little bit, yeah. Chapel Hill denied my application, which is good, since that means I ended up here.

Cunningham

They denied me from grad school, too. The blue is too ugly anyways.

Subject #7

Yes. Who would wear that downtown?

Cunningham

Chapel Hill has got nothing on downtown Columbia.

Subject #7

It's absolutely not.

Cunningham

It's very mediocre. What was your favorite part about going to the basketball games?

Subject #7

I think it was just when I went with my dad. At least it's just the social interaction. Hang out with friends while watching the sport. We all enjoy watching when I go with friends, at least, but it's just really entertaining. It's different in most sports. In between most sports, there's a lot of waiting. Like in football, you have to wait for them to snap the ball. In baseball, you have to wait for the next pitch. Basketball is just constant back and forth, and that's a lot. Very entertaining. Hockey is similar.

Cunningham

Do you typically hang out on your phone? Do you look things up on the Internet? Are you on social media during the games?

Subject #7

I don't use social media much in general, so no. When they're playing, I'm watching the game, but in between the breaks, maybe I'll go on my phone just to see what else is going on or check text or whatever.

Cunningham

Why do you typically not go to every game that you're not working?

Subject #7

I don't have the sports pass, so tickets are expensive. And also I've had a very busy semester, so I haven't had as much time or as many people to go with. And it's more convenient for a lot of people to just come over to my apartment and watch the game on TV than buy tickets to the games.

Cunningham

Would you go to every game if you had the all sports pass, even without your friends?

Subject #7

I think so. I have several friends who have the all sports pass. It's also that if you're buying tickets and you don't have the all sports pass, you don't get in the student section. And being in the student section is a completely different experience than not being in the student section. So if I did have the all sports pass, I don't know about every game, but I would certainly go to a lot more than the two I did this semester.

Cunningham

Would you rather watch the game at home with your friends or be at the game in the student section by yourself?

Subject #7

Probably at home, to be honest, I think the social interaction really does it for me. But it also kind of depends on the team because if it's like Kansas, I'm going to go to the Kansas game. Whereas if it's like Mississippi or Ole Miss, I wouldn't have gone unless I went with someone else.

Cunningham

The Kansas game was pretty exciting, so I totally get that.

Subject #7

Yeah.

Cunningham

What were you doing at the Kansas game, out of curiosity?

Subject #7

I don't remember. I don't even remember when the Kansas game was. I was definitely watching it, but I think I don't remember what's happening at the Kansas game. When was the Kansas game?

Cunningham

I want to say November. Early December. It's totally cool if you don't remember.

Subject #7

Okay. If it was November, then yeah, I definitely wasn't. I didn't go to any games last semester. I think I just watched it at home just because my classes last semester were really busy.

Cunningham

Were there any incentives or promotions during the basketball game? The two basketball games you went to like free hats, discounted food or anything like that? Do you remember?

Subject #7

I don't, no. We didn't have great seats either time. I went the first time because my friends and I that was a last minute decision to go. And the second time, tickets were also super expensive for the Ole Miss game because the arena began to sell out. So we were kind of in nosebleed seats and we didn't really go get food during the game, so we were just up there most of the time.

Cunningham

You said that was a last minute decision. Walk me through what the process was like from I wasn't going to go to the game to I'm at the game and I'm having fun or whatever.

Subject #7

So the first time when I went with my friends, it was a new club I joined and they were making plans to go to the basketball game and I was like, okay, I'm in. And then the second time, my dad and I had been talking about it for a long time, but he forgot to get tickets, so it wasn't really a last minute decision, but the tickets were a last minute purchase.

Cunningham

Did your dad fly all the way from Florida, Georgia to Missouri to come see the basketball game?

Subject #7

He was actually in Minneapolis because he had a business thing going on, and then he just flew down here. So technically yeah.

Cunningham

Pretty convenient, though that's not from Minnesota here. So just as a disclaimer, I'm not a crypto bro. I don't believe in scams or anything like that. But I'm curious, you know, about NFTs and cryptocurrency, if anything at all.

Subject #7

I mean, I haven't really looked into them since I don't care, and I think they're all scams. That's about the extent of my knowledge.

Cunningham

I totally get that. A lot of my project is looking at maybe coming up with some way that it's not a rug pole or anything, not an investment per se, but having maybe a digital trading card of Kobe Brown dunking the basketball. Or that spinorama corner shot against Alabama and fans who attend that game maybe get that moment in some NFT form as a promotional tool compared to, like, a hat or a giveaway of some sort. More like a digital giveaway.

Subject #7

I'm not interested. And if this actually does get back to the Mizzou marketing team, please tell them not to pursue that. That would alienate so many of their consumers.

Cunningham

For disclaimer. This is not for marketing. This is purely okay. This is any of that. This is me just wondering.

Subject #7

Fair enough.

Cunningham

There's got to be some way to come up with some idea that uses that technology, because it's a technology that hasn't been used properly, in my opinion. So I was just thinking of a way that it could work, and there's.

Subject #7

And I'm sure there is. I just think the whole idea of NFT is stupid to begin with. Like, oh, I own something in the blockchain. Who cares? There's certainly an audience out there who does care, and maybe they'll buy the NFT. Maybe there is a small audience for that, but I would say majority of the audience would not be receptive to it.

Cunningham

You said it would alienate their fan base and their fans. What do you mean by that?

Subject #7

I don't think it would alienate them. I don't think people would stop coming to games, but I think people would be like, Why are you doing this? And it would probably lower people's opinions of the marketing team or whatever entity is doing that, but it wouldn't stop them from coming to games, I don't think, because they're not there for marketing. They're there for the game.

Cunningham

Do you think it matters if the team is good, out of curiosity, for people to attend?

Subject #7

Oh, absolutely. You could see that within the past few years, like, we had seven, eight sold out games within the last few months, whereas the past last year I don't know really anyone who went to a basketball game. I didn't go to a basketball game. So if the team is good, people are a lot more willing to go out and spend money and support them. And I think that's true for any sport, really.

Cunningham

What do you think would get you to go to a game if you were saying on a Saturday night, I have nothing to do, but I don't know what I'm going to do, and then you see it as a basketball game. What would convince you to go?

Subject #7

If the tickets were cheap enough and if the seats weren't nosebleed, and if I had other people going. If it were just me going by myself, I would probably have a whole several other things I'd

rather do instead of go to a basketball game and bad seats by myself. But if I'm going to be in the student if tickets are available for the student section. If they are available for the student section, even if I don't have friends going, I think I would do it if it was the student section. But especially if I had friends going and I said, oh, you should come to the game, I'd be like, yeah, I'll go to the game. I have nothing else going on. So it's really, again, about that social interaction. And student tickets just went so quickly this year because every game was sold out. So if I had student tickets, I would have gone to more, but I didn't.

Cunningham

It seems like the games are a lot more of a social event for you.

Subject #7

Yeah, I would say so. And again, it's just I don't want to go to a game by myself in nosebleed seats. If it's a student section, that's a different story. But if I'm going to be in nosebleed seats, I want to do it with other people.

Cunningham

That makes sense. How would you convince somebody who may be on the fence about attending a game to come with you to go.

Subject #7

On the fence about it quickly and easily? I actually don't know if they were on the fence about it, if they didn't have any other plans, I'd be like, Just come on, give it a try. See if you like it. Especially if tickets are cheapish or if we had student section tickets. I guess if they're on the fence about going to a game, they wouldn't have the all season sports pass. But I don't know. It's a good question. They were on the fence about it. I'd probably just ask them to try it. If they really weren't sure and they had nothing else going on, I'd be like, It'll be fun. Just come try it. If you don't like it, we can leave and we don't have to do it again or whatever, I guess.

Cunningham

Have you left at halftime or anything like that, like you mentioned?

Subject #7

No. And I don't think I would. I'd stay there for the whole game unless it's like a 40 point deficit and there's no real way you're coming back. There's just no shot, and everyone, including the players, have given up. Then. Yeah, I'll probably leave. But if you're down by 20 points, it's basketball. Anything can happen. So I'll stick it out for the whole time. But I have never left a sporting event early because the team was losing. Except maybe baseball, because baseball is that's different.

Cunningham

What Mizzou athletic events besides basketball, do you typically attend?

Subject #7

I went to football games last semester. My friend's parents host tailgates, so we would go there sometimes. I would go into the game, I wouldn't buy my own tickets because, again, I don't have the all season sports pass, but if they had extra tickets, I would go into the game with them. But other than that, not much. I usually get my Mizzou athletics dose from MBO.

Cunningham

I totally understand that. Were you in the student section for the football games?

Subject #7

I was not, no. Well, I was the first semester because I had the all season sports pass, and a few times last semester I did just because we snuck over there. But my friend usually has better tickets than the student section anyways, so no, not really. Sounds like the student section is a lot more fun to be in.

Cunningham

I've never been in the student section here at Mizzou but it looks pretty fun to be in.

Subject #7

It's very fun, especially if you're one of the types of people who likes I like yelling during sports events, and it's kind of awkward to yell in the middle of a bunch of silent people. But if you're in the student section, everyone's yelling. It's a lot more fun.

Cunningham

What's your favorite part about hanging out in the student section?

Subject #7

The energy. Especially if you're even without friends, everyone's reading for the same team, and everyone's there for the same reason, so it's just a lot more fun. In the student section, they're the ones especially at the museum basketball games, they're the ones leading the charge. They're the loudest in the building.

Cunningham

So the energy, what gets you the most energy? What gets you the most hyped up when you're at a sporting event? In the student section?

Subject #7

In the student section? Well, the student section as a whole will get hyped up based on the momentum of the game. Like if Kobe Dunks or whatever, everyone will erupt. And if we keep that momentum going, everything just gets progressively more and more hype. But just in general, the student section starts screaming. I'll start screaming, too. We're all cheering for the same team. It's a lot of fun.

Cunningham

Is there anything I may have forgotten to ask you that you would like to share or anything at all that you think would remotely add to this research?

Subject #7

I think they should make it more accessible for students. I think there should be a student discount if you're not in the student section for people who don't have the all season sports pass, especially if our basketball team stays as good as they are. Unless you have the all season sports pass, you're probably not going to make it into the student section. So either you need to expand the student section so more people can get in, or they need to have a student discount for tickets. Because I know I would go to more games if the tickets were cheaper, and it's just not as fair to the students who are here. I don't think that we have to pay the same price as people who don't live here.

Cunningham

Have you tried to go to a basketball game besides the two games you went to where you were just not able to go to?

Subject #7

There was one I think I looked at into going with a bunch of friends, but we all decided not to just because tickets were expensive and we had other things going on that we wanted to do instead.

Cunningham

What other things were those, out of curiosity?

Subject #7

Going out, getting dinner, hanging out afterwards. It was Friday night. Sure, you can imagine types of things.

Cunningham

I totally get that. That's all the questions I have. I'll go ahead and stop the recording.

Interview 8**Cunningham**

So, Joey, could you tell me your first and last name and spell them both out for me?

Subject #8

All right. My name is Joey Oberding. That's J-O-E-Y-O-L-B as in boy, E-R-D as in dog. I-N-G as in Gary.

Cunningham

Perfect. And what year are you here at Mizzou?

Subject #8

I am a sophomore here at the University of Missouri.

Cunningham

Perfect. So, simple question to start off with what's your favorite part of Mizzou and why is that?

Subject #8

My favorite part of Mizzou is probably the actual classes because I feel like I'm learning a lot here at Mizzou that I'm not able to learn at most other institutions and certainly most other public institutions. I feel like I have a big opportunity here, and I feel like every single day I come into class, I'm like, okay, I'm building my resume. Because when people look at the University of Missouri on a resume, that's a very good thing. People like that. So that's a big reason why I like this university.

Cunningham

What is your favorite thing to do for fun around campus?

Subject #8

My favorite thing to do for fun around campus is something I like to do, is not necessarily around campus, but just around the city of Columbia. I do like exploring the city, so once a week I'll try to go to a different local restaurant, try to see what it's like. I go with some friends. That's a nice little thing I like to do. Other than that, I like taking walks around campus, too. Obviously, right now the weather isn't fantastic, but generally, especially when it gets warmer, I do like to walk around campus, and I like to feel a bit very much. Yeah.

Cunningham

What's your favorite place to walk around campus? What's your favorite thing to see?

Subject #8

My favorite thing to see when I walk around campus is actually there's the spot by the Reynolds Journalism Institute. It's a really small spot, but it's sort of like a mini park. It has, like, a mini river. The river is not always running, but it's got, like, rocks there. And even though it doesn't exactly I don't exactly walk around there. Once in a while, I'll just sit on a bench and just chill for a little while, and I like that. I feel like I'm really tapping into my inner old man there when I do stuff like that, but I do like it, and it's a nice way for me to take a break from the grind of going to classes and all of that without just, like, sitting in my dorm room all day and doing nothing. Well, I'd be doing nothing regardless, but that's besides the point.

Cunningham

Is that the little pond by College Ave. On that little street corner that's, like, just tucked in, or am I thinking of something else?

Subject #8

I think you're thinking of something else. It's not a pond. It's like a creek.

Cunningham

I'll have to check that out.

Subject #8

Yeah, it's pretty cool. It's pretty cool.

Cunningham

Do you go to a lot of Mizzou athletic events as a fan? Are you a big sports fan here?

Subject #8

Well, I'm a big sports fan. I really am. For instance, 95% of my shirts that I own are sports shirts. However, that being said, I've never really taken a huge interest in Mizzou athletics specifically. I think the reason for it is because I'm not from Missouri, and I haven't lived around Mizzou athletics my entire life, so I just don't really pay. I guess the honest answer is I just don't care enough to pay as much attention. I watch a game on my laptop once in a while, especially basketball. I watched quite a few basketball games this season, but I don't go to the live events. I

think I went to one, maybe two basketball games last year. I've gone to two football games, and I think that's it. So there you go.

Cunningham

Did you go to any basketball games this year?

Subject #8

No, I didn't. Well, the only one that I did was the one that I worked, which was the old Miss game. You'd think that I'd want to go to more games this year considering they're in the NCAA Tournament this year, but no, I just didn't really have too much of an interest. Honestly, I didn't. Well, it kind of goes back to what I was saying before about I've not lived around Mizzou athletics, so I haven't really cared. But also the fact I was a freshman last year. I'm a sophomore now. I'm a little busier. I've been doing things with clubs. I try to keep myself relatively busy. And also I have an ongoing project, which sort of sort of hampers the ability to go to games, which is I try to watch a movie every single day, and I keep to that. So because of that, a lot of the time, it's like, okay, well, if I want to keep this arbitrary streak going, then maybe I can miss out on a game that I really wasn't going to care about anyways. I like the social. I like interacting with the crowd. I do like that a lot. Like I said, I am a sports fan. 95% of my shirts are sports shirts. But yeah, I just don't really care about Mizzou athletics specifically. That'll probably change by my senior year, but right now, sophomore March 2023, I don't really care that much.

Cunningham

Would it be possible for you to repeat what you just said? You cut out a little bit. You said you have an ongoing project, and then you cut back in when you said you have a streak or something.

Subject #8

Oh, my apologies. Yeah, I have an ongoing project where I try to watch a movie every single day, and I keep to that. I keep to that pretty well. So I've averaged so far through this year, a movie a day. Some days I miss one then I watch to the next day, just depending. But that takes up a good amount of my free time when I haven't already planned it out beforehand, hanging out with people and whatnot. And because of that, I don't really think about, okay, I want to go to a Mizzou basketball game, or anything like that. It's just really not on my radar, to be completely honest with you. A lot of the time, sometimes it will be I'll be like, Man, I really should go out and see a game more since I have the perfect opportunity right in front of me. But I think working now, we're doing what we do, it sort of is a replacement for that. I'm okay with that. I'm okay with that.

Cunningham

So on a scale of one to five, with one being zero interest whatsoever, and five being I would go to every single game, what would you put yourself as of being at?

Subject #8

I would probably put myself as a two. I think that'd be fair, because if average is three, the average fan, especially here on an SEC school's campus, I think is way higher than going to two games a year, which is me. So I think two is fair. I mean, once again, it's not like I don't care about the sport. I really do, but I usually pay attention more to pro levels of sports, NBA, NFL, what have you. But also my college team isn't Mizzou anyway, my college team for basketball is Xavier, because my dad went to well, he didn't go to Xavier, but, I mean, I'm from Cincinnati, and that's sort of like as a school I grew up rooting for football, it would probably be Cincinnati for the same reason. But it's mostly college basketball for me. That's the college sport I care the most about.

Cunningham

Let's talk about your two experiences last year, going to a Mizzou basketball game. What was the process like with that? Do you go by yourself? Do you go with friends? Whose idea was it? What you do during the game? Tell me that. Tell me your story.

Subject #8

Yeah, so last year I went to a game. I believe man, I really should have remembered this. I believe the game was against Colorado State. Colorado State was the game sorry. I think it was against Colorado State. I did not go by myself. I went with, I think, two friends. Two friends. And we were in the student section, and it was really an interesting experience because I did not know what to expect. I did not know what I've never been in the student section before, and when I was in there, I really did not realize how loud it was. And I guess it's kind of a stupid thing to think in hindsight. Of course it's going to be loud at the student section, but that wasn't really something that was too on my radar. So when I was there, it's like I really couldn't hear my friends over all the noise. And eventually, and this is to be completely honest, it was driving me up the wall because I could not pay attention to the game. And it doesn't help that I'm short, so I could barely see over people anyway, if I could at all. So I had to be doing that all game because I wasn't near the front because didn't get there super early. So eventually we just got out of the student section and we're like walking around the arena and I don't remember exactly where we found another spot. I didn't even know how we did it, to be honest. I think we just walked to some section, it was kind of high up and just sort of sort of watched from there the rest of the game and then left.

Cunningham

Were there any promotional events or any giveaways that you remember?

Subject #8

No, I don't. There is probably something, but I straight up just don't remember.

Cunningham

That's totally cool. You mentioned that you go and watch the games with your friends sometimes. What's that like? Tell me that.

Subject #8

It's pretty cool. I do like theoretically the novelty of going to a game by myself. I don't mind just taking in the game by myself, but also it's a lot harder to incentivize honestly myself to go to a game when there's not like somebody that's like, come on Joey, come on, let's go, let's go. Yeah, it's nice. It's nice to hang out with people and to have an excuse to do it.

Cunningham

Do you watch it in a dorm room? Do you watch it in a lounge? Do you go to a restaurant?

Subject #8

Almost all the time I just watch in my dorm room. One thing I like to do is similar to the movie thing, I try to listen to an album a day as well. So a lot of the times I'll put on a sporting event I'll have the commentary kind of low and then I'll just listen to an album at the same time. As I mentioned earlier, I like to keep myself busy. I like to do a bunch of different things. So the novelty of going into a restaurant and watching the game there or what have you, it's nice and I do it maybe once every few months and maybe I'll go with friends actually. I think always I go to go with friends actually thinking about it. But yeah, most of the time I just watch it in my dorm room for the reasons I just mentioned.

Cunningham

When you were at the games last year, when you're watching with your friends or watching by yourself in the dorm room, are you hanging out on your phone as well? You said you're listening to music, but are you like texting people? Are you on social media? Are you doing anything like that?

Subject #8

Yeah, I mean it's basically a lot of the time it's sort of the background noise, not to say I'm not paying attention to it, but I'm doing other things at the same time. I'm thinking, is this song good? Maybe I'll look at my phone. But normally, like, two things on a screen are enough to satisfy my attention. I like to think anyways. But yeah, sure, I'll glance at social media once in a while, especially if something crazy is happening during the game or something.

Cunningham

What do you mean by doing something crazy on social media?

Subject #8

Well, like, for instance, this is in college basketball, but there was this NBA game a few months ago between the Lakers and the Celtics where there was a missed foul call at the end of the game, and it was so egregious that I was like, I had to go to my phone, like, oh, what was that? What was that? And that's sort of what I mean. But that could also apply to any other thing, like say Mizzou's, either going on a run or dropping the ball. I mean, that's just an example. That was something I kind of threw out there. But I mean, it is true. I'll glance at Twitter if the game is interesting enough to be talked about on Twitter, that's my thought.

Cunningham

So you're using your social media during the game as like a conversation space, seeing what other people are saying. Are you adding?

Subject #8

I don't tend to post myself at all. I just like to see different people's thoughts on different things that are happening during the game or just happening in sports in general. I usually don't look at it when I'm watching sports because I like to take it in myself, but once in a while I will just to see what people are saying.

Cunningham

That's very insightful. I like that. What's the first thing you think of when I say Mizzou basketball?

Subject #8

Kobe Brown.

Cunningham

Why is that?

Subject #8

Because he's the best player. And I really think something that really happened recently is that he sort of embodied Mizzou basketball, and obviously that's going to change next year. But I think for now it's so funny because I feel like Kobe Brown has almost taken a life of his own. That feels weird to say considering he's a person, but I feel like he's really elevated himself to being

he's almost talked about more on campus than Mizzou basketball itself. He's an icon. He's a celebrity. So, yeah, the first thing that comes to my mind is him, for sure.

Cunningham

Do you follow Kobe Brown on social media?

Subject #8

I don't actually. I don't follow any of the Mizzou basketball players. Maybe I should, but I don't know what I'm missing, to be honest.

Cunningham

Do you follow, like, the team's Twitter? Do you get updates from apps or social media pages or anything like that?

Subject #8

Yeah, I follow the basketball Twitter. I used to follow the football Twitter, but it's kind of seasonal where it's like, okay, I don't need to see all the promotional stuff I don't need to see all the hype for next season Tweets or whatever. So usually I like going to following cycle where when the football season is starting to heat up, I'll refollow, then I'll unfollow when the basketball season is cooled off. But that's it. I just follow those two. I don't follow any other sports accounts or any Mizzou accounts in general, honestly.

Cunningham

You said you'll unfollow a page during the off season to avoid promotional posts. What do you mean?

Subject #8

Yeah, just stuff that I don't necessarily care about. If the football team is posting about, like, oh, check out this game from, I don't know, whenever. Look at how cool this play is. See you next year. It's like, okay, well, sure, that's a cool play, but this isn't teaching me anything. It's teaching me that I should be more excited for football. But as we learned, clearly, I didn't really take that information in. So it just really isn't something that I care to see, to be honest. I care more about seeing score updates and things like that and less about reminiscing on the season that we just saw and stuff like that.

Cunningham

How do you think you would be encouraged to go to a basketball game? What do you think would have to be said to you or on social media or be given to you or promoted to you?

Subject #8

That's an interesting question because I feel like I'm in a pretty unique position when it comes to people who don't go to the sporting events too much in the sense that I care about the sport. I watch the sport, I do, but I just watch a different team. So the question is basically, how can I care more about Mizzou athletics? And I guess that's the sort of thing where I have to sort of be honestly peer pressured into it. I love this theme of this team, and I feel like, to an extent, I'm in the process of that happening, going to the university, interacting with people who live and breathe Mizzou basketball every single day and Mizzou athletics. So I think that would be the best thing, I think in terms of something that specifically Mizzou made some good changes this past year for football especially where they allowed you to use your student money and things like that, which I thought was really cool. But obviously that didn't change how much I went to the game. So I think that's a really difficult question, and it's good that you're doing research on it because I think it's a valuable question. Because to be honest, I don't really think I have a great answer. I think the answer I would go for is if people wanted me to go, if people were like, hey, come to this, enough people pressured me into it. Because that's sort of what's happened in the past. But also, you can't really market a promotion around that unless you're like if you have a party of five or more people. You don't have to pay as much or something, but I don't know if that's a feasible thing to do.

Cunningham

Would group discounts interest you? Like I said, I'm not actually working for marketing, I'm just purely researching.

Subject #8

Yeah, I know. I think that would interest me a little more. But yeah, I think it's sort of interesting because since I'm a student okay, wait, let me restructure my thought process. I think the idea of group discounts is nice, but since being a student and going to a game is so communal anyways, I don't think the idea of a discount is as much of an incentive to most college students as it would be to say adults or kids and other people who don't go to Mizzou just because. Think about what I said with the student section. I mean, you've seen the student section. It's massive. I didn't even know how many people fit in that area. It's so big and so it's so communal and I feel like the community aspect of it is already such a big selling point. But I just think that me, personally, I'm in a sort of unique spot that most other students aren't in, in terms of loving the sport, but not really loving a lot of the I guess it would be I just didn't love the student section because I'm short and I didn't like all the noise and I wasn't expecting it. So there you go.

Cunningham

I totally get that as a fellow short person, the struggle is real sometimes.

Subject #8

Oh, my God, is it ever.

Cunningham

I'm just curious what you know about cryptocurrencies or NFTs. Like I said, I'm looking into how sports promotion, marketing people could maybe use something like a digital trading card. Not as an investment or anything like that. Sort of like NFTs are being used now, but more of like a personal keepsake item, something that you can have. Almost like a digital bobblehead. Almost.

Subject #8

Yeah. I know quite a bit about NFTs. Not because I care about them or think they're good or anything. In fact, it's more for the opposite. I'm pretty far against NFTs personally, but I do know quite a bit about them. I try to keep myself informed of what's going on in the world. And crypto is such a big thing over the past two or three years. I mean, you have the Crypto.com Center in LA. I think it's still called that. They might have changed it, but stuff like that. Crypto is everywhere. I mean, on NBA jerseys, you see crypto advertisements all the time, so I definitely keep myself informed of it. I know that it's kind of been it seems as if it's been dying off for the past year or so, but there are ways that I suppose that NFTs can be brought back into the mainstream.

Cunningham

You said you're pretty against NFTs. Why is that? What do you mean by that?

Subject #8

Well, I feel as if this is the whole can of worms, so I don't want to go too deep into it, but I think NFTs basically are just a giant Ponzi scheme. I think it's a giant Ponzi scheme. I think that it only benefits those who get into it at the top. It's basically a pyramid scheme in the end, because I feel as if it's like the person on top gets all the money. I think that it's the sort of thing where it's like at first it seemed cool. Back in 2014, when crypto was actually first starting, it seemed like, okay, this is a way so banks don't have to look at your money, and it's basically unmarketed. It's like a whole new form of currency. It's not regulated by inflation. These were all the arguments that was popping up, and it's 2014, so I was like eleven or twelve. So I was like, I don't really get it, but like, a new currency? That's wild. So I didn't really know much about it for many years until probably like four, three, four years ago when it started popping back up again, and I was like, cryptocurrency, this is still around. Wow. And then I learned more about it, and of course it just kept getting bigger and bigger, and at first I was like, okay, cool, there's a bunch of new, different currencies. But then basically I thought more about it, and I was like, okay, all these different cryptocurrencies are popping out. There are probably hundreds on the market right now. How many of those are being made specifically as, like, an alternate form of currency? And I was like, okay, let me think about that. Then I see all these celebrities, all these athletes, too, are promoting their own NFTs. Sorry, I'll repeat that. Since I cut out. Then I see all these athletes

and celebrities are promoting their own NFTs, and I read a lot about it online, and I start figuring out this isn't an alternate form of currency. It is, but what it is before that is a way to make money and a way to take advantage of people who want a different who don't want to have to rely on dollars and cents and things like that. And I think over time, things have sort of gotten worse in that department. I mean, it's not just cryptocurrency. It's NFTs as well. It's the Board Apes. It's the what have you. It's the slurp juice. I don't even know. There are so many different things. Here's the thing. There are so many different versions that it's like a cryptocurrency as an idea is like, okay, it's a currency. It's a currency. It's a singular currency that's different from the rest. And that was the original thing. When originally bitcoin started popping up in 2014, it was like, okay, here's this alternative form of money. It was fine when it was one, but now that it's a few hundred it's like, okay, they're all just setting out to try to make themselves some money. And the endorsements of celebrities and athletes, I think, only prove that a little more. In my personal opinion, when guys like Jake Paul and Steph Curry and Snoop Dogg are promoting their own NFT, promoting their own cryptocurrencies just to make a quick buck, basically, okay, I can stop there. But yes, that's a little bit of the can of worms being opened up. I hope that's good enough.

Cunningham

Have you heard about.. you seem well informed about cryptocurrency and pro sports. Have you heard about the Dallas Mavericks using NFTs as giveaway items? No, you cut out again.

Subject #8

Oh, I did not hear about that. I'm going to repeat that. Yeah, no, I did not hear about that. I know that NBA teams are very into crypto, NBA players especially, they all seem to have their own, like I think their agents get them into it. I read something about agents getting players into it because the idea is, okay, basically you can make some money off this. You'll be able to sort of build your image. And athletes are like, okay, cool. I don't know. Once again, it's a can of worms, so I won't go too deep into it. But it's really unfortunate how athletes get preyed upon to use NFTs to build their image because you look across sports, every athlete is doing it. Tom Brady did it. I mean, it's really interesting, this sort of dynamic between sports and NFTs we've seen. So I think this conversation is good. It's a good one to have and it's a good thing to do research on. I think it's valuable, for sure.

Cunningham

A lot of what you're talking about is NFTs is like an investment item, almost like a way to make money. I'm curious what your thought process would be or what your thoughts are on if Mizzou made a trading card of Kobe Brown. Not as a way to make money, but just be like, hey, 1st 5000 people in the game get a free digital trading card of Kobe brown's monster dunk on whoever.

Subject #8

Yeah, I don't know, because the thing about that is it's basically hold.

Cunningham

Oh, that's not good. I'm going to have to have you repeat that. (Referring to connectivity issues online)

Subject #8

My Internet going a little crazy.

Cunningham

That's totally cool. Take your time. I'm also in the control room, so it's like just a dark closet, so that might not be helping either.

Subject #8

Yeah, I'm relying on Tiger WiFi can be a little tough.

Cunningham

They're done that. All right. If you just want to restart your answer to that. All right, sounds like we're good now.

Subject #8

Yeah. So the question was about the Kobe Brown trading card, right? Yeah, I don't know about that. I don't know about the Kobe Brown trading card because I think that the idea of it not being an investment is a good one. But the thing is, things like cryptocurrency and things like NFTs and things like digital trading cards. They're exclusive and it's cool, but they're not really meant to just be something you get.

Cunningham

Can I get you to hold on for one second? I apologize for that. Walter came in the control room and I didn't want to interrupt him. If you could just continue your thought. As you were. I'm sorry about that.

Subject #8

Yeah, I think that a lot of the times, like NFTs and cryptocurrencies and digital trading cards, they're not bad ideas. There's nothing wrong with having something digital and getting something like that from a promotion. But at the same time, pretty much like it or not, they're designed to be investment items. They're designed to be resold and they're designed to basically be a form of investment. It's like having an actual limited to 5000 people trading card. If you had a card of say, I don't know, like Derek Jeter. That was like the first in 5000 people to enter

Yankee Stadium. Got that? You could keep that and you would value it and maybe even maybe treasure it. But you know that you would get more money for it if you resold it to someone who was a bit of a freak, shall we say? No, I'm kidding. But I think that's sort of the same thing, especially since it's digital, it's not like a holdable item. I feel like a lot of the intrinsic value of having a limited item like that is sort of lost. And that's sort of a thing I see with people who are into NFT especially, is that it's very much thing about you have your own item that's unique to you. And that's one of the things I think is cool about it, honestly. But at the same time, a lot of people are still looking at it as a way to make money. So I think if that did happen, if that was a promotion, I think that it would get a lot of flack and I think that it wouldn't be valued the same way that a lot of other promotional items would be. And I think that if that did happen, I think it wouldn't be a good look on the university because in a sense they would be sort of endorsing a specific investment, sort of saying, hey, this is how you should use your money. Because that's sort of the stigma, if nothing else, that NFTs have sort of gained at least from a lot of news websites and stuff like that that I see every day. So I don't think it'd be a great idea.

Cunningham

Who do you think would give them flack and why do you think they do so well?

Subject #8

I think people all over online, there are obviously circles of people who care about NFTs, but I think if you browse Twitter for 2 seconds, you'll see someone condemning NFTs. I think that honestly, the power that social media holds, you would think it would be a boon to something like a digital trading card. But honestly, I think it hurt it even more, especially with all these actual NFT scams where people will dump money into it and then just won't get anything back in return or stuff like that. That happens all the time. Since there were hundreds and hundreds of these. Even if just like five out of 200 are scams, think about how that's still such a high percentage for a business that's supposed to be thriving. It's still such a risk. And I think that they would get a lot of flack from that. They would certainly get flak from me, to be honest. I'm not a poster, but I would say to my friends, did you hear about this, what they did? I can't believe they actually went through and was like, hey, we'll give you NFTs. If I'd known that about the mavericks as well, I probably will tell people about that. Because that's the sort of thing where it's like, look at this digital age we're in and look at the benefits of it. But also, why is Mizzou giving out something that's essentially, since it's an investment, it's essentially an item to be gambled with, in a sense, because it's something meant to be resold. Very much so. And it's meant to be held on to. It's basically like, okay, it's betting with digital trading cards. It's betting that this item will gain value over time or this item will lose value. And obviously, that's sort of like a very general way to look at it, or, I don't know, weird way to look at it. But it's something I see often, and it's something that I honestly think it's like, okay, well, it's not betting, it's not gambling, but at the same time, it's akin to it, right? It's not totally off from it. And that's sort of why I'm not for it, to be honest. Because I think that something that we see a lot with sports nowadays is they get more and more into gambling now that it's legal in a lot of states, and it's all sports shows talk about it's what's the line? Should you bet on this player passing over 300 yards? Or how many points will Nikola Jokic get today? Stuff like that. And I think the more and more sports go down that road,

it may be more profitable for them, but I don't think it's good to garner actual fans of sports and teams. I don't mean to keep opening up the can of worms, but I can't help myself rambling about these topics. My apologies.

Cunningham

No, that's totally cool. Like I said, I'm doing market research, and I'm looking into what Mizzou students think about attending the games, why they may or may not go, and then if they have any knowledge of cryptocurrency or NFTs like you do, obviously, what their thoughts were on that. So you've been incredibly helpful.

Subject #8

I will say really quickly, I'm obviously against them, but I think at this school, specifically. I think it could actually work. I do think enough people at this university care about NFTs and crypto especially. Honestly, like, frat bros seem to be, like, into it. So I think that, honestly, there's a market there. I am not personally in that market, but I think Mizzou could do something potentially there. It just wouldn't appeal to me whatsoever.

Cunningham

Who do you think would that market be?

Subject #8

Like frat bros. Not to stereotype, but I've been around the block for a few years now, and the people the people who want to bring up entities in conversation and want to talk about crypto are often stereotypes of themselves, to put it bluntly. So that would be my thought. I mean, obviously not everybody's going to share their interest in such a matter, but that's sort of what I've seen. Personally.

Cunningham

I appreciate your time. You've been probably our most insightful interview I've done, so I appreciate that. Is there anything you'd like to add that I may have forgotten to ask or something that you think would add value to this interview?

Subject #8

Um, I don't think so. I think I basically covered every if you need sort of not rambling. Yeah.

Cunningham

All right. Looks like you're back. Maybe.

Subject #8

Yeah. Well, we're working with two not amazing Internet connections. It's okay. Yeah. I don't have anything more to say.

Cunningham

As a way to say thank you. I'm going to enter you for a \$20 gift card raffle. When I'm done, probably by the end of this week with my interviews, I'll pull a name out of a hat and if it's yours, I'll reach out and I'll ask you where you want your gift card to. And I have one last request. If you know anybody who would be down to chat for a few minutes about this conversation, if you could send me their information or pass along that link I sent you, I would greatly appreciate that. I need one or two more and that would be incredibly helpful as well.

Subject #8

Okay. I'll try to look into that. Talk a lot about the subject.

Cunningham

We were so close.

Subject #8

Figure that out fixed. Oh, yeah. If I find somebody, I want somebody that can act.

Cunningham

Yeah, I'll look for I appreciate that, Joey. That's all I got, so thank you so much. I'm going to go ahead and stop the recordings now.

Subject #8

All right.

Interview 9**Cunningham**

Okay, so could you tell me your first and last name and spell both of them out for me?

Subject #9

Okay, my first and last name is Drew Hayes. That is D-R-E-W H-A-Y-S

Cunningham

Perfect. And what year are you here at Mizzou?

Subject #9

I'm a third year junior here at Mizzou.

Cunningham

Awesome. And now, very easy question to start off with. What's your favorite part of Mizzou and why?

Subject #9

My favorite part of Mizzou I think, would have to be just the sports and athletic department as a whole. I think I've enjoyed and have some of my best memories attending all sorts of different games, whether that be volleyball or football or basketball. I think I've grown up liking sports, and I think Mizzou has a really good foundation for just being able to enjoy sports. Yeah, I think that's my favorite part.

Cunningham

What's your favorite athletic event to go to and why?

Subject #9

I think my favorite athletic event to go to is volleyball. I grew up playing volleyball. My mom was an avid volleyball player, and so I just have a lot more respect and love for the game than any other sport, so that's probably my favorite sport to watch.

Cunningham

How many sporting events do you go to on average in a year? You can take a rough guess, too. Well, it's totally okay.

Subject #9

Probably like 30-ish. I'd say maybe just attending on my own. Probably 20 to 30.

Cunningham

On a scale of one to five, how much interest do you have in attending Mizzou men's basketball games, with one being no interest at all and five being that you would go to every single game if you are able to afford it?

Subject #9

Five. I would love to have the time and the money to be able to just go and sit and watch basketball all the time every time we have a home game. That would be ideal.

Cunningham

I've heard a lot about this all sports pass. Do you have one of those, out of curiosity?

Subject #9

I do not. The only reason that I do not have one is because of my internship, so I wouldn't be able to get the use out of it that way. For what it's worth.

Cunningham

Where do you intern it?

Subject #9

I intern at Mizzou broadcasting.

Cunningham

Also, I should probably make it clear this is not for the actual athletic department. This is literally just so I can graduate. I wanted to do something about sports marketing, and I just applied it to Mizzou basketball.

Subject #9

I just had a quick question. I'm just answering as, like, a student. You only not answer with a broadcast, like, what we do with the broadcast answer. I'm debating.

Cunningham

Answer however you feel like you should answer. There are no wrong answers, I promise.

Subject #9

Okay. Because I'm at most games because of Mizzou broadcast, but I attend other games. I'm not but I don't know how to calculate that. I don't know what really counts.

Cunningham

Do you go to a lot of games as a fan?

Subject #9

Yeah. Whenever I'm not doing Mizzou Broadcast, I try to attend all the games that I can, unless they're sold out, because basketball has been pretty sold out when I've tried to go to a game.

Cunningham

Why do you think that is?

Subject #9

I think we had a change in Mizzou Basketball this year. We got a new coach and we started really working really hard. And I think people started to enjoy that and enjoyed to see our team actually start doing a little bit better this year. And I think fans, as they started coming to more games, became more interested and enjoyed the atmosphere more and yeah, so I think we built an atmosphere this year around Mizzou basketball that's been a lot different than the past years.

Cunningham

What's the first thing you think of when I say the words Mizzou Basketball?

Subject #9

Awesome. I think it's really awesome. I think that it's exciting. I think it's nice for our school to finally come together and really show some Mizzou pride towards a team.

Cunningham

So when you're not broadcasting a game with Mizzou broadcast operations, you try to go to every single game. What do you do when you can't? Like, if they're sold out or whatever?

Subject #9

My roommates, actually we are all kind of have been really interested in football and basketball this year, so whenever we haven't been able to get to a game, we will watch it at home on TV, like the KU game. We fought tooth and nail trying to get tickets to the KU game and just no one would budge, no one wanted to give them up. So we sat in our living room and just watched it through ESPN.

Cunningham

Do you go with those same friends to the game when possible?

Subject #9

Oh, of course. I think that that's probably like my three roommates or more. So two of my roommates. We definitely try to go to everything together and see everything together.

Cunningham

If you had a ticket, but just for yourself, would you go by yourself?

Subject #9

That's really hard. I have a really hard time doing things alone, so I don't know if I would like the KU game. I think, yes, I would have, because that's just how could you pass that up? But other games I do just have a hard time trying to go by myself.

Cunningham

Tell me about one of the experiences at one of the basketball games, any of them.

Subject #9

One basketball game, I don't remember who we were playing, but it was one of the very first packed games. I remember that I had been to basketball games like my freshman and sophomore year, and it was fun going to a game and experiencing that. But this year I went to a game and the arena was packed. It was like rowdy. People were really into it. We watched Truman come down from the rafters and it was just one of those things you're like this is what it's like to go to an SEC school and a big school and that appreciates and loves sports. And I just thought it was one of those moments. I was like, yeah, this is pretty freaking cool. And the rest of the game was just filled with just everyone was into the game the entire time. I don't know. Yeah, I think that's

probably my favorite experience, realizing I was finally attending a game that was full of energy and I don't know, I think it was just kind of a turning point in watching Mizzou sports.

Cunningham

Who's your favorite player on the team?

Subject #9

I don't know. I think my favorite player right now is probably Nick Honor. Watching him score some of those half court buzzer beater shots has been insane. And I feel like he's just come through and saved the day these last few times. And I think that's always cool to watch. Kind of like not underdog moment, but more so kind of an underdog moment. He's probably my favorite right now just for that sole reason.

Cunningham

What's the most memorable moment you remember from any of the basketball games you've been to? What's the one thing that stands out?

Subject #9

The one thing that stands out is probably the student section. I think the student section really gets into it. I enjoy seeing all every time I'm blown away with all the signs and stuff that people come up with and just people being creative and really actually getting into it and cheering our team on. And I think just watching our student section really kind of just show up and show out. I think that's probably been my favorite memory and experience.

Cunningham

Do you remember if there were any incentives or promotional items or events for any of the basketball games you attended this year?

Subject #9

I know that there were some incentives. Not that I heard of. I didn't actually attend these games. But there's, like, a Star Wars night where people could line up and get a free Star Wars I don't know what that's called. A lightsaber. People can get a lightsaber. I think sometimes they work with Andy's to do, like, maybe a free scoop of ice cream or something. But I know there are promotional things that are offered at the game to encourage people to attend and just add a little something extra to the experience. But I don't remember any at a game that I have gone to, but I've heard about them.

Cunningham

What kind of promotional items would persuade you to go to a game that you weren't so sure about attending?

Subject #9

Oh, I would do a free scoop ice cream. I think that's something I think that was a pretty good one. Or I'm always bummed out when Mizzou does events and there's, like, limited edition T-shirts or something. I think if we could do, like, limited edition T-shirts for a game, that'd be the first 300 people get this cool T-shirt. I am a sucker for a good t-shirt and there are some good ones in the past that I've missed out on, so I think that would also be kind of a good one.

Cunningham

So when you're at the game with your friends, are you on your phone? And if so, what are you doing on it?

Subject #9

If I'm on my phone, I'm taking videos for sure, especially of the video board, because I think there's always some funny stuff going on the video board, or I'm taking videos of what's going on the court sending up to friends. Sometimes I have a family that loves Mizzou, so I like to brag and tell them whenever I'm at a game, watching a game. But for the most part, I'm not on my phone unless I'm trying to capture what is going on around me. But besides that, I very rarely am on my phone.

Cunningham

It kind of seems like the games are more of a social event. So you're social with your friends at the game, but then you're also sharing your experience with your friends or family maybe, who aren't at the game?

Subject #9

Yes.

Cunningham

Have you heard of NFTs or Cryptocurrency before? And if so, what do you know about them?

Subject #9

Okay, so I'm going to be really honest, I don't know very much about them. I haven't really allowed myself to dive into that because it kind of scares me. It's kind of intimidating and I don't fully understand. I understand cryptocurrency a tiny bit, that it's like money in the internet, and I don't really know too much about that.

Cunningham

What do you mean by it scares you a little bit?

Subject #9

I just think that it's really complex and I think that to me money is tangible and cryptocurrency doesn't seem that way. I don't know, I just feel like it's not something that you just are readily like you always have access to, if that makes sense. Same reason I would be scared of stocks, because if you put your money in the stock, it's not really something tangible that you have. It's something that's sitting somewhere in like a system. The system tells you you have this much, but it's not actually in your bank account or in your pocket. And I think it's just kind of scary though.

Cunningham

Like liquidity almost.

Subject #9

Yes. Essentially, I guess you could say along the lines, I just am not a very trustworthy person. And so I'm like if I don't need to know if I don't care about it and I don't trust it and I haven't really done the research because I'm just like, oh, well.

Cunningham

What's prevented you from looking further into it?

Subject #9

I guess I don't have any reason to at the moment either. I don't think it's ever come up in a part of my life or anything that I've needed it or needed a reason to kind of learn more. I don't know, I just feel like it hasn't come a time I feel like maybe I will cross that bridge further down the line when I enter the workforce and a career and starting that whole thing. But as of right now, I just haven't found any need to kind of dive into it. I'm not sure.

Cunningham

So part of the purpose of the research that I'm doing is looking at applying NFTs. They're non fungible tokens. Think of it as a digital trading card. So instead of a bobblehead or a T-shirt that you get when you enter a Mizzou basketball game, you scan your phone and you get a video, a limited number video or an image of a player. So maybe something like you mentioned Nick Honor with the buzzer beaters. In theory, you could have that. And so many people who were maybe at that game or attend the next game could get a limited number of the digital items.

Subject #9

Okay. Yeah. Okay. So then I do have an idea of what an NFTs is because I've seen people on Twitter and stuff selling they try to sell them, or they're the only ones that can view the image. But I think that would be something that it's almost like a digital like, my brothers are really into football cards and baseball cards, so it'd almost be like a digital football or baseball card and I don't know do NFTs kind of work the same way, where as time goes on, they become more valuable and that sort of thing.

Cunningham

In theory, yes, this would be a little less. So you mentioned on Twitter people like, selling it. It wouldn't be more of like a direct investment sort of thing.

Subject #9

Yeah.

Cunningham

Like, hey, this is like something that you own and it's personal and it's a digital collectible.

Subject #9

Okay, well, I'm not a very tech savvy person, but in theory, that would be pretty cool if I learned how to get involved with all of that. I think that would be enticing. I think it kind of also speaks to kind of the day and age that we're in as we're progressing forward, and it's something new to look forward to, and it's something different. So that's definitely something I would be interested in and would be on board with.

Cunningham

What do you think would help you get over the hump of maybe you said you're a little scared by the technology and you don't really know a whole lot about it. What do you think would be helpful in furthering your understanding of it?

Subject #9

I definitely think that I wish there was more what's the word that I'm looking for? Not transparency, but an easier, almost quick guide to understanding NFT and cryptocurrency and that sort of thing, where it's not such heavy information and heavy content that you're absorbing to kind of understand it, but more a little bit easier version and a more easily digestible way of understanding and kind of diving into it. Because every time I tried to kind of learn more and read more. It's been just like really heavy and a lot to consume and not really fully

understanding. It has made it hard to try to learn more about it. And so I don't know, I guess I'm having a really hard time trying to describe this.

Cunningham

No, you're doing great, trust me. Like I said, there's no wrong answers here. And I'm just picking your brain as a potential...

Subject #9

Yeah. So I guess just making it easier for people to understand what it is that they're getting. What it is that exactly they're getting. And yeah, I guess that's my answer.

Cunningham

How do you think an NFT promotional item would impact your experience at the game?

Subject #9

I think it would impact my spirits because I think people love to love to get something and people love to get things. And I think it'd be one of those things that, wow, cool. I'm the only person or we are the only people that have this. It's one of those things that's cool to be able to show your friends, show your family something to collect. And I think it's just something that would be nice for going to a game. Here's a little something to show appreciation for going to the game because I think fan appreciation is always a big part of a sporting event and creating an environment where people want to be in. I think it would just kind of show a little bit of appreciation to the fans.

Cunningham

Explain further by what you mean of appreciating the fans, just appreciating people for.

Subject #9

Showing up and loving the team and continuously going back and supporting them. I don't know, I feel like you just as an organization like the athletic department, you should appreciate the people who are coming and watching your games and coming in supporting you not only emotionally, but monetarily. And I just think that it's one of those things that you should always give back to people who support you because once people feel like they're not being appreciated, then I feel like they're not as enticed to continue to go. I'm not saying necessarily that means they need to get free things, but people always being like, thank you for always constantly supporting us, and thank you for being thankful. Essentially.

Cunningham

What would make your overall experience at the games better?

Subject #9

Oh, I don't know. Overall experience? You really are picking my brain. I'm trying to think.

Cunningham

I'm doing my best.

Subject #9

I promise to make my overall experience better. I would have to say can it be like totally out of anything the blue?

Cunningham

Absolutely.

Subject #9

Better parking. Better parking, better parking experience.

Cunningham

What's wrong with the parking?

Subject #9

I always end up having to park and shuttle into the game and it's really inconvenient. Okay, it's not that inconvenient, but I wish I could just park my car in a lot and walk into the game and not worry about shuttling over.

Cunningham

I totally understand a common theme that people have talked about is connectivity issues in the arena. So they may be trying to load up Instagram or Twitter, but the Internet is awful, or they can't get good cell service because there's so many people. What's your experience with that?

Subject #9

I don't know what carrier these people have, but I think I usually have fairly good service in the arena. There's not really many problems that I have. I may have once or twice have had like a dropped call or something of the sort. But when I mentioned I will send videos or pictures of the

arena to my family or friends back home. I never have trouble opening Instagram or Facebook or something to be able to send that over to them. Yeah, I feel like I can't recall the time I had really bad issues with Internet or data or anything like that.

Cunningham

What is the most iconic image of the University of Missouri?

Subject #9

Truman the tiger. Or.

Cunningham

What about Truman?

Subject #9

Truman Special? I think he has a unique tiger face. I don't know. His jersey? I have no idea.

Cunningham

That's totally okay. What would you say to somebody who is on the fence about attending a game to try to get them to come with you?

Subject #9

I would tell them that we have a really fun environment. I think that the whole from once you get into the arena until when you leave, I think it's just overall a really good experience. And I don't think you're going to go in there and not have fun. I would tell anyone that you're going to walk in there and you're going to have fun and it's going to be entertaining and it's going to be a good atmosphere of fans and players and everything. I would just say that it's something you wouldn't want to miss out on. It's just like an opportunity to go do something fun. It's going to be fun, it's going to be exciting, and you wouldn't want to miss it. I think that's what I would tell someone.

Cunningham

Is there anything I may have forgotten to ask you that you would like to share or something that you think would add any value to this research and it can be any miscellaneous thoughts?

Subject #9

Not that I can think of. You really picked my brain to the point, like I didn't even know where to go next. Okay, this is very interesting. I don't know if I have anything else to add, but knowing

what I do know now, if I think of anything, I could send you an email or something because I did not know where this interview is going to go. So knowing now, talking about NFTs and cryptocurrency, I would love to look a little more into that and then maybe share some more thoughts with you.

Cunningham

Yeah, that's always all right. That's totally cool you have all that information. And if you know anybody who would like to further discuss this conversation. It doesn't matter their knowledge of NFTs or cryptocurrency if they just want to talk for 20 or 30 minutes, I would greatly appreciate that.

Subject #9

All right. Yeah, for sure. Well, I will see if anyone wants to, but thanks for the interview. That's fun.

Cunningham

And as a thank you for your time and participation, I will add your name to a pool of entries for a \$20 gift card of your choice. So when I'm done with the interview process, which hopefully by the end of this weekend, I need one or two more interviews to get done, I will be able to do that, and I will contact you if you are the lucky winner. And if you want to tell your friends that if they are willing to participate, they will also be entered to win a gift card.

Subject #9

Perfect. Well, I will keep you updated. I'll let you know.

Cunningham

Thank you so much. Drew, I'm going to go ahead and stop the recordings now. Perfect.

Interview 10

Cunningham

So if you could tell me your first and last name and spell both of them out for me.

Subject #10

My name is Sam Fry S-A-M F-R-E-Y

Cunningham

and what year are you here at Mizzou?

Subject #10

I am a junior here at Mizzou.

Cunningham

Perfect. So very simple question to start off with. What's your favorite part of Mizzou and why?

Subject #10

My favorite part of Mizzou is, I would say going to the sporting events just because of the community there, and people usually have common interest and are passionate about the events. And I like interacting with the students section and seeing how excited they get about the results of the games.

Cunningham

What's your favorite Mizzou athletic event to go to?

Subject #10

My favorite event to go to is basketball, because I like the environment, because it's a closed space and you're close to the court, and it just feels very intimate and it gets very loud, and the passion is really high.

Cunningham

On a scale of one to five, or between one and five, how much interest do you have in attending a Mizzou men's basketball game as a fan, with one being no interest whatsoever, and five being you would go to every single game if you are financially able to do so?

Subject #10

Five.

Cunningham

What is the first thing you think about when I say the words Mizzou basketball?

Subject #10

Well, as of this year, I think of success. I think very different if you ask me this question 365 days ago, but I think of a program that's building in the right direction under a very talented new coach, and I think the fans are much more excited instead of apathetic like they were last year. So I think of excitement in a bright future.

Cunningham

If I asked you that same question, there's a previous question on the scale between one and five, how much interest would you have in going to a game last year? If I did ask you that question a year ago, what would you have said?

Subject #10

Last year, it would be a one or two, because I could have gone to pretty much every game and chose not to go to a lot of them.

Cunningham

Why was that?

Subject #10

I think a lot of it was just because of the results and the style of play. They were not losing, but they were losing, scoring 50 points in the game, and it was just when there aren't many fans at the games, and I would go to a game and the student sections would be a quarter full, and it just wasn't a rewarding experience for me.

Cunningham

So, it sounds like you weren't going to the games last year because the game on the actual court was bad, but also the student section was bad. Do you think there's a correlation between the two of them?

Subject #10

Yes, I think there is a correlation. I think the students respond to results and the fans do as well. And when the results aren't good, the students find better things to do with their time.

Cunningham

What were you doing when you weren't going to the basketball games last year or this year? What were you doing this year when you weren't going to the basketball games.

Subject #10

Last year? I was going out to eat with my friends, watching other games on TV, just doing schoolwork, things like that. This year, I think I went to almost every game. I think the only time I didn't go to the game was when I was on winter break. But this year it was appointment television and appointment viewing. And I worked most of the games mostly on camera six, so I got to experience the atmosphere and got to stand close to the court, which was pretty cool.

Cunningham

You said you didn't go to the games over winter break. Did you watch them at home? Did you go watch them with your friends?

Subject #10

I did. I watched them with my family in Michigan when I was there. And it was very I really remember watching the Illinois game with all my family and having the sense of pride that this is my school and they're destroying their rival. And then I watched the Kentucky game back home with a lot of my friends who go to Kentucky because I'm from Kentucky. And there was that sense of pride again, where my school is crushing the school that you all go to. And that was pretty cool for me.

Cunningham

So, it seems like this year when you weren't actually at the games, you were watching them on TV, but last year when you weren't going to the you weren't going to the games and you weren't even watching them on TV, you were watching others.

Subject #10

Correct.

Cunningham

Why the sudden change? Why the dramatic change?

Subject #10

I think just because of the results, that might make me kind of a weak fan, but that's okay. I think it's just much more interesting to watch a team like this year where they're winning games and playing a high tempo style, scoring a lot of points. And really, the coach kept thanking the fans and kept expressing how much he loved the support and just trying to reciprocate that support back to my school and back to the team because they were doing so well.

Cunningham

How many games did you go to as a fan this year?

Subject #10

As a fan, I don't think I went to a single game as a fan. I think I went to all the games as an employee for MBO and working camera, but I think if I didn't have this job, I would have gone to nearly every game I could as a fan.

Cunningham

How many did you go to last year?

Subject #10

Last year I probably went to I guess is there about 15 to 20 home games. I probably went to five or six.

Cunningham

Why do you not go to every Mizzou basketball game?

Subject #10

I don't go to every game because there might be something else going on that night that I've got socially or academically or something else I want to watch. I don't think that necessarily I enjoy the Mizzou basketball games and I go and I can, but if I don't have time to go or I have other obligations, I don't feel like I'm missing it's like a marquee event for me.

Cunningham

You said you went to about five or six games last year. Do you remember if there were any incentives given out, like promotional items or giveaways?

Subject #10

Yeah, the Auburn game, they had raising canes, and I believe they had a Cuonzo Martin signed mug, which is now a bit out of date, but that was one I remember getting. I think they had a shirt. There was a shirt giveaway at one of the games. Yeah, stuff like that.

Cunningham

What incentives usually pique your interest?

Subject #10

I think the swag giveaways pique my interest. The shirts, the hats, the beanies, whatever it might be Mizzou gear.

Cunningham

You say, like, the shirts and hats, but you also mentioned that they gave you, like, raising canes. Why the shirts and hats versus maybe the raising canes if you don't find that?

Subject #10

No, the raising canes is fine, but the shirts and hats are more tangible items that I can wear all the time. Raising canes, I can go two blocks from my apartment and get whenever I want, but I think the shirts and the hats are more of I just like the Mizzou swag. I just prefer to wear it and add to my wardrobe.

Cunningham

When you were at the games as a fan, did you use your smartphone when you were in the student section?

Subject #10

Yeah, I use my smartphone. I use my smartphone to get my ticket. I use my smartphone to check it during timeouts, things like that.

Cunningham

What are you doing during timeouts on your phone?

Subject #10

Either responding to text messages, Snapchats, or just scrolling through Twitter, stuff like that.

Cunningham

Are you usually, like, sharing photos or talking about the game maybe with your followers on Twitter or your friends or anything like that?

Subject #10

I'm usually sending photos to my family because they enjoy it, like, see what I'm doing. And on Twitter, when I'm at the game, I don't talk about it. I don't tweet about the game or post pictures on Twitter. Usually.

Cunningham

I've heard a few things about, you know, connectivity issues and like, not being able to, like, use your phone, like, sometimes drop calls or maybe like, you can't refresh your social media feed. Have you had any issues with that?

Subject #10

No, but that is only but I think the big reason because of that is because I have the access to the media WiFi and password. I think that's probably a reason why my phone works at the games most of the times. But I think people without that access might struggle to get online just because of the amount of traffic and the amount of people in one space trying to use the internet at the same time.

Cunningham

Have you heard of NFTs and cryptocurrency before? And if so, what do you know about them?

Subject #10

I have, I don't know much, but I know NFTs are certain items that are minted and you can buy and sell them and then cryptocurrency mostly. I know bitcoin, Ethereum, things like that that you can trade on apps like Coinbase and things like that.

Cunningham

Where do you typically get how did you hear about them and how do you know about them?

Subject #10

Mostly through Twitter. I know people were making them their profile pictures and talking about how much they were investing in crypto and NFTs and the Dogecoin boom and all that was a very popular Twitter trend a while back.

Cunningham

So what I'm potentially looking at as the frame of this research is strategic communication professionals using NFTs as maybe like a digital trading card as a promotional item for a giveaway. So you may walk in as a fan, scan your ticket and then you are given a digital image of Kobe Brown dunking the basketball or a clip from the previous game or maybe that game.

Subject #10

Okay, nice.

Cunningham

So I was wondering what your thoughts are on an NFTs promotional item as a potential incentive for fans.

Subject #10

I think it would be cool. I don't know if it would get as much. I think if you pulled students you would get more be more in favor of shirt and things like that giveaways just because you can find Kobe Brown dunking the ball on YouTube or on the Mizzou Twitter account after the game. So I'm not sure if the NFTs would be a huge incentive, but I think it would be cool if you got one for entering the games.

Cunningham

So it sounds like from your perspective it's just like, oh, that's kind of neat. But it may not persuade you to go to a basketball game or help you persuade a friend who's maybe on the fence about going with you.

Subject #10

I think it would definitely persuade a certain faction quite a bit, but I don't know if that faction is large enough to really drive up the attendance as much as maybe like a lightsaber giveaway, which I know was very popular with my friends when they did that for the I believe it was the Iowa State game. That was one of the ones that stuck out to me is people were very excited about the lightsabers and my roommates were fighting with them that night, so they had a lot of fun with that.

Cunningham

You said it may attract a certain faction of people. Who do you think those people are?

Subject #10

People that are very interested in NFTs and cryptocurrency and think they have a lot of value, which again, I don't know how much of that, I don't know how what portion of that is here at Mizzou, but I think it would be at least some number.

Cunningham

So how do you think an NFT item would impact your experiences at the game? As a fan.

Subject #10

I think it would make me feel more connected with the players, just having an image of Kobe Brown or some other player. The fans. They want to connect with the team and get more intimate with the players. And I think having that would maybe you get a DeAndre Golston against Tennessee or whatever it was. And now you feel like, hey, maybe he's my favorite player now, and you have more of a reason to want to go to the game.

Cunningham

Why do you think fans are looking to connect with the players?

Subject #10

Because it's their favorite team and they want to have some kind of attachment and a reason to go to the games and not just going for the sake, but going because they genuinely have invested interest in the players. And I think that's what makes college sports different than pro sports. Pro sports, you kind of have attraction to a city maybe, or a certain team because you're growing up there or something else. But in college, you go to the school and you connect with the players because you're living much more shared experiences as them. You're seeing them on campus, they're in your classes, they're right there on the football field with you. You kind of feel like you have that more intimate connection because you're going through the exact same phase of life as them at the same place.

Cunningham

So it sounds like you're saying that fans have a more personal connection with maybe college athletes compared to professional athletes, and they may identify with the athletes more than they identify with maybe like a hometown team.

Subject #10

I think that can definitely be the case, especially with in the alumni too of Missouri that go to the games. They've gone to the school, and now they're watching athletes go to the school, play for their team, and get better and grow as people and as athletes over their four years. And I think that's why people have an attachment to Kobe Brown is because he stayed at Mizzou and gotten better all four years, and you know a player better when they're here all four years. I think at a

school where you have a lot of players that just cycle in and out, like Kentucky, you're kind of learning a whole new roster every year. And I think fans want to have that prolonged connection with players. I think that's why Kobe is going to be a player that gets talked about in Mizzou history as maybe the best player ever to play here, but definitely one of the biggest fan favorites and most memorable here.

Cunningham

Is he your favorite player on the team?

Subject #10

Yes, he is.

Cunningham

What would make the overall experience at the games better in your eyes?

Subject #10

I think I like the idea of doing different theme games and putting shirts on chairs, so, like, if you want to do a blackout, put a black shirt on every chair, a white out of white shirt on every chair, a gold rush, a gold shirt on every chair. I think it would make the participation better. It would look really cool on TV if everyone was wearing the same shirt. And it's kind of a token of it's almost like your own personal NFT where you've gotten this. Maybe we play Kentucky and it's a gold out game, and the shirt says, like, first Kentucky and has the date on it's, kind of like your own NFT is saying, hey, I was at that game and I saw the big win.

Cunningham

You keep mentioning T-shirts and other you said the word tangible item. Is that an important element to you compared to maybe like a digital item as a promotional item?

Subject #10

I think it's more important to me than a digital item because it's something where you can wear this shirt around and show that you're invested in the school and you're participating in the athletic events and supporting the team in that way. Whereas I think a digital item, you can get out your photo and show somebody, but you're not stopping random people on the street, I don't think, and showing them your NFTs of Kobe Brown dunking the ball. Whereas a shirt that's kind of more you're wearing it for people to see it as they walk by without having to really talk to them or broadcast out loud that you have that item.

Cunningham

What's the most iconic image of Mizzou in your perspective?

Subject #10

I think the image that comes to mind is just the columns with Jesse Hall in the background. I saw people they were visiting on tour. They were, like, taking pictures there I saw the other day. I just think when it comes to the zoo, when everyone comes there, that's kind of the picture you want to get with yourself. In the column, you see all the background. It's just a nice image with the quad and the columns and the buildings and all that.

Cunningham

What would you say to somebody on the fence about attending a game to get them to come with you?

Subject #10

I would say that it makes you feel more connected to the school, and I just think it's a genuinely enjoyable experience. I think you're getting to watch not only students, but also a lot of alumni and fans come together in one place for a shared experience, and there's just a lot of doing the cheers and watching your team compete against other schools, I think is really a big part of the college experience. And it's one of the reasons that I came to Mizzou is because when I was looking at colleges, I wanted a school that had a good athletic department, and I think Mizzou the football team is very competitive. Usually in the SEC, the basketball team made the tournament was in the top 25 at points this year, and they were fourth in the SEC the baseball team is quite good now as well. So I think having that sense of pride in your school, I think going to the athletic events is a big part of that.

Cunningham

It sounds like sports is like a really big element of your experience here at Mizzou. Would you agree with that?

Subject #10

Yeah, I would definitely agree with that. I think it was big when I came here. I think it's even bigger now that I work at MBO and get to go to pretty much every athletic event that we have. And I feel like I've gotten to know a lot of the teams well that this year that maybe I didn't like the soccer team or the volleyball team, whereas last year I maybe went to one or two of those games, but this year going to a lot more. You know the players and you know the team and how they're going to perform, and I think that's been cool for me.

Cunningham

Do you think other Mizzou students would have a similar sentiment, like with having sports be such a major part of their experience?

Subject #10

I think some students do, but I think some students just naturally aren't as interested in sports as I am, and that's okay. But I still think it's cool for at least people that aren't interested in sports to go to maybe one football game or a couple of basketball games just to get that experience. I think that's an important part of the college experience.

Cunningham

What's the best experience you've been a part of in Mizzou? Athletics.

Subject #10

Man, that's tough. I think the Georgia football game was up there this year. I know they didn't win, but that atmosphere was incredible and off the same side of the coin. The Auburn basketball game was also incredible last year, even though they didn't win two times, going up against number one, number one team in the country with huge crowds and pushing to the very edge. I think the Iowa State basketball game this year was probably my favorite because of the throwback jerseys and because I thought the crowd was really electric that game, and they won by a lot, so that was obviously pretty fun, too.

Cunningham

You said earlier that the success of the team seems to have an impact on attendance, but you just listed off two of the three games where Mizzou lost.

Subject #10

Yeah.

Cunningham

I'm curious what your thought process is about that.

Subject #10

I think in terms of the Auburn game, that was just because they were playing the number one team in the country and people go to the game for the school, but they also go for the opponent sometimes as well. And I think the Auburn game was the case in that you're seeing, at least for me, it was an opportunity to see a top three NBA draft pick in person, which is rare, and seeing one of the best teams in the country. And then for the Georgia game, I think all football games are important just because there's only six of them all year. So you have limited opportunities to

experience that. And you're also playing the number one team in the country who just won a national title in Georgia. So I think fans were chumming at the bit to go to that game and they are both great atmospheres. So I think the atmosphere sometimes can carry the experience even if they don't pull it out in the very end.

Cunningham

What makes a great atmosphere?

Subject #10

Lots of fans. Lots of fans that are being allowed. I think the team performance makes a great atmosphere because if your team is doing very poorly, then the atmosphere will die down. But in those cases, Missouri was up by ten in the fourth quarter, so the atmosphere was the fans were living and breathing on every first down, every play, every sack, every catch, every snap of the ball, really. And when the fans are that invested in the game and the game is that close against the top opponent, then the atmosphere is naturally going to be loud and fans are going to be having a good time and going crazy.

Cunningham

What's the best way to convince a fan to attend a game where Mizzou may lose?

Subject #10

I think the best way to convince a fan is to say what if? And I think a lot of people were, what if the Georgia game was a big what if because, hey, what if they actually win and then we get to storm the field after the game? I think that's like, that'd be a core memory of any person's experience. Storm onto Farrell and celebrating with the team after a huge upset. And I think the fear of missing out is a way to convince people, say, hey, if we win, you're going to out on this huge life experience. So I think even if you don't think they're going to win, deep down you can try to kind of say, what if you miss out? I think people have FOMO a lot of fear of missing out and tapping into that as a way to get people to go to the games.

Cunningham

Is there anything I may have forgotten to ask you or something that you'd like to share that you think may add any value to this research?

Subject #10

I think the giveaways are important because they get people in the door, especially earlier in the season. I think they become a bit less important as the season goes on just because the fans already have an idea of what the team is. For example, I think basketball last year had some good crowds at the beginning of the season because of the factor of the unknown and they didn't know

how good they were going to be. And then as the team showed what they were, the crowd thinned out. And then this year they were back because there was a new coach and new players and people were curious, and as they played well, the fans returned to the stadium and ended up selling out multiple of the games. So I think if you can get the fans in the door with giveaways in the beginning of the year, then you kind of leave it up to the team to dictate the attendance for the rest of the year, but that's about it.

Cunningham

You said that promotional items and marketing can get people into the stadium at first, but then it's sort of out of their control once the product on the court sort of is developed.

Subject #10

I think to an extent it is. I think it's still important to continue to incentivize fans to come to the games, and you might get some extra fans by doing cool incentives. But I think by the time the season is about halfway done, you have either a committed fan base, which was Mizzou this year, or a non committed fan base, which was Mizzou last year. And the results on the court losing to Kansas City last year, I think was kind of a sign that people might not want to be might not want to spend their money on a team that is destined to go nowhere, really?

Cunningham

Even if there's a really awesome promotional item?

Subject #10

I think the promotional item would have to be pretty cool because you're spending money and time on a product that you might not believe in. So the promotional item would have to be worth the ticket and the amount of time it's been at the games if you don't value what the team is doing. So I think it becomes harder as a marketing department to promote items when the team is not doing well. And I think it's almost easier to promote items when the team is doing well, because it's almost like an added bonus to go because you're already wanting to go see this team play. But hey, now you get a shirt on top of that, or you get a bucket hat on top of that. So I think it's important regardless of the team, but it might not have as much pull on the actual attendance of the game.

Cunningham

Well, Sam, you've given me a lot of great perspective.

Subject #10

Thank you. That's all I have.

Cunningham

As a way to say thank you. I'm going to put your name in a drawing for a \$20 gift card, and I'll probably do that right after this call. So if you're the winner, I will contact you and you will be able to pick and gift card you want, and I'll send it to you.

Subject #10

Wow.

Cunningham

Thank you for taking time out your day. And I'm going to go ahead and stop the recordings.

Field Notes

Monday, January 9- Sunday, January 15, 2023.

I arrived back in Columbia from winter break a few days early and started my professional placement with Mizzou Broadcast Operations (MBO). I hit the ground running on my first Monday morning when I was joining the crew on production meetings with ESPN operations experts, directors, and producers for the week's linear women's basketball and gymnastics broadcasts on the SEC Network. I expected to be the quiet note-taker in the back of the room, but I was asked for my perspective on camera placements, shot assignments, and crewing options because of my prior experience in TV so there was no place to hide.

Throughout the week I spent time learning how to operate the technical director board and learning how each of the hundreds of buttons work. I was also tasked to shoot multiple opening scenic shots of the Hearnest Center on campus for the productions that went on national TV. In between those big tasks I was also building graphics for the broadcasts, editing headshots of the baseball team to make frontend video graphics for each player, and creating presentations on broadcast essentials for lesser-known sports such as wrestling so newer employees can easily know what to look for when they may be working their first wrestling show.

I have never been around a control room during the day where no broadcast is going to air until I started this professional placement. It is much quieter and more controlled compared to the chaotic and often stressful gameday operations. I love both but it is interesting to see the major contrast between show days and dark days. Working behind the scenes for the behind-the-scenes work of TV has been a busy yet exciting time so far.

Monday, January 16- Sunday, January 22, 2023

I started the week off with our broadcast meeting reviewing the broadcasts from the week before and the technical, engineering, and crewing changes that must be made for the next broadcasts.

This week, I learned how every detail is vital to put on a professional broadcast. It was a lot of preparation work for three days of broadcasts. There was work needing to be done for two linear broadcasts on the SEC Network and one digital show on SEC Network+. I spend most of the week grinding away on editing action shots sent to us by the opposing schools of their athletes. That might have been the most frustrating and time-consuming thing I have ever done working in TV. The attention to detail needed went down to the individual pixel.

I then took those photos and loaded them in our Expression graphics system where I took each photo and made a front end image of each player. The front ends are little animations that appear before a highlight package of a player that is shown during a broadcast.

I then spend nearly all of Friday building graphics on the Expression machine for the women's basketball broadcast on Sunday vs Tennessee. I was making graphics about each team's schedules, rankings, coaches, star players, and a series of graphics about Pat Summit, the hall of fame women's coach for the Lady Vols who the SEC Network was honoring this week.

Monday, January 23- Sunday, January 29, 2023

After our weekly Monday meeting, I was tasked to go through and take inventory on the recordings we had in our media archive. I went through every show we had as well as every road game Mizzou played in football, volleyball, soccer, and men's and women's basketball this school year. I was tasked to find the ESPN Melt, (a playlist of clips of every important moment in the game to make highlights from) the recording of our multiview system with director and

producer microphone recordings, the recording of the actual show, as well as any post-game interviews, and press conferences. That multi-day process was the start of a larger month+ long project of going into the ESPN Media Bank system, shared between all production companies and college broadcast departments, and download hundreds of hours of missing content that I might not have seen in our archives.

I also spent time this week preparing for our small Friday morning swim and dive broadcast I got to direct and technical direct. I had to really come up with creative ways to put on a show with just two cameras and make it look like a full-blown show with four or five cameras.

This was our most important week of preparation for our largest broadcast of the entire school year. Saturday's men's basketball game was on ESPN 2 which called for all hands on deck and a lot of specialty elements for the show. This called for me to make new front-ends for Iowa state and assist our director Jordan in building our new 2-box system in our switcher system. That turned out to be a lot of trial and error and hours of key mapping for the dozen or so buttons that need to be pressed for a seemingly simple-looking shot on TV.

As for my project, I have 16 responses on my screening survey and I hope to get a few more by the end of next week so I can begin the scheduling process to interview about a dozen or so subjects. If you could remind your classes about the survey, I would greatly appreciate it. If selected for an interview they can win a \$20 gift card. I cannot think of an easier way to make 20 bucks as a college kid!

Monday, January 30- Sunday, February 5, 2023

Monday's weekly meeting started off a good week at MBO. I was complimented for my effort and the quality of the swim and dive show that I directed the Friday before. The extra effort I put in to prepare even for a simple two-camera passthrough seemed to pay off.

This week was a lot with four or five (I'm already losing count) linear broadcasts of both men's and women's basketball and gymnastics. We only had so much time in the office to prepare and tie up any loose ends before the craziness began.

I had to go back and edit more of the baseball team's headshot pictures from my first week. The head coach requested that we edit out things like earrings and studs the players may have been wearing.

I spent some more time working on completing our broadcast and highlight archive from MediaBank. MBO decided to make life easier and just set me up with an account for that. That process is a bit slow but is just as important to the department's operations.

Finally, this week I was tasked to use my experience at Virginia Tech's broadcast department and create a series of broadcast review sessions. At VT we had weekly review and suggestion meetings to help nail down the tiny details of a show. At MBO we are looking to shift away from freelancers as our camera and replay operators (among other positions) and build a more student-centered crew. I briefly mentioned over lunch about these evening review training and one of my supervisors thought that was a great idea and assigned me to build out a similar program here at Mizzou. This has been a little tricky because we can easily just put a few clips on a tv screen but we have to find ways to get these students to come in on their evenings off, find a day that is frequently open from broadcasts and even find room to do it in.

This upcoming week is a little less hectic so I will have some more time to work on these two ongoing projects.

Monday, February 6- Sunday, February 12, 2023

This was a slower week at MBO with only one basketball show on Tuesday. The first half of the week, I finished up the MBO review session guide for my supervisors. A part of that

was overhauling our department's YouTube channel. Although it's not public, we still use it as a part of the review process as we upload our multi-view and director/producer communication line. I worked on creating timestamps of elements like "Good game coverage" and "Graphic Error." These timestamps will allow the show's directors and producers to review the show, point out the good and the bad, and link specific examples where the rest of the crew can watch and click to exactly where in the show they did well or made a mistake.

We moved our weekly production meeting to Wednesday to allow us a little breather after Tuesday's basketball show. It was really nice because the full-time crew asked me what I thought about our replay sources for the videoboard show for basketball since I have been directing those shows the last few weeks. It shows how even just as an intern, I'm already being treated like a full-time professional.

I also continued to download the rest of our archive. I finally finished up football and started chipping away at men's basketball. I then went through our baseball archive to find footage of star returning player Luke Mann and other fan/pageantry shots we have saved that we are going to send to the SEC.

Next week picks back up with wrestling, gymnastics (with Olympic gold medal winner Suni Lee coming into town) and more basketball.

Monday, February 13- Sunday, February 19, 2023

This week at MBO was much busier than the last. I started the week off by continuing the archival process. I have just about completed men's basketball, so it will be smooth sailing on that front for the rest of the process.

I then got to help out some undergrad students who rolled through the control room to learn some replay. My supervisors and I ran through some simulated replay sequences with

them, and I got to jump back on the technical director's switcher board with the hundreds of buttons. That kickstarted the week as I helped produce and technical direct the wrestling broadcast of Mizzou's upset win over Iowa State.

The craziness continued when I technical directed the women's basketball broadcast on the SEC Network+. It was far from perfect but learning that position is a marathon, not a sprint. I was able to punch a few rollouts, and a 2-Box official review sequence. That 2-Box was something I helped build weeks ago, so it was rewarding to pull it out and execute it well in the moment.

I then got to be on camera for the men's basketball show on ESPN 2 on Saturday night and for Sunday's gymnastics meet vs. Auburn. I'm in desperate need of more coffee.

Monday, February 20- Sunday, February 26

This week at MBO once again started with our weekly production meeting, recapping the gymnastics meet, basketball and wrestling. We also had to hash out some ideas to resolve some crewing issues. ESPN is not sending a director or producer for our next gymnastics show next week, and with TrueFalse coming up after, we are going to be super short-staffed. This might prove to be beneficial to me as maybe I will be put in a newer position or take on some more responsibility the next few weeks.

I spent the week working on the Mizzou women's basketball archive. I then helped our producer prepare for today's basketball broadcast by going through and downloading recaps and melts from nearly half of the SEC as today was the final day of the women's regular season and that was a major storyline the show it on.

I then learned how to operate the score bug program for baseball. All the elements like balls, strikes, runner's positions and effects like "GRAND SLAM" all fire from our software. So those are even more buttons that I need to learn how to use.

Speaking of buttons, I took a day to work on my technical directing skills. I devised the idea to pull up the broadcast's last multiview recording of the men's basketball show vs. Mississippi state and operated the switcher board as if it were a live broadcast. I was pretty proud of myself for coming up with the closest way to simulate a live show and get some much-needed practice in.

Baseball season starts this week which is every broadcast professional's favorite show, said nobody ever, and I will be helping out a lot with that in the next few days (or months).

Monday, February 27- Sunday, March 5, 2023

This was probably one of our most intense weeks of preparation for the entire semester. It was a good look at what life is behind the scenes while working behind the scenes.

Monday took 3 hours of technical meetings to make sure we had enough cameras and replay routing systems to cover gymnastics, a weekend of baseball, and a linear basketball game.

For gymnastics, we had to reproduce most of the broadcast from scratch. I was busy making highlight packages, match recaps, and advancers for the Florida vs. Oklahoma matchup.

For baseball this week, I learned how to fill out the stats sheets that get uploaded to our graphics system that spits out the player's averages and other information from the score bug.

That was just the preparation elements. For broadcasts, we had a women's basketball show that I was the associate director for, a baseball game where I operated the score bug and

graphics. I ran the camera for gymnastics and then was the video shader for baseball at the end of the weekend.

Monday, March 6- Sunday, March 12, 2023

This week consisted mostly of preparation for MBO's first linear broadcasts for softball as well as a handful of smaller baseball shows. At the start of the week, I updated the statistics spreadsheets for baseball. Then I Photoshopped nearly 50 action shots for the team that will be used throughout the season for frontends, highlight packages, and player graphics.

Throughout the rest of the week, I had to continuously update the spreadsheets and create new projects for new teams that the baseball team played throughout the week, such as Western Illinois and New Jersey Institute of Technology.

I then built highlight packages for the two best players on the Kentucky softball team for Mizzou's weekend series against the Wildcats. Then I cut up Kentucky's frontends for in-game replay packages.

All in all, this week consisted of 9 broadcasts with midweek matchups for baseball and softball, along with a full weekend series for both squads and a gymnastics show. Three of them are happening today alone so it has been and will be very busy.

Monday, March 13- Sunday, March, 19

This week was packed with broadcasts. We had four baseball shows, two softball broadcasts, and the women's NIT.

I spent the week helping build the switcher board for Wednesday's baseball show vs. Lamar that I got to technical direct. I then spent some time downloading advancers for this weekend's baseball series vs. number 2 ranked Tennessee. Advancers are those hype videos

played when coming back from a commercial break that shows highlights and has exciting music that is usually advertising something like a conference championship tournament.

For broadcasts, I got to do a bit of everything. I got to technical direct for baseball, run replay and build video highlights for women's basketball, and run the camera for this weekend's baseball series. Technical directing was certainly a learning experience, but that's how TV works sometimes.

Monday, March 20- Sunday, March 26, 2023

This week was pretty short and sweet at MBO and was a much needed breather. Our Monday morning meeting was mostly focused on the crewing for the next week since most of the students on the crew are away for spring break then it shifted to look forward to April as some changes are happening with the availability of some of the full-time staff.

Now that women's basketball is over, I was able to just about wrap up their season archive, leaving me with just a few more highlights from their none-conference play to download after they were prematurely deleted before being moved to our server.

I then built a highlight package for Alex Honnold, the softball team's starting catcher, who had two home runs against Florida the prior weekend. I'm now able to put together a package in just a couple of seconds on our replay system.

I then was the assistant director for the midweek softball game, where I was communicating with our Verizon representative, making sure we go in and out of commercial breaks without issue. Rarely in TV can one position make or break a show, but the AD position can. If we are stuck in a commercial break but the game is restarting and we miss the moment, that is all on that person.

Then to finish the week, we went over the recording of the game to see where we can clean up some mistakes and review some situational in-game moments like a big homerun or a rollout to a commercial break. I'm learning that just like athletes have a film session after a game, so do the broadcast crew.

Monday, March 27- Sunday, April 2

Sports don't stop even when classes do! I was kept busy this week with softball playing four games at home, with one of those being a linear show with ESPN sending in a producer for us.

I gained experience building replay packages and programming several video segments for the broadcasts this week for Mizzou's midweek matchup vs. UNI and the weekend series vs. Alabama. I made videos for both teams' pitchers and outfielders, Mizzou's homerun hitting, and even a special tribute to their 1983 Women's College World Series team.

All this practice during the day greatly helped me out when I was the lead replay operator for Wednesday's softball game. Our crew was shorthanded with the students being gone for the week, so I had to step up and take the lead of the replay crew. It was two hours of controlled chaos being used for instant replay at a moment's notice while also building in-game video packages that were shown throughout the broadcast. The full-time staff was very impressed with me stepping in and stepping up when needed.

For this weekend, I slid over and was just a typical instant replay operator for Mizzou's first game of the weekend vs. Alabama. Then I moved over to camera for the rest of the weekend.

Monday, April 3- Sunday, April 9

Things are picking up around the office with one of our supervisors going on paternity leave, so our already smaller crew must step up. This week was a lot more pre-programming video elements for Mizzou's baseball series vs. Vanderbilt. I made packages for Vanderbilt's ace pitcher, their last weekend series, and their overall dominance in hitting across the SEC. I'm at the point now where they can just ask me to build something for the show and I already know what I'm going to make that will help tell the game's story entertainingly.

I then cut up Vandy's front-ends for the replay systems that will be shared with the rest of the NCAA to use if they host Vanderbilt later this season.

I then continued to fill out the rest of the archive and wrapping up basketball and gymnastics while I start on soccer. I did this while also reviewing our broadcasts from the last two weeks to learn from our mistakes and figure out a way to streamline different communication sequences like a replay rollout to commercial break.

I was working the camera for the baseball series, where I got to cover Mizzou's impressive walk-off upset victory in game 2 of the series.

Monday, April 10- Sunday, April 16

This week was a grind. MBO is in the middle of a stretch where we have 16 shows in 20 days, or something close to that. That schedule pressed us to get ahead as much as possible before our linear softball series vs. Ole Miss.

I spent the week downloading highlight packages for our upcoming shows, cutting up front ends for video packages, and sitting in on coach calls with ESPN and the announcers. I also was tasked with cutting up the opening sequences from Mizzou's baseball games vs. Vanderbilt

to send to the announcer. I then clipped off Mizzou's walk-off win against the Commodores and sent that to my producer. I then finished up editing action shots for the baseball team to use for our upcoming midweek game vs. Missouri State and next weekend's series.

For the broadcasts, I was out at the venues running camera and enjoying the nice weather, until today, when it was freezing cold and windy. Tomorrow softball has their Mic'd Up Monday show vs. Ole Miss live on the SEC Network at 6 P.M., so I recommend tuning into that and listening to Coach Anderson wired up for the broadcast.