

Effect of event service quality and satisfaction on the quality of life and behavioral intentions of recreational runners: a comparison of running events in Taiwan, the USA, and Greece

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Aim of the paper

There is overwhelming evidence for the need to encourage physical activity to improve health and quality of life (QOL), and mass participant sport events (MPSEs) including distance running events represent a population-based intervention with the capacity to increase physical activity (Funk et al., 2011). For example, in Taiwan, there were 669 distance running races in 2015; in the USA, there were over 15 million road race participants and 26,000 road races in 2012 (Eagleman, Lough, & Pharr, 2014); while in Europe, there were approximately 35,817 finishers in the 2014 London Marathon (Web Marketing Associates, 2014). Thus, there is a need to understand, from the event management side, why people engage in distance running, and more importantly, from the sport and health side, whether participation in MPSEs influences regular exercise intentions and QOL. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship among service quality variables, event satisfaction, exercise intention, QOL and intention to participate again to understand how MPSE participation influences the intention of recreational runners to participate in future events.

Literature review

Given the popularity of distance running races, academia has focused on specific issues such as motivation (Funk et al, 2011), QOL (Sato et al., 2014), happiness (Theodorakis et al., 2015), event satisfaction (Sato et al., 2014; Theodorakis et al., 2015), event service quality (Theodorakis et al., 2015), involvement (Funk et al, 2011), life satisfaction (Sato et al., 2014), and exercise intention (Funk et al., 2011). Yet, a collective model for testing specific constructs (mental health, physical health, and social aspects) related to QOL and their relationships with antecedent (service quality, event satisfaction) and outcome (exercise intention, intention to participate in future events) variables is not provided in the literature. As previously noted (Masters & Ogles, 1995; Shipway & Holloway, 2010), distance runners may benefit from a QOL enhancement associated with mental health, physical health, and social aspects (affiliation, social recognition, etc.). Furthermore, even if some variables have been included in a collective model, they were only applied to a single case for each independent study. This may generate inconclusive results among different models and cases, showing a lack of cross-cultural and cross-national cases. A previous study (Theodorakis et al., 2015) also called for continued testing in different cultures to establish the robustness of the findings. Obviously, the cross validity and external validity of a model are

warranted. Extending previous research and to fill the voids, the current research adds two variables to the model we are testing to include regular exercise intention and intention to participate in future events, and addresses the subdomains of QOL specifically related to distance runners, in a path model by applying it to different running events globally.

Methodology/Potential contributions

This study utilizes survey research with three distance running events in Taiwan, the USA, and Greece. Data are being collected via on-site and on-line surveys. The subjects of this study ran either a 5 or 10km race, since we want to focus on less involved rather than serious runners. Data collection has already been completed for the Taiwan and Greece events, and will be collected from the USA event very soon. We will test the reliability and validity of the questionnaires used in different cultural contexts and then conduct the model comparison. A multi-group confirmatory factor analysis will then be performed. Theoretically, the current study will add to the knowledge base on how MPSEs can enhance recreational runners' QOL and regular exercise intentions through which their intentions to participate in future events are promoted within cross-national and cross-cultural contexts; practically, the findings will not only aid comprehensive understanding of less physically active participants, but will also facilitate event providers' effective improvement of service quality, and governments' effective allocation of public resources for promoting MPSEs. (The results are not yet available at the time of abstract submission. The author guarantees that the results will be presented at the conference). Note: This research was supported by the Ministry of Science and Technology, Taiwan [MOST 104-2410-H-006-078].

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