

The mediating effect of emotional attachment on title-sponsored events

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Aim and Research background

Title sponsorship is one of the significant marketing strategies to increase market share. It provides an opportunity for sponsors to achieve a great deal of brand exposure to targeted customers. Understanding the mediating role of emotional attachment can offer better knowledge of event marketing. Hence, this study aims to examine the mediating effect of emotional attachment on title-sponsored events. The theoretical foundation is solely based on the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM), consisting of, in sequence, awareness, attraction, attachment, and allegiance. The PCM of sport consumers is an innovative conceptual paradigm for exploring sport event management (Filo, Funk, & O'Brien, 2010). In hypothesis development, event attraction and familiarity conceptually stemmed from PCM as the antecedents, which can affect emotional attachment. Event loyalty and brand purchase intention were the consequent variables. Therefore, we proposed two hypotheses:

H1: Emotional attachment positively mediates the relationship between event attraction and familiarity and event loyalty.

H2: Emotional attachment positively mediates the relationship between event attraction and familiarity and brand purchase intention

Methodology

In order to explore the mediating role of emotional attachment, we conducted a quantitative survey to test the hypotheses. The measures referred to Speed and Thompson (2000) for event attraction, Baloglu and Mangaloglu (2001) for event familiarity, Thomson, MacInnis, and Park (2005) for emotional attachment to the event, Zeithaml (1996) for event loyalty, and Speed and Thompson (2000) for sponsor brand purchase intention. All the items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale. This study adopted the active survey approach for the data collection, with questionnaires distributed to the participants of the "2015 (the 15th) BaGua Mountain Merida Cup & Bicycle Festival." This event attracted more than 3,000 participants in 2015. There were 295 valid questionnaires obtained from the 350 distributed questionnaires. Mediating regression was employed for testing the hypotheses.

Results and Contributions

The results indicated that event attraction and familiarity positively affect emotional attachment. Emotional attachment to the event mediates the effects of the antecedents and the consequent variables. Specifically, attraction ($\beta = 0.30$, $t = 4.01$) and event familiarity ($\beta = 0.24$, $t = 3.38$) affect emotional

attachment to the event. Emotional ($R^2 = 0.49$) attachment also positively affects event loyalty ($\beta = 0.68$, $t = 19.75$) and sponsor brand purchase intention ($\beta = 0.50$, $t = 10.34$). In addition, the results also revealed that event attraction ($\beta = .61$; $t = 15.76$) and familiarity ($\beta = .86$; $t = 33.45$) positively affect event loyalty. Similarly, event attraction ($\beta = .51$; $t = 9.15$) and familiarity ($\beta = .39$; $t = 6.45$) positively affect brand purchase intention. According to Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach, the two mediating models were supported in event loyalty ($H1$, $R^2 = 0.46$) and sponsor brand purchase intention ($H2$, $R^2 = 0.26$).

The contributions of this study are that it offers insights for companies holding title-sponsored events for brand marketing. Providing more event information and designing more interesting activities can attract event participants to have higher loyalty and sponsor brand purchase intention.

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