

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN WRC NESTE OIL RALLY FINLAND– IMPLICATIONS FOR STRATEGIC MARKETING

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Aim

Sport Business School Finland conducted several research projects during the WRC Neste Oil Rally Finland –event in Jyväskylä in 2011 and 2012. The aim of these researches was to collect in-depth information about customer satisfaction of different types of spectators and participating teams. The goal of this paper is to define the overall customer satisfaction with the event and the services provided and to examine the word-of-mouth marketing potential of the respondents by measuring the willingness to recommend the event to other consumers. This paper concentrates particularly on the results of customer satisfaction surveys and aims to deepen the understanding of the correlation between customer satisfaction and their willingness to recommend the rally event.

Theoretical background

Sport event organizers, as well as sport organizations have several types of customers; spectators, competing athletes or teams, sponsors, suppliers and the communities in which they operate. This study focuses on different types of spectators and participating teams. Sport spectators and fans are usually not a homogenous group of consumers and therefore their expectations and expenditures differ significantly (Quick 2000).

Elements of customer satisfaction often comprehend customer expectations, perceived overall quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. This general approach has been studied in more detail in the context of sports by many researchers, for example in action sport events, university basketball matches and in game day services. The SSSM (The Sport Spectator Satisfaction Model) by Van Leeuwen, Quick and Daniel (2002) for one includes in customer satisfaction, not only customer expectations to perceived performance, but also determinants like club identification and win/lose –factor as well as separates core and peripheral expectations, performance and disconfirmation.

The customer's willingness to recommend the purchased service or product has been considered a new asset for operative marketing. In strategic brand management and marketing, the brand loyalty typologies often refer to customer activity in promoting the brand. However, in the context of tourist destinations and services for travelers several studies have also realized the validity of consumer recommendation. Consumers buyer and post-purchase behavior and recommendation studied by Robinson & Etherington (2006) and Quick (2000) and the approach of Clemens, Brush & Collins (2010) are referred in this study. The theoretical framework of this study combines the core of SSSM's and the customer's willingness to recommend the event. By identifying the most important determinants of customer satisfaction correlating respondent's willingness to recommend the event, development suggestions for marketing practices could be presented. Therefore, the determinants that have stronger correlation to recommendation could be considered as the most important strategic strengths of the event in order to attract customers.

Methods and data collection

Data was collected during the WRC Rally Finland in August 2011 and 2012. Structured survey questionnaire with Likert scale determinants was used in person to person interviews. Interviews were conducted by using iPads and paper questionnaires during the event. Both headquarter and special stage spectators were interviewed. Data was processed in Webropol survey data system and Pearson's correlation coefficient was used when calculating the importance of determinants. The overall number of respondents in this survey was 849.

Results, implications and discussion

Results of this study indicate that there is a strong correlation between certain measured customer satisfaction determinants, like the frequency of attendance and provided service quality, and customer's willingness to recommend the rally event. However, it can also be shown that different types of customers consider different aspects of their experience important when recommending the event to other consumers. On the other hand, the results also suggest that the high level of customer satisfaction includes some risks, as the most satisfied customers might promote the event in a way that the expectations of new customers end up being extremely high.

References

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