

THE ROLE OF MASS PARTICIPATION SPORT EVENTS (MPSE) FOR PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INVOLVEMENT

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Abstract keywords

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Aim of abstract

Mass Participation Sport Events (MPSE) have experienced unprecedented growth over the last decade. MPSE generate significant social and economic benefits to the host community (Running USA, 2012). In terms of social benefits, research indicates MPSE have the capacity to produce a number of positive outcomes for both organizations (e.g., WOM, loyalty) and individuals (e.g., exercise intentions and activity commitment) (Funk et al., 2011; Kaplanidou et al., 2012). This research has primarily focused on event satisfaction as the key determinant of social outcomes but has failed to examine how unique event service attributes contribute to event satisfaction, which can lead to positive psychological benefits. Hence, the purpose of this study is to investigate the specific service attributes of an MPSE that contribute to positive involvement in physical activity.

Literature review

Contemporary consumer behavior literature maintains involvement as an important construct. Sport involvement is conceptualized as an individuals' perception of participation in a sport activity as a central component of his/her life that provides both hedonic and symbolic value (Beaton et al., 2011). Theory suggests numerous internal and external determinants influence the level of sport involvement. Internal determinants represent a range of personal and psychological factors while external determinants refer to social and environmental platforms that provide the context for influencing involvement in active sport participation. Theoretically, MPSE represent one such platform that has capacity to increase involvement with physical activity through an individual's preparation, participation, and continuation of activity post event with satisfaction being a key predictor of outcomes (Funk et al., 2011). In related work, service quality as represented by service deliverables is a significant predictor of event satisfaction (Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008). Hence, research is required to integrate the two streams of research and examine how service delivery and event satisfaction lead to post event physical activity involvement.

Methodology

A multivariate post-event survey was distributed to participants of a MPSE held in the Northeastern U.S. (N=4,828). A demographic profile of participants included 57% were female, 91% were between the ages of 21-55. Participants were Caucasian (76%), educated (89% college graduates), and affluent (71% with annual household income greater than \$60,000 USD). Service Delivery (SD) was measured by developing a 28-item event attribute scale based on consultation with event organizers. Overall Event Satisfaction (ES) was assessed using three items (Funk et al., 2011) while Psychological Involvement (PI) was assessed through a composite of three items (Beaton et al., 2009). All items were measured on 7-point Likert scales. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were used to assess the psychometric properties of the constructs. The SD→ES→PI Model was tested using Partial Least Squares (PLS), due to the assumption of multivariate normality being violated.

Results, discussion and implications

Exploratory Factor Analysis followed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis revealed a 22-item five-dimension scale of SD, including Expo (EXO)($M=5.44$), Start-line (SL)($M=5.13$), Course (CO)($M=5.79$), Finish-line (FL)($M=5.17$), and Event Operation (EO)($M=6.12$). Reliability, convergent and discriminant validity tests revealed acceptable fit to measurement models with average variance extracted (AVE) (.52-.81) and Cronbach's α (.77-.88) of each construct. Structural model testing with an overall model fit (GoF=.32) indicated a moderate effect size. The direct effects between SD and ES revealed four significant relationships (EXO, CO, SL, and EO). Among which, EO ($\beta=.31$, $p<.01$) had the strongest positive impact. ES had a significant and positive influences on PI ($\beta=.29$, $p<.01$). Collectively, the model explained 21% variance in ES and 8% in PI. In summary, the current research makes two contributions. First, it provides a parsimonious tool for event service attributes that can assist academics and event organizers to monitor service deliverables to improve participants' experience. Second, it highlights the role of service delivery in facilitating event satisfaction and creating positive involvement in running post event. Overall, the results showed that how to deliver euphoric event experience could translate institutional impact of an MPSE to lead to positive psychological outcome to the engaging participants. Practically, the findings reinforce the central role that sport organizations and event managers play in increasing individuals' connection to a physical activity with important health residuals.

References

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