

Impact of corporate wellness projects on internal marketing

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Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to understand and evaluate the effectiveness of corporate wellness programs as an internal marketing strategy on employees' short-term well-being and affective commitment to the organization. The study examines the impact of involvement in and status of the participated event on employee well-being and affective commitment through the mediation of level of participation and favorability towards the event.

Literature review and background

Employers apply workplace wellness programs in order to improve their employees' health, decrease costs related with health insurance and job absenteeism as well as to enhance employee commitment (Cawley and Price, 2013). Maintaining employee commitment and well-being are seen as the important factors of internal marketing (Fisk, Brown and Bitner, 1993). As employees are companies' brand ambassadors, satisfied and motivated employees will also lead to enhanced external marketing strategies where they can create value for customers and have direct impact on customer satisfaction as well as profitability (Veleva, Parker, Lee and Pinney, 2012).

One of the dimensions of employee well-being is the physical well-being. In 2015, 32% of the US companies offered reimbursements for fitness center memberships, 21% offered on-site fitness centers, 17% offered on-site fitness classes, as well as 14% the companies offered employer sponsored sports teams (SHRM, 2015). While employees can appreciate the health benefits of sports through corporate wellness programs, they may also feel more valued by their employers which will lead to higher loyalty toward the employer (Huddleston, Fry and Brown, 2012). Employers can spend on sports as a way of team-building activity. They can also build their corporate sports teams to promote their company as a way of advertisement. Thus, investing on sports within the company and sponsoring the employees' participation in sports maybe a strong tool for creating value for the employees and obtaining value from them in return. While participation to corporate sports events as a part of corporate wellness programs is rising globally, there is a limited number of studies on their impact on organizational commitment..The focus of this study is the impact of sports on short term employee well-being and internal marketing strategies for generating organizational commitment.

After a literature review on internal marketing, sponsorship and wellness, a conceptual model was developed to test the impact of involvement and status of the event on employees' favorable attitude towards the sponsored sports activity and their level of participation. In the second part of the model, the impacts of favorability and participation are measured on employee short-term wellness and affective commitment.

Methodology

This study considered a single case, the participation of employees with their corporate teams to Istanbul Marathon (sponsored by a multinational telecom company), which is recognized as one of the biggest sports oriented corporate wellness event by employers in Turkey. Recently, 193 surveys are completed by employees from various Turkish companies, including but not limited to Mercedes-Benz Turkey, Shell, Microsoft, JLL Turkey and Nutricia. The survey process is still continuing and will be completed before the conference

A CFA will be utilized to assess the psychometric properties of scale items and the proposed model will be tested with SEM. We guarantee that the analysis of the data will be completed and all findings will be presented at the conference.

Results/ implications

The understanding of the role of sports on employee well-being and affective commitment will have both theoretical and practical implications The results of this study will add to the extant literature on the effect of corporate sports event sponsorship on internal marketing. The context of study is chosen as Turkey where sports organizations (especially running organizations) and corporate wellness programs thrived in the past few years. The study will be a pioneering study that will guide the future corporate wellness programs based on sports in Turkey. It is believed that the study will also guide sports organizations from the corporate events and internal marketing perspectives.

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