Applying The Theory Of Planned Behaviour To Test Environmental Behaviour Among Cycling Spectators

Du Preez, Elizabeth Ann; Heath, Ernest Thomas
University of Pretoria, South Africa
E-mail: elizabeth.dupreez@up.ac.za

Research aim

The need to take responsibility for protection of the natural environment is a contemporary issue of growing importance for sport organisations, especially in the context of the continually growing sport event sector (Sotiriadou & Hill, 2015). For any organisational efforts to succeed and bring about long-term changes in the relationship between event sports tourism and the environment, there needs to be an understanding of the consumers of event sports tourism products and their attitudes and behaviour regarding environmentally responsible practices. The aim of this research study was to test a range of factors that could possibly influence spectators' propensity to display environmentally responsible behavior, using cycling events as a case study.

Theoretical background

This study combines knowledge from various subject areas, namely Environmental Psychology, Environmental Education and Consumer Behaviour, to explore environmentally responsible consumption within the context of event sports tourism. To this purpose, a theoretical model was developed that depict factors relevant to such behaviour among cycling event spectators. The model was based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour, a well-known and continually used model in behavioural studies (Ajzen, 2011). Although widely used in environmental and sustainable tourism studies, very limited application of the model has been undertaken in the sport context (McCullough, 2013). The model is known for its flexibility in allowing the inclusion of other variables and processes within it to improve prediction of intentions or behaviour in a specific context (Ajzen, 2011). At the basis of the model stand the three main drivers, Behavioural Attitude, Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioural Control, leading to the outcome variable behavioural intention. In this study behavioural intention is divided into two components, namely Situational Intention (while spectating) and Future Intention (before attending the next event). The addition of factors into the model focused on aspects relevant to sport spectating that could provide insight from an 'intrapersonal' and 'extra-personal' perspective. The three intrapersonal factors chosen were Attendance Motivation, Place Attachment and Behavioural Costs. To present the extra-personal perspective two factors that the spectators have no control over, but their presence or absence may have an influence on behavioural intentions were added, namely the Environmental Management System (including aspects of its design) and Behavioural Benefits (after Ajzen, 2011; Hinch & Higham, 2011; King, Kahle & Close, 2011; McCullough, 2013).

Methodology

Quantitative research in the form of structural equation modelling was used to simultaneously test the effect of the various factors on the behavioural intentions of spectators. A spectator survey was conducted across a series of ten different cycling events (mountain bike and road cycling) across South Africa. The final sample included a total of 1,034 spectators.

Results, discussion and implications

The research revealed that the refined structural model displayed adequate, but not good fit with the empirical data. Three of the relationships proved to be significant, namely the relationship between Situational Intention and Future Intention; between Attendance Motivation and Situational Intention; and between Situational Intention and Place Attachment. Based on the findings, cycling spectators with a positive Situational Intention may be more likely to display desirable behaviour in future; making it imperative for event managers to focus on identifying such individuals, as they could be the ones supporting managerial initiatives toward greening events in the future. The findings suggest that these individuals may be those spectators attending because of their affiliation with, or love for the sport of cycling (being motivated by the sport type itself). The findings link to current research exploring the link between place attachment and responsible behaviour in the sport event context (Du Preez & Heath, 2016; Hinch & Holt, 2017; McCullough & Kellison, 2016). Results of the other relationships tested in the model also present managerial implications. The importance of implementing an environmental management system in a visible manner becomes evident as these facilities could assist in establishing the 'norm' of desired behaviour. Environmental communication should also be placed within the right message frame. For example, encouraging people through rewards alone may not necessarily prove to be effective, as findings suggest that such gains/

benefits may not necessarily motivate a spectator in an outdoor setting, such as at cycling events. Rather, framing communication in such a way as to establish an association between the spectator's participation in responsible activities with greater pride in the event or setting could be more effective. Suggestions for further research are made, including testing factors within different sport event contexts.

References

Ajzen, I. (2011). The theory of planned behaviour: reactions and reflections. *Psychology & Health, 26*, 1113–1127.

Du Preez, E. A. & Heath, E. T. (2016). Determining the influence of the social versus physical context on environmentally responsible behaviour among cycling spectators. *Journal of Sport and Tourism, 20*, 123–142.

King, J., Kahle, L. R. & Close, A. G. (2011). Introduction: the study of sports and events consumer behavior. In L. R. Kahle & A. G. Close (Eds.), *Consumer Behavior Knowledge for Effective Sports and Event Marketing* (pp.1–28). New York: Routledge.

McCullough, B .P. (2013). Identifying the influences on sport spectator recycling behaviours using the theory of planned behaviour. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing, 14*, 146–168.

Sotiriadou, P. & Hill, B. (2015). Raising environmental responsibility and sustainability for sport events: A systematic review. *International Journal of Event Management Research, 10*, 1–11.