

Enabling And Constraining Factors That Lead To Inspiration And Intention To Increase Sport Participation From Sport Spectating

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Aim of the research

Hosting sport events has the potential to increase residents' happiness, stimulate economic activity and tourism expenditures, and inspire sport participation. This study focuses on the potential of events to inspire sport participation. To date, evidence at a population-level has suggested that watching events does not lead to sport participation, thereby calling into question increased physical activity as a justification for public subsidization (Potwarka & Leatherdale, 2016). However, scholars have also argued that much of this work has failed to investigate explanatory factors that would provide insight into individual responses to spectating even if the overall effect is not large (Veal, Toohey, & Frawley, 2012). Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify factors that might inspire sport participation in the context of an international swimming event held in Canada. Event organizers and sport governing bodies seeking to stimulate participation from events can use the results to design intervention strategies aimed at stimulating increased participation.

Theoretical background

In order to model potential demonstration effects through inspiration, this study builds on a recently tested Demonstration Effects Model (Potwarka, Drewery, Snelgrove, Havitz, & Mair, in press). The premise of the model is that spectators are first stimulated by a sport event, which in our case was a swimming event. Individuals then cognitively process the event, which ultimately leads to some kind of affective response and ultimately forms an intention regarding participation. In the case of sport spectating, Madrigal's (2006) FANDIM scale suggests that spectators cognitively process the event in six ways. Dimensions are *fantasy* (imagine being part of the action), *flow* (being immersed in the action), *evaluation* (critically evaluating the athletes), *aesthetics* (admiring the beauty of the sport), *personalities* (focusing on specific athletes during a competition), and *physical attractiveness* (appreciating the appearance of the athletes). Higher levels of cognitive processing of the event lead to an increased likelihood of that individual being inspired (Potwarka et al., in press). An inspired state (Thrash & Elliot, 2003) then positively shapes an intention to engage in sport participation. This intention can be to engage in the sport at hand or physical activity in general and vary based on the background of the individual in a particular sport (e.g., re-engaging in the sport, increasing levels, or trying a new sport). However, other factors may also influence the development of inspiration and intention. We propose that *constraints* (i.e., intrapersonal, interpersonal, structural) might play such a role and test that addition to the extant model. We view the formation of an intention to participate as the first step in a process that could lead to the behaviour. Thus, intention formation is a necessary, but incomplete condition in the demonstration effects process.

Method

Data were collected at the 2016 FINA Swimming Championships held in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. Spectators were approached inside the swimming facility to solicit their completion of a paper and pencil survey and were offered a small gift in return for their time. Madrigal's FANDIM scale was used to measure the cognitive dimensions of sport spectating, except for the *physical attractiveness* dimension as it was deemed inappropriate for the context (i.e., youth athletes). Inspiration was measured using three items from Thrash and Elliot's state inspiration scale. Intention to swim was measured in three different ways. Constraints were measured using items that represent *other sport preferences*, *perceived access to swimming*, *sufficient energy*, *other commitments*, and *recreation companions*. Background information on participants' experiences with swimming was also collected. A total of 258 useable surveys were returned to the research booth. Subsequently, data were analyzed using AMOS to assess the suitability of the measurement and structural models. Bootstrapping was employed to test the presence of mediation.

Results and discussion

Results of the CFA indicated the measurement model provided good fit to the data ($c^2/df = 1.47$, CFI = .971, NFI = .917, RMSEA = .043). Subsequently, the structural model was tested and indicated good fit as well ($c^2/df = 1.70$, CFI = .969, NFI = .928, RMSEA = .045). Results provided support for a fully mediated model, indicating no direct effects on intention to participate. Three factors were found to have a fully mediated effect on intention through inspiration, including fantasy, aesthetics, and energy. Results suggest that not only do cognitive elements of an event experience inspire spectators, but perceived constraints can also

hinder the development of inspiration. Results also support the notion some cognitive dimensions of spectating influence intention through inspiration. Specific implications for sport organizations will be discussed in light of the results.

References

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