

Event Characteristics' Effect On Sport Tourists' Behavioral Intentions

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Aim of the research

This study aimed to investigate two dimensions of behavioral intentions following participation in a sport event: 1) intentions to revisit/reparticipate and 2) likelihood to engage in word-of-mouth communications about the destination and event.

Literature review

Much of the research to date focuses on how destinations use sport to build a destination brand (e.g., Chalip & Costa, 2005), how destination image influences repeat visitation (e.g., Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007), and how destination image changes following the event (e.g., King, Chen & Funk, 2015). Likewise, on the sport event side, much work has been done to explore how the event can capitalize on the destination location (Kaplanidou, 2010), sport involvement and tourism and motivation to participate in sport events (Buning & Gibson, 2016).

The event can enhance its brand by capitalizing on a favorable destination (e.g., Kaplanidou, 2010), but it seems that for some active sport participants, the event factors play a bigger role than the destination (Newland & Aicher, 2017). One gap in the literature is that the intention to return to the destination for other leisure tourism has not been tested. One assumption often held by sport event directors and community leaders is that sport events can increase tourism outside of the event, which has not been tested empirically.

Research hypotheses

Based on the above information and discussions, we propose the following four hypotheses: Event characteristics will positively influence sport tourists' behavioral intentions to: H1: revisit the destination; H2: participate in the event again; H3: recommend the destination to others; and H4: to recommend the event to others.

Methodology

The survey questionnaire was designed based on extensive review of sport event and tourism literature. American respondents ($n = 690$) that had recently travelled to participate in an active sport event were targeted via an online survey using Amazon Mechanical Turk. Respondents were asked to assess the importance of sport event and destination attributes in the decision to participate in the sport event at the destination (King et al., 2015). For behavioral intentions, the respondents indicated the likelihood of revisiting the destination, participating in the event again, recommending the destination to others and recommending the event to others. Additionally, sport tourists answered sport participation and demographic questions.

Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis was employed to detect the underlying factor structure of the event characteristics. The research hypotheses were tested through the estimation of four regressions: one for each of the dependent variables of the study.

Results

The factor analysis with Varimax rotation revealed three components that explained 41.8%, 10.6%, and 9.92%, of the total variance, respectively. These were labeled as *event repute* (A), *event extras* (B), and *cost/value of event* (C). The independent variables included these three event characteristics that were computed to form three new single item variables from the mean scores of the items comprising each factor. The hypotheses were then tested through the estimation of four multiple regression models with one of each of the dependent variables. Overall, the results showed that the event characteristics' factor was a significant predictor for all dependent variables of behavioral intentions. Most variance explained by the event characteristics was in the dependent variables of behavioral intentions to return to the event ($R^2 = 25.6$), recommend the event ($R^2 = 23.3$), recommend the destination ($R^2 = 19.9$), and return to the destination ($R^2 = 15.9$).

Discussion and conclusions

All four hypotheses were supported. Athletes were more likely to return/recommend the destination to others if the event environment was scenic and easy. For event directors, this knowledge could be helpful

when choosing event locations in a destination. Athletes were more likely to return to the event for the extras and cost/value. In practice, event directors might consider how event ancillaries and/or added benefits could be included to add value to the participant. Finally, athletes were more likely to recommend the event to others if they perceived the event to be valuable. Having a better understanding as to what amenities can be provided for that added value is key. The findings are important to event managers working closely with destination marketers to enhance flow-on tourism. What drives behavior is key to improve repeat participation and visitation. Implications to theory and practice will be discussed.

References

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