

# The Impact Of Sport Event Volunteers' Social Interaction In Virtual Space

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## Aim of research and background

This paper highlights the importance of establishing social interaction ties amongst sport event volunteers in a virtual space, which further impacts volunteers' team member exchange, and future intentions to repeat volunteering and spreading positive word of mouth to potential volunteers.

Several scholars have highlighted the importance of social interaction between organizational members to organizational effectiveness (Alge, Wiethoff, & Klein, 2003). Establishing positive social relationships among members is valuable to organizations since such quality relationships contribute to organizational effectiveness and sustainable power (Alge et al., 2003). In addition, social interaction between members leads to organizational effectiveness by influencing team member exchange (Seers, 1989). Although scholars have emphasized the significant link between social interaction and team member exchange and its important role in member experience, studies in sport volunteerism involving these constructs are still nascent (Alge et al., 2003; Liao, Liu, & Loi, 2010; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Particularly lacking is the involvement of social media as the platform of member interaction.

Understanding the relationship between social interaction and team member exchange in the social space and how it affects future volunteering intentions, especially in an empirical setting, may provide meaningful insights that will extend the body of knowledge in sport volunteerism in general and volunteer management in particular.

## Method

Total of 150 event volunteers in the Northeast region in the United States participated in the survey. The Partial Least Squares (PLS) method of structural equation modeling was used to test the hypotheses and the structural model. Composite reliability test was used to confirm internal consistency of the measurement scales. The adequacy and statistical significance of the path models were confirmed by indices including individual indicator loadings, average variance explained (AVE), bootstrap t-statistics, and convergent validity.

## Results

Reliability test generated values between .91 and .97 for all measurement items. Convergent validity was confirmed by examining the item loadings of the latent constructs in respect to the average variance extracted (AVE > .50) values. Hypotheses testing generated significant results. Social interaction ties had a positive impact on team member exchange ( $\beta = .41$ ,  $t$  value = 6.68,  $p < .01$ ), word-of-mouth ( $\beta = .42$ ,  $t$  value = 7.02,  $p < .01$ ), and re-participate intention ( $\beta = .41$ ,  $t$  value = 6.19,  $p < .01$ ). The mediating effects of team member exchange indicated significant paths from social interaction ties to word-of-mouth ( $\beta = .17$ ,  $t$  value = 4.65,  $p < .01$ ) and from social interaction ties to re-participate intention ( $\beta = .17$ ,  $t$  value = 4.28,  $p < .01$ ). The goodness of fit for the proposed model was .38. This indicates good fit of the model to the data.

## Implications

The impact of social interaction on resource exchange and organizational effectiveness mainly found in traditional organization settings may be extended to virtual social media communities. Social media can be used as an interactive tool to connect volunteers in the virtual space and create social communities related to volunteer work. This in turn will encourage volunteers to actively engage in these online communities, offer richer volunteer experience, and build more positive social interactions amongst volunteers.

## References

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