

Social World Influence on Event Satisfaction and Runner Behaviors

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Aim

The following research questions guided this study were: (1) What differences exist in event attribute quality, overall event satisfaction, personal performance, social world influence, and repeat behaviors existed between local and non-local participants? (2) What differences exist in event attribute quality, event satisfaction, personal performance, social world influence, and repeat behaviors existed between first-time and experienced runners? (3) What differences in attribute quality, event satisfaction, personal performance, and repeat behaviors in social world status? (4) Does social world mediate the relationship between overall event satisfaction and repeat behaviors?

Literature Review

Runners, like any other social group, develop and maintain a subculture in which they identify with and seek opportunities to engage with others with similar norms, values, beliefs, and behavior (Unruh, 1980). Running becomes part of their social world and belonging to this group distinguishes them from others. As an individual becomes more immersed into a social world, he/she progresses through four distinct social types: outsiders, occasionals, regulars, and insiders (see Unruh, 1980). It is possible these distinct groups will interact with the event and the event attributes differently. In evaluating the event attributes on quality, Parasuraman et al (1988) argued identifying the gap between expected and actual perceived service quality identifies gaps within the service. Researchers extended this logic to indicate comparing the perceived quality to a benchmark will develop an even stronger understanding of perceived attribute quality (Feng, et al., 2014). It is important to not only know how runners might perceive the quality of an event, but also how this may differ by social world, local vs. non-local participants, and level of experience with the event.

Method

Through a partnership with a running festival in the Midwest United States, data were collected via an online questionnaire distributed to all participants following the event. The questionnaire included items to measure social world immersion (4 items, Gawhiler & Havitz, 1998), event attribute satisfaction (21 items, Du et al., 2015), overall event satisfaction (3 items Du et al., 2015), performance goal achievement (1 item), and demographic items. The scales were found to be valid and reliable. For event attribute quality, the participants were asked to rate how important the attribute was to their decision to participate in the event and how the event compared to a previous running event the participant attended. Following the methods of Feng et al. (2014), a difference score between importance and comparative performance was calculated and used for the event attributes satisfaction in the following analyses.

Results

A total of $N = 3,924$ complete responses were received from which included non-local participants ($n = 2,219$) and local participants ($n = 1,705$). For first (local status), second (event experience), and third (social world) research questions, separate MANOVAs were calculated. For RQ1, results indicated significant differences between locals and non-locals in

social world status ($F[1, 3097] = 275.84, p < .001, h^2 = 0.08$), intent to return to the event ($F[1, 3097] = 118.58, p < .001, h^2 = 0.04$), overall event satisfaction ($F[1, 3097] = 15.28, p < .001, h^2 = 0.01$), course attributes ($F[1, 3097] = 8.38, p < .01, h^2 = 0.003$), and crowd support attributes ($F[1, 3097] = 11.06, p < .001, h^2 = 0.004$). For RQ2, results indicated significant differences between event experience in social world status ($F[1, 1792] = 3.869, p = .049, h^2 = 0.002$), intent to return to the event ($F[1, 1792] = 281.81, p < .001, h^2 = 0.136$), recommend event to others ($F[1, 1792] = 13.764, p < .001, h^2 = 0.008$), course attributes ($F[1, 1792] = 17.32, p < .001, h^2 = 0.01$), and pre/post-race attributes ($F[1, 1792] = 11.513, p < .001, h^2 = 0.006$). For RQ3, results indicated significant differences in social world status for performance goal ($F[3, 3091] = 5.582, p < .001, h^2 = 0.005$), intent to return to the event ($F[3, 3091] = 19.432, p < .001, h^2 = 0.007$), recommend event to others ($F[3, 3091] = 7.652, p < .001, h^2 = 0.007$), overall event satisfaction ($F[3, 3091] = 5.584, p = .003, h^2 = 0.004$) and course attributes ($F[3, 3091] = 3.315, p = .019, h^2 = 0.03$). And, finally, for RQ4, a mediation Process procedure (Hayes & Scharkow, 2013) was calculated. The results indicate that social world mediates the relationship between overall event satisfaction and repeat behaviors, accounting for 56.13% of the variance. The standardized coefficient between event satisfaction and social worlds (.29) and the standardized coefficient between social world and behavior (.06) were both statistically significant ($p < .001$). The bootstrapped unstandardized indirect effect was .07, and the 95% confidence interval ranged from .02, .17. Thus, the indirect effect was statistically significant (Hayes & Scharkow, 2013).

Discussion and Conclusions

Social world matters. The more satisfied an immersed athlete is with the event, the more likely the athlete is to tell others about the event. Social world does mediate the relationship between satisfaction and behavior. So, more immersed runners are not likely to participate in the event again. Differences with non-locals, event experience, and social world were found. These findings will be discussed in detail during the presentation.

References

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