

Is the cause or the sport more important to fundraisers?

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**Marketing
Session 17**

**Friday, May 30, 2008
3:30 PM - 3:55 PM**

**Presentation (25-minute)
Abstract 93**

Nonprofit organizations in Canada are increasingly utilizing sport events as a means of generating funds and raising awareness (Scott & Solomon, 2003). Participants are key contributors to the effectiveness of these events as their involvement and levels of fundraising are critical determinants of the event's overall success. In order to increase the amount of funds raised from these events, organizers strive to increase the overall number of participants and the average amount fundraised per participant (Wharf Higgins & Lauzon, 2003). Thus, the identification of effective practices aimed at the attraction and retention of participants is of great importance to event organizers.

Webber (2004) identified that in order to maximize the amount of funds raised from cause-related events, fundraising techniques and marketing strategies need to be developed based on participants' reasons for attending the event. Two major aspects of consumer behaviour that have been shown to be important in predicting participation are subcultural identification and motivation (Green, 2001; Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001). It has been shown that events that have been redesigned with a focus on subculture have been able to significantly increase the number of participants in attendance (Green, 2001). Providing event organizers with information pertaining to participants' subcultural identification and motivations will enable a sport event offering and marketing campaign to be tailored to distinct target markets in order to increase participation numbers and maximize the amount of money that is raised (Wharf Higgins & Lauzon, 2003; Rohm, Milne, & McDonald, 2006). While these constructs have received the attention of researchers in terms of participation in a particular sport (e.g., Green, 2001; Wheaton, 2000), little research has examined their existence within the context of a cause-related sporting event. This type of event can be considered unique due to the existence of two potentially strong identities namely the sport and the cause. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between demographics, identification with the sport and cause, motivation and the level of fundraising at a cause-related sporting event.

The study was conducted at two different Canadian cities holding the Rona MS Bike Tour in 2007 (i.e. Brampton to Waterloo, Niagara). The two tours were selected for their differing levels of difficulty. The Brampton to Waterloo tour consisted of a challenging 190 km route over two days, and the Niagara tour consisted of moderate 40 km and 75 km routes over one day. Participants were asked to complete a written survey that consisted of three sections: (a) an adapted version of Shamir's (1992) Leisure Identity Scale intended to measure identification with cycling and the cause; (b) an short version of Beard & Ragheb's (1983) Leisure Motivation Scale and selected motivation constructs from Wharf Higgins and Lauzon (2003); (c) demographic information and the amount fundraised. Of the 236 surveys distributed, 206 were returned (i.e. Response rate of 87.3%). Alpha coefficients and factor analysis will be used to test the internal consistency of the latent constructs and to validate the scales. Structural equation modelling will be used to determine the relationship between demographics, identity, motivation and the amount of funds raised.

The findings of this study have both theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical standpoint it identifies the influence that identification with the sport and cause, and motivation have upon the amount of funds raised as well as the impact that one construct has upon the other. From a practical standpoint, an understanding of these relationships will allow nonprofit organizers to design their events and marketing campaigns to match the identities and motivations of their intended target market (e.g. top fundraisers). An improved focus on satisfying the needs of participants will improve retention and increase the number of people participating each year. Further, more effective and efficient marketing practices will ultimately lead to a greater amount of funds available to support the given cause.