The Direct and Indirect Effects of Sport Event Reputation on Volunteer Commitment

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The essence of successful sport events is volunteer contribution. The importance of volunteers as a resource is emphasized in larger sport events that require a massive number of individuals for delivering the sport service. This suggests that volunteers are key stakeholders with an interest in producing successful sport events. Considering the significant influence of volunteers on the event programs and services, developing effective recruitment and retention strategies is a cardinal task for many sporting event managers (Cleave & Doherty, 2005; Cuskelly & Auld, 2000). Various volunteer studies suggest that motivational factors have influence upon actual volunteer participation (Bang & Chelladurai, 2003; Clary, 2004).

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using LISREL 8.7 to build a measurement model and to verify the appropriateness of the scales used in the sport event context. The measurement model including 17 items with the 3 constructs of volunteer commitment, volunteer satisfaction, and brand reputation indicated that all items for each construct significantly loaded on their corresponding construct. Results from CFA revealed that the chi-square test was significant ($\chi^2 = 378.68$, df = 116, $p < .01$), which would indicate an unacceptable fit. However, the chi-square test of absolute model fit is sensitive to large sample size and non-normality in the underlying distribution of the input variables (Kline, 1998). Thus, the alternative fit indices indicated that the measurement model had an acceptable fit of the data: CFI = .96, NFI = .94, TLI = .95, IFI = .96, and RMR = .058 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hair, Tatham, & Black, 1998) as shown the fit indices (CFI, NFI, TLI, and IFI) exceeding a...
cutoff value of .90 with RMR value below .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kelloway, 1998; Kline, 1998). The reliability test of the scales with Cronbach’s alpha exhibited reliability with alpha values ranging from .87 to .91, meeting the minimum level (.70) recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Then, the proposed model with the hypothesized relationships was tested using structural equation modeling (SEM). The results indicate that although the $\chi^2$ value with 116 degrees of freedom was significant at $p < .01$, other fit indices indicated that the proposed model achieved a satisfactory fit with the data (CFI = 0.96, NFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.95, IFI = 0.96, and RMR = 0.058). That is, as hypothesized, brand reputation had a significant positive relation with volunteer commitment to the event and positive relation to volunteer satisfaction. Volunteer satisfaction had a significant positive relation with volunteer commitment. However, although all the direct and indirect relations were significant, the beta coefficient value of the direct relation from brand reputation to volunteer commitment was lower than the values of the indirect relation of those through volunteer satisfaction. That is, it appears that the role of brand reputation is demonstrated as being more indirect.

Overall, the present study increases the understanding of the role of sporting event reputation in volunteer commitment. The value and the meaning of the sporting event as a brand is essential given that high quality or well-known sporting events is likely to create more attention from people for the volunteer service than unidentified sporting events. The study also provides a unique extension to the literature by demonstrating how the sporting event itself needs to be modified not only to meet expectation and needs of participants, but also to satisfy motivations of volunteers. Furthermore, given that sport services are simultaneously produced and consumed, event organizations must realize that quality service experienced at the event could affect reputation and help predict volunteer’s future consumption. Volunteers may begin to demand a similar sporting service as they have come to expect as participants.