The Predictive and Moderating Roles of Organizational and Brand Reputations on Individuals’ Intentions to Volunteer for Sporting Events: An Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior

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A large body of research exists that identifies volunteers’ motivations for sporting events. Volunteers are motivated to provide their time and effort by a variety of reasons. However, there may be some other external factors that can help individuals decide to volunteer for a certain sporting event. According to numerous consumer behavior studies, organizational reputation (e.g., Caruana, Cohen, & Krentler, 2006; Keh & Xie, in press) and brand reputation (e.g., Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Geisser, 2001) have been found to be important influential factors that predict the consumer’s behavioral intention. Applying the concept of organizational reputation values to a volunteer work setting, individuals may have strong intentions to volunteer at and be part of a certain sporting event of which the organization has favorable reputation given that the individuals trust the sporting event organization as a good event provider. An event’s reputation (i.e. brand reputation) may also predict individuals’ intention to volunteer at the sporting event as brand reputation is closely tied to consumers’ trust of product quality.

Individuals’ decision to volunteer for a certain sporting event may be explained by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) that includes three elements. According to TPB, the three elements: (a) attitude, (b) subjective norms, and (c) perceived behavioral control (PBC), can guide behavioral intention and actual behavior of individuals (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). That is, an individual’s favorable or unfavorable attitude toward volunteering at a sporting event, perceived social pressure by others, and perceived control beliefs that may impede the individual’s volunteer activities can lead to the prediction of the individual’s intention to volunteer at the sporting event. Therefore, it is important to understand whether organizational and brand reputations play an important role in moderating the effects of the three elements on an individual’s volunteer intention. The purpose of the present study was (a) to examine the influences of TPB variables, organizational, and brand reputations on individuals’ intention to volunteer for future sporting events and (b) to investigate the moderated impacts of organizational reputation and brand reputation on the relationships between TPB variables and intention.

The sample consisted of one hundred seven participants (25.7% female; 74.3% male) who volunteered for the 2009 NCAA Men’s Basketball Tournament (a response rate of 95.7%). A survey questionnaire was administered to the volunteers in person at their orientation session prior to volunteering at the NCAA Basketball Tournament. The questionnaire was consisted of four parts: (a) organizational reputation, (b) brand (event) reputation, (c) TPB, and (d) demographic information. Sporting event organization’s reputation (NCAA) was assessed using 2 items used by Selnes’s (1993) study. Event’s reputation (here NCAA Basketball Tournament) was examined with the same two items as the organization’s reputation items with a simple change of wording. A theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) questionnaire was employed to measure the volunteers’ Attitude (4 items), Subjective Norm (4 items), and PBC (3 items), and volunteer Intention (3 items). All item responses ranged from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7), using a 7-point Likert-type scale as well. The questionnaire included five demographic questions: sex, age, ethnicity, education level, and marital status.

The internal consistency estimates (Cronbach’s alpha) were computed to determine the reliability of the multiple-item scales. The results showed that Cronbach’s alpha ranged from .74 to .95, meeting the minimum level (.70) recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). A multiple regression analysis was performed to identify the effects of TPB variables, organizational and brand reputations on the participants’ intention to volunteer for future sporting events. The full model equation was significant (F(5, 70) = 25.22, p < .01; R² = .64, Adjusted R² = .62). Higher levels of brand reputation (i.e., the NCAA Basketball Tournament’s reputation) were associated with higher levels of the individual’s intention to volunteer (β = .44, p < .001). On the other hand, the organizational reputation variable was negatively related to the individuals’ intention (β = -.37, p < .05). Subjective Norm (β = .57, p < .001) and PBC (β = -.39, p < .001) were significant although Attitude variable was not found to be significant (β = .00, p = .961).
Moderated hierarchical multiple regression analysis procedures were employed to examine the moderating effects of organizational reputation and brand (event) reputation on the relationship between each of the TPB variables and volunteer intention. All the predictors were centered to reduce multicollinearity problems (Howell, 2002; Aiken, West, & Pitts, 2003), and interaction terms were computed as a cross-product of the centered predictors (Kim, Kaye, & Wright, 2001). For each regression analysis, a predictor variable was entered first, and then a moderator variable was included in the second model (Nunally & Bernstein, 1994). The interaction term was then added in the final model. Therefore, six separate regression analyses were performed.

Of the six regression analyses, two regression procedures produced significant interactions: Subjective Norm × Organizational Reputation and PBC × Brand Reputation. The results of the moderated regression for Subjective Norm and Organizational Reputation revealed that variance accounted for by the first model including only Subjective Norm was moderate ($R^2 = 0.40, F(1, 79) = 51.75, p < .001$). The second model that added Organizational Reputation was significant ($F(2, 78) = 26.41, p < .001$). However, the slight increase in R-squared ($R^2 = 0.40$) was not significant in the second model. The final model that included the interaction term showed a significant incremental increase in R-squared ($R^2 = 0.44, F(3, 77) = 20.27, p < .001$), indicating that Intention depends upon the interaction of Subjective Norm and Organizational Reputation. As for the results for the moderated impact of brand reputation on the relationship between PBC and Intention, the PBC variable accounted for 14% of the variance ($R^2 = .14$) explained in the Intention variable in the first model, which was significant ($F(1, 79) = 12.96, p < .01$). The results of the second model revealed a significant increase in R-squared ($R^2 = 0.22, F(2, 78) = 10.95, p < .001$). The final model showed an increase in R-squared ($R^2 = 0.26$), which was also significant ($F(3, 77) = 9.16, p < .001$).

According to the multiple regression results, subjective norm variable was found to best predict individuals’ intention to volunteer for future sporting events. A strong Subjective Norm may indicate friends and family members who support the individual’s volunteering; this support may enable the individual to volunteer by potentially receiving childcare or transportation if needed and provide positive feedback and affirmation about volunteering. Moreover, the combination of high levels of Subjective Norm with high levels of Organizational Reputation led to higher levels of volunteer intention. This could be a result of a strong and positive organizational reputation; a volunteer could feel that his or her family or friends would support them volunteering for or involved with a particular organization. Consequently, the findings of the present study provides a better understanding of individuals’ decision making process with respect to volunteering for a certain sporting event and important insights into new strategies to increase volunteer recruitment, retention and reliability, thereby being able to directly apply to practical situations involving event managers, volunteer managers and sporting event organizations.