An Examination of the Influence of Sport Event Quality Perception on Destination Image

Kae Sung Moon, University of Florida
Daniel Connaughton (Advisor), University of Florida
Yong Jae Ko (Advisor), University of Florida
Jeoung Hak Lee, Kyung Hee University

Sport tourism
Abstract 2011-144
Friday, June 3, 2011
1:15 PM
Poster (Alumni Hall)

Many cities and nations have expressed interest in hosting mega international sport events. Hosting sport events can result in a variety of benefits including increased economy activities (Getz, 1998) and improving the destination image and community pride of residents in the region (Allen et al., 2002). In comparison to hosting mega international sport events (e.g., Olympics, World Cup), there has been less interest in hosting smaller-scale, international sport events (e.g., PGA Championship, marathon race). Hosting an international sport event can result in three main benefits. First, cities can expect a major improvement in their destination image because it may be possible to hold the event annually. Second, cities can further develop community identity by hosting a creative mixture of sport events and traditional festivals within their region. Third, hosting such events may improve a city’s infrastructure (e.g., roads, parking, and places of lodging) and living environment (e.g., post-event public use of facilities; Moon, Lee, & Ko, 2009).

To further increase the potential benefits of hosting an international sport event, it is important to develop a positive event/service quality perception and destination image among current and potential tourists. Enhanced event quality positively influences the sport tourist’s enjoyment and satisfaction of the event (Getz, 1997) and their revisit intentions (Petrick, Morais, & Norman, 2001). Additionally, an improved destination image positively influences their first visit to a destination and revisit intentions (Binge, Sanchez, & Sanjaz, 2001).

In the sport and tourism literature, scholars have examined consumers’ event quality perceptions and destination image, and their positive effects on consumer decision making processes. To date, however, there have been very few empirical studies examining the relationship between international sport event quality and destination image. Therefore, an empirical examination of the theoretical relationship between these important constructs will contribute to the body of knowledge in sport event/tourism management and marketing.

In this study, event quality factors were measured by Parasuraman et al.’s (1985, 1988) scales of intangible factors (i.e., reliability, responsiveness, security, credibility, communication, and assurance) and Wakefield and Blodgett’s (1999) scale of tangible factors (i.e., design, equipment, and ambience). Destination image was developed by modifying existing scales including Echtner and Ritchie’s (1993) scale (i.e., cognitive image: tourist sites/activities, nightlife and entertainment, ease of communication, hospitality/friendliness/receptiveness, and opportunity for adventure), Hosany, Ekinci, and Uysal’s (2007) scale (i.e., affective image: interesting/boring, pleasant/unpleasant, exciting/gloomy, relaxing/distressing, friendly/unfriendly, and arousing/sleepy), and Silva and Alwi’s (2006) scale (i.e., conative image: intention to receive new services, complaint behavior, positive aspects of the region, weakness of the region, and intention to share positive and negative things with other people through word-of-mouth). The survey format was a five-point Likert type scale.

This study recruited 451 spectators/tourists who attended the Tour de Korea, an annual international road cycling stage race, which is held in 7-10 regions in South Korea for 10 consecutive days. Each year over 20 professional cycling teams (and over 120 professional cyclists) participate. Of the respondents, 54.1% were male, 32.6% were aged 40-49, 65.2% were married, and about 55% had a college degree. In terms of occupation, 24.2% were students while 30.8% were employees in a managerial position. About 48% were aware of the Tour de Korea 2 years before their survey participation.

Reliability and validity of the measurement scale were established through a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), Cronbach’s alpha analyses, and intercorrelation analyses. As indicated by $\chi^2/df = 907.99/376 = 2.42$, RMSEA = .056, CFI = .96, SRMR = .046, the measurement model achieved good fit for the data. All factor loadings were greater than .70, ranging from .71 to .93. AVE values ranged from .62 for Affective Image to .79 for Tangible Factors. Reliability coefficients ranged from .91 for Affective Image to .94 for Intangible Factors. Correlation among factors was reasonably high, ranging from .34 to .78. Taken together, the results provide evidence for convergent validity of the measurement scales (Hair et al., 2006). A series of regression analyses were performed to answer the research questions. The results suggested that event quality perception positively influenced the destination’s image (i.e., cognitive, affective, and conative image). Specifically, some of intangible event quality factors (i.e., communication, reliability, and security) were found to be important predictors of all three image factors (i.e.,...
cognitive, affective, and conative image). Assurance was an important predictor for only cognitive image while responsiveness was an important factor for conative image. In terms of tangible factors, only Ambience was an important predictor for all three image factors, and design was found to be an important predictor of cognitive image. In sum, although we found some differential effects of tangible and intangible aspect of event quality on destination image, we conclude that consumers’ event quality perceptions are an important predictor in developing the destination image. Thus, we suggest that an organization hosting international sport events should enhance event quality to help develop their destination image among the targeted market segment. Consequently, the authors believe that a clearer understanding of the theoretical relationship between event quality and destination image in the tourist’s decision making process will make both scientific and practical contributions.