

Rediscovering Antecedents and Consequences of Event Satisfaction within a MPSE Context

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Mass Participation Sport Events (MPSE) in the U.S. and worldwide have experienced unprecedented growth over the last decade (Running USA, 2012). Studies from epidemiology argue this popularity stems from the fact that MPSE represent an effective population-based intervention that has the capacity to facilitate active lifestyles among participants (Bauman et al., 2009, Murphy & Bauman, 2007). Within sport, scholars have provided evidence in support of MPSE's potential social role for increasing physical activity noting that event satisfaction is a key predictor variable to elicit positive attitudinal outcomes toward the activity and exercise intention (Funk et al., 2011). However, this research has primarily focused on the functionality of MPSE and neglected to examine key determinants capable of influencing a participant's evaluation of the experience. Specifically, what factors contribute to a state of contentment where the individual is physiologically required to perform a given physical activity? Hence, this research examines key performance-based determinants of event satisfaction and associated outcomes. Satisfaction plays a salient role in business and consumer behavior research. Within the field of sport management, Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm (EDP) (Oliver, 1980), Service Quality (Parasuraman et al., 1985), and Serviscape (Bitner, 1992) are three distinct constructs that have been extensively used to investigate satisfaction and its associated outcome variables (e.g., future behavioral intentions) across a variety of spectator sport events in the prior literature (e.g., Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008; Tsuji et al., 2007; Yoshida & James, 2010). However, this body of research has failed to investigate the role of behavioral performance may contribute to event satisfaction requiring a context specific examination of MPSE.

The performance perspective suggests that a positive causal relationship exists between goal achievement and satisfaction. Bandura's (1977, 1982) self-efficacy theory proposes that an individual's sense of personal efficacy is derived from performance goal achievement and is vital to determine whether a behavior will be initiated and maintained. Stoeber et al. (2009) reported that performance outcomes significantly affected satisfaction at a triathlon event. Hence, a participant's actual performance at the MPSE conceptually is likely to influence not only event satisfaction but also contribute to important outcomes of satisfaction including long-term activity commitment, future exercise intentions, as well as travel related intentions (Funk et al., 2011; Kaplanidou et al., 2012). The purpose of the current research is to examine key internal and external components that contribute to event satisfaction as well as the resulting positive attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. Specifically, what are key event and running related antecedents and consequences of event satisfaction within a MPSE?

To respond to the aforementioned research question, a multivariate post-event survey was distributed to participants in a renowned running-event held on the southeast coast of the U.S. (N=3,476). Participants' demographic characteristics included 50% male and female, 63% were between the ages of 25 and 44, and 57% were married or living with their life partners. The majority of participants were Caucasian or Hispanic (90%), educated (82% were college graduates) and affluent (64% had an annual household income greater than US\$75,000). The survey measured the following key predictor variables: a) personal performance (PP), b) expectancy-disconfirmation (ED) both using 7-point Likert scales, and c) 28-event related attributes (EA) developed in consultation with the event organizer to capture a spectrum of event deliverables. All attributes were also measured on 7-point Likert scales. Principal Component Analysis was used to reduce item dimensions before a composite factor score of EA was computed using a least squares regression approach to facilitate the subsequent analysis (Hair et al., 2006). The overall Event Satisfaction (ES) was assessed using a composite score of three items measured on a 7-point Likert scale (Oliver, 1980) (M= 6.38). Last, key outcome variables were assessed through two single-item measures for word-of-mouth for the event (WOM) and event return intention (RI). In terms of future running behavior (BI), it was assessed by asking participants about the number of running events they were planning to participate in (within the following 12 months post event).

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Path analysis using AMOS 20 was employed to examine the direct relationships between predictor variables PP, ED, EA and ES, the direct relationships between ES and outcome variables WOM, RI, and BI as well as indirect relationships between antecedents and consequences of ES. The analysis demonstrated an acceptable model fit to the data χ^2 (df) = 6938.25(21); RMSEA = .080 (.069, .092); SRMR = .026; CFI = .981; NNFI = .932; AGFI = .948 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Results indicate that collectively the three predicting variables EA ($\beta = .15$), ED ($\beta = .43$), and PP ($\beta = .05$) explained 42.4% of the variance in ES with all paths significant $p < .001$. In terms of outcomes, a combination of ES ($\beta = .40$), EA ($\beta = .29$), ED ($\beta = .36$), and PP ($\beta = -.08$) explained 43% variance in WOM. The model further explained 9.7% variance in RI and 2.0% in BI. In addition, significant indirect relationships between exogenous variables PP, EA, and ED and endogenous variables WOM and RI were identified at $p < .001$. Finally, a significant negative direct relationship was found between PP ($\beta = -.06$) and BI.

In summary, the current research makes three contributions. First, the empirical results augmented prior literature on event satisfaction, which to date has extensively examined spectator sport with limited attention to participant sport. Second, results suggest conventional expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm and service quality along with environmental factors represented by event attributes are necessary but not sufficient to holistically explain participants' event satisfaction at mass participation sport events. Therefore, a runner's evaluation of physical performance in the event should also be considered to predict their event satisfaction as well as the associated attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (i.e., WOM, RI and BI). Among which, the negative direct relationship between PP and BI indicates that participants that were less satisfied with their personal performance presumably will devote more time in preparing for and participating in the future events in order to promote performance goal achievements. Third, analysis also supported the notion that event-related attitudinal and behavioral outcomes should be included to enrich the array of event satisfaction consequences suggested by prior MPSE literature (Funk et al., 2011; Kaplanidou et al., 2012). Practically, to improve participants' experience at a MPSE and elicit positive attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, 1) event organizers should continue to take a service quality approach to manage the event more effectively to promote overall satisfaction. 2) Given the positive relationship between performance and event satisfaction, event practitioners can utilize relevant information to create marketing initiatives to extend individuals' post event sense of satisfaction.