

Understanding the Relationship Between Volunteers' Social Media Interaction, Team Member Exchange, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior in a Community Sporting Event

Chungyeol Lee, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Jakeun Koo, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Younghan Lee (Advisor), University of Massachusetts, Amherst

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Community sport organizations are confronted with limited financial and human resources (Misener & Doherty, 2009). These organizations rely heavily on volunteers for the successful outcome of community-based sporting events, while facing declining rate of volunteers (Cuskelly, 2004). Therefore, effective volunteer management while reducing the cost of recruiting and retaining volunteers is crucial for successful operation of community-based sporting events. One method that can enhance volunteer acquisition and retention is the promotion of social interaction ties (SIT) amongst volunteers in social media platforms. Extant studies have recognized the importance of social interaction among organizational members (Nahapiet & Goshal, 1998), based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). Alge, Wiethoff, and Klein (2003) suggest that social interaction between members leads to organizational effectiveness by influencing team member exchange quality (TMX). TMX, in brief, refers to the quality of relationships among coworkers (Seers, 1989). According to Kamdar and Van Dyne (2007), TMX induces extra-role behavior, which represents the concept of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Furthermore, previous research indicates that OCB has a positive effect on loyalty behavior of organizational members (Van Dyne, Graham & Dienesch, 1994). Despite the previous efforts, limited studies have provided a unified theoretical framework pertaining to the relationship between these variables. Specifically, the lack of studies involving social interaction in social media context limits our understanding in this particular aspect. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to empirically examine the relationships between social interaction in social media, TMX, OCB, and loyalty behavior of sport volunteers.

The subjects for this study were the volunteers of a local sporting event hosted by a university in the Northeast region. An online survey was performed, which obtained 150 valid samples. Social media platform used in this study was Facebook, which social interaction amongst volunteers took place.

The study proposes that online social interaction ties of volunteers will positively affect team member exchange and organizational citizenship behavior. Additionally, the study predicts that team member exchange will positively affect organizational citizenship behavior. Lastly, we propose that organizational citizenship behavior will positively affect word of mouth and intention to re-participate.

Three items from Chiu, Hsu and Wang (2006) were used to measure SIT. Seers' (1989) ten-item scale was used to measure TMX. Thirteen items were selected from the scale developed by Lee and Allen (2002) to measure OCB. Three items each for word of mouth and intention to re-participate were adopted from Maxham (2001). All items were presented on a 7-point Likert-type scale.

The study utilized Cronbach's alpha coefficient to measure internal consistency. In addition, regression analysis was used to test the proposed hypotheses. Cronbach's alpha test (.854 to .960) results confirmed internal consistency according to the coefficient (.70) value standard suggested by Murphy and Davidshofer (2001). Regression analysis results revealed that SIT had a statistically significant positive affect on TMX and OCB. SIT explained 19.1% of the variance in TMX ($F=34.950, p<.001$) and 15.4% of the variance in OCB ($F=27.018, p<.001$). TMX explained 47.2% of the variance in OCB ($F=132.409, p<.001$). Finally, OCB explained 27.5% of variance in word of mouth ($F=56.111, p<.001$) and 28.1% of the variance in re-participate intention ($F=57.891, p<.001$).

The finding that SIT directly affects TMX is in line with the results from Alge, Wiethoff, and Klein (2003). The fact that TMX has a positive effect on volunteer's OCB is consistent with the work by Kamdar and Van Dyne (2007). In

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addition, the study recognized a partial mediating effect of TMX on the relationship between SIT and OCB. Lastly, the finding that OCB positively affects loyalty behavior supports the work by Van Dyne, Graham, and Dienesch (1994). To date, most social interaction studies have been conducted mainly in business organization settings (Chen, Chang & Hung, 2008). This study provides empirical support in the sport volunteer management context. In addition, while previous studies predominantly focused on face-to-face interactions between the members (Maurer, Bartsch & Ebers, 2011), the current study focuses on online interactions between the members applying the concept of SIT in social media platform. The study results show that social interaction on social media will help organizations by encouraging extra-role behaviors and loyalty behaviors of the volunteers. It implies that social interaction through a social media platform can be developed as a valuable cost-effective resource management tool for community sport organizations with limited financial and human resources. Overall, this study offers practical implications for the community sport organizations on how to manage volunteer recruiting and retention effectively with limited resources. The study, in addition, extends the body of knowledge that involve sport volunteer management studies in general and community sport event management in particular. Detailed implications of the findings, limitations, and directions for future research will be discussed in the presentation.