Relationship of Travel Distance on Commitment and Motivations in Sport Tourism

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Large sport participation events rely heavily on tourism in order to fill registration and provide the local area with significant positive impact (Daniels, Norman, & Henry, 2004). Previous research has investigated overall motivations to participate in sport tourism events (Daniels & Norman, 2005; Holden, 1999; Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2005), including developing consumer profiles of sport tourists (Hallmann & Wicker, 2012; Zorba, Micoogullari, & Zorba, 2004). Hallmann & Wicker (2012) developed profiles of marathon runners and determined there were three basic categories, holidayers, socializers and marathoners. The authors also go on to comment about distance traveled, specifically as related to length of stay, but also as a potential factor in profile generation. The distance traveled seems to have an impact on a person’s motivation to travel and might be reflective on their overall commitment to the sport, however little is known about the differences in motivations and commitments between those that travel long distances and those that are local residents. The purpose of this project is to examine whether levels of motivation to participate in sport, commitment to sport, and motivations to attend might differ based upon the type of participate and distance traveled. Often times it is assumed that the individuals that travel greater distances either have specific motivations (such as interest in a specific event attribute), have interest in a specific type of participation (i.e. competitive or with family/friends) and/or are more committed to the sport.

Methods

The data was collected from registered participants of a large half-marathon located in the Midwest. Surveys were collected via the online survey tool Qualtrics. Participants that had registered by the date the first emailing were sent a message containing a brief description of the project along with an internet link to the survey resulting in 35,375 successfully delivered emails. At the end of the 6 week open period, 6,916 people clicked through to the survey and of those, 6,638 began the survey. The total complete and usable surveys resulted in 5,328.

To measure the participants motivation to run and train for this event, a shortened version of the Motivation of Marathoners (MOMS) Research (Masters, Ogles, & Jolton, 1993). Respondents rated the importance in their motivations on a 7-point Likert-Type scale from ‘not at all important’ to ‘extremely important’. Commitment to running was measured using an adaptation of Yair’s (Yair, 1990) scale. Statements such as “I will continue to run no matter what happens in my life” were rated using a 7-point Likert-type ranging from completely disagree to completely agree. To measure the importance of specific race attributes in motivating people to participate in the event, race organizers developed a list of the attributes that they felt were most important in to the decisions to participate. Respondents also recorded their primary type of participation; competitor, fun-runner, for fitness, with family, with friends, or to achieve health goals.

Results

The first step was to examine if there were differences in type of participation by distance. There were little differences in competitors, fun runners, and health goals, but fitness runners tended to be more local, and a higher percentage of those that participated with family and friends were from outside the local area.

ANOVA s were used to investigate differences in the motivation to marathon, motivation to participate in this event, and commitment to running and include here are a few of the results. Ratings for event motivations indicated that those participants from the immediate county and surrounding counties were more motivated by fitness (F=62.37, p<.001) and personal accomplishment (i.e. ‘to challenge myself’ (F=32.30, p<.001) and ‘to push myself’ (F=24.29, p<.001)). Those from outside of the state were more likely to rate family (F=336.23 p<.001), friends (F=141.41, p<.001), and schedule/training (F=104.22, p<.001) as more important motivations. There was very little relationship between distances traveled and item ratings for the MOMS except that those from outside of the state rated social factors as more important (F=13.21, p<.001). Those that traveled further rated many of the running
commitment items higher, especially measures of running importance (F=7.33, p=.007) and achievement (F=13.43, p<.001) with slightly higher importance for desire for recognition (F=4.827, p=.028), and social interaction with other runners (F=5.39, p=.020).

Discussion and Conclusions

Previous research has sought to examine motivations and profiles for active sport tourists (Daniels & Norman, 2005; Hallmann & Wicker, 2012; Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2005). This project furthers the knowledge of sport tourism by including distance traveled and intended type of participation as determinants in motivations and commitments to participate in running and running events. Research should consider the implications of travel distance beyond trip behavior (such as type of accommodation and length of stay) as a potential marketing tool to identify differences in participants. The results from this study suggest that motivations of participants vary based on travel. Those that travel the furthest tend to have more social motivations and commitment, whereas locals are more focused on fitness and personal challenge. One surprising result was the non-significance of competitive factors. There were nearly equal percentages of competitors from each of the distance categories. Therefore, you might assume that travel distance is not a barrier for competition, rather these participants are motivated by other factors. Future research should investigate motivations and commitments based upon other factors.

Marketers and managers of these events could benefit by understanding what draws these individuals to their event. This information can also significantly improve the experience for each type/profile of participant therefore increasing satisfaction, intentions to participate again, and intentions to recommend.

References


