Resident and Sport Tourist Sponsorship Recall and Behavior Intentions

Kostas Karadakis, Southern New Hampshire University
Thomas Aicher, University of Cincinnati

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Sport tourism has recently been reported as a multibillion dollar industry and is increasingly becoming highly valued and recognized as a source of economic growth and opportunity (Hinch & Higham, 2011). The Travel Industry Association estimates 75.3 million people in the United States travel to participate or attend sport events annually accounting for more than 27 billion dollars in direct spending (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 1998; Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008). One of the key elements for the continuation and sustainability of sport tourism events are the sponsors. Organizers of events such as marathons must be able to show that participants and spectators of events are able to recognize and differentiate sponsors of the event from non-sponsors and that they develop favorable opinions/perceptions of said sponsors. This suggests that evaluations/recall occur once an event is over. Construal level theory (CLT) suggests that people develop abstract mental construals of distal objects (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Therefore, even though people are unable to experience what is not present, they can predict the future, recall past events/experiences, envision responses from others, and hypothesize about what might have been (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Predictions, memories, and speculations are all mental constructions, distinct from direct experience (Trope & Liberman, 2010, p. 440). In applying this theory to a past event, individuals and/or participants look back on a decision they made (to attend/participate), they assume a more distant perspective which involves the examination of overall product elements in terms of quality and central features (recall of sponsors, likelihood of purchasing, volunteering, and future attendance; Dhar and Kim, 2007).

The purpose of this study was to explore CLT as a theoretical framework to evaluate sponsorship recall, likelihood of purchasing sponsors’ products, donating to, and volunteering for a charity associated with a sport event. Additionally, the authors explored if there were differences between participants of the event with regards to distance ran (full vs. half a marathon) and whether they were a resident or sport tourist.

Through a partnership with a mid-scale marathon in the Southwest United States, event participants were e-mailed a link to an online questionnaire. A total of 311 participants responded to the questionnaire, and 201 provided completed questionnaires yielding a 64% response rate. The questionnaire asked participants to identify sponsors and charitable organizations involved with the event (a list of 12 sponsors were provided, only 6 were actual sponsors), evaluate sponsor prominence (a 10-point scale evaluating sense of sponsorship, 1=small to 10=large), fit with the event (a 10-point scale evaluating sense of sponsorship, 1=makes no sense to 10=makes perfect sense), likelihood of purchasing products or services of sponsors as a result of sponsoring the event (7-point scale, 1=Very unlikely to 10=very likely), likelihood of donating money to (10-point scale, 1=Not very likely to 10=Very likely), and volunteering for the charities involved with the event (10-point scale, 1=Not very likely to 10=Very likely). Participants in the current study completed the survey eight months after the event. SPSS 22.0 was used to analyze responses through the estimation of descriptive statistics, independent sample t-tests, a multiple analysis of variance test (MANOVA) was conducted in order to determine whether there were any significant differences between the residents and sport tourists, and distance ran.

The results show that participants were able to identify and recall the sponsors of the event healthcare (99%), running (86%), restaurant (53%), t-shirt provider (50%), local university sport forum (37%), and retail store (19%). Additionally, participants identified the charitable organization that started the event (96%). When asked about the prominence of the sponsors compared to competitors, participants indicated healthcare sponsor to be the most prominent (M=9.51, S.D.=1.12), followed by the running sponsor (M=7.27, S.D.=2.62), and t-shirt provider (M=6.32, S.D.=2.54). When asked to evaluate sponsors image in terms of fit with the event participants indicated that it made sense for all sponsors to sponsor the event (all means above the mid-point of 10-point scale) with the running sponsor being evaluated the highest (M=9.83, S.D.=0.69), followed by the healthcare sponsor (M=9.67, S.D.=0.88), and t-shirt provider (M=8.33, S.D.=2.18). When asked about purchasing products or services...
participants indicated they were more likely to purchase products or services by the running sponsor ($M=6.25$, $SD=1.23$), followed by the t-shirt provider ($M=5.01$, $SD=1.72$), and the restaurant sponsor ($M=4.75$, $SD=1.70$). When asked about donating to the charities involved with the event, participants indicated that they would most likely donate to the Main Charitable Association ($M=7.03$, $SD=2.86$), followed by Local Youth Charity ($M=5.71$, $SD=2.81$), and Local Education Foundation ($M=5.29$, $SD=2.79$). In terms of volunteering, participants indicated they would likely volunteer for the Main Charitable Association ($M=5.56$, $SD=3.17$), followed by Local Youth Charity ($M=4.69$, $SD=2.96$), and Local Education Foundation ($M=4.28$, $SD=2.93$).

A MANOVA was conducted to examine any differences between distance ran (Full vs. Half-marathon), and resident and sport tourists. No differences were found between the groups for distance ran. Statistical differences were found between residents and sport tourist for the size and prominence of sponsors for the t-shirt provider, with residents reporting a higher mean ($M=7.05$) than sport tourists ($M=5.88$). Residents also reported that it made more sense for the t-shirt provider ($M_{resident}=8.84$, $M_{sporttourist}=7.76$) and running sponsor ($M_{resident}=9.98$, $M_{sporttourist}=9.80$) to sponsor the event. A significant difference was found between residents and sport tourists with residents reporting a higher likelihood of purchasing products or services from the majority of the sponsors with the exception of local university and retail store. A significant difference was also found between residents and sport tourists with the likelihood of volunteering for the charities involved with the event. Residents were more likely to volunteer for the Main Charitable Association, the Local Youth Charity, and Local Education Foundation. No differences were found with likelihood to donate money to the charities by the event participants.

CLT fits as a theory to evaluate memories (sponsorship recall; prominence of sponsors; and, sense of sponsorship) and behavior (likelihood to purchase products or services; donate money to charities, volunteer for charities) as participants in the current study were able to recall/identify sponsors and charities eight months after the event took place. Participants overall are more likely to donate money to charities than volunteer for them. However, when comparing likelihood of volunteering for the charities, residents are more likely to volunteer. This is likely because residents feel a connection to their community and the event, and therefore feel the need to support the event/charities. Fit of sponsors was high, and participants were more likely to purchase from the running company over the other sponsors. It is important to note that participants were more likely to purchase products or services from sponsors that were perceived to have a better fit with the event. This suggests that organizations need to ensure that sponsorship fit with the event makes sense to participants in order to show a higher return on investment and sponsorship recall. Overall, residents were found to report higher mean scores.