The Influence of Personal Performance Expectation on Event Satisfaction

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In the sport management, participants’ satisfaction has been an important factor when evaluating the success of sport events because of its direct effect on future behavioral intention and word of mouth recommendations (Funk, Jordan, Ridinger, & Kaplanidou, 2011; Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2010; Tsuji, Bennett, & Zhang, 2007). Therefore, researchers have attempted to determine which event factors have the greatest influence on satisfaction. To date, much of this work has focused on service quality, physical attributes, motivation and other event attributes (Greenwell, Fink, & Pastore, 2002; Tsuji et al., 2007; Smith, Costello, & Muenchen, 2010; Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008; Rust, Zahorik, & Keiningham, 1995). However, according to extant research on participant satisfaction with a Mass Participant Sport Event (MPSE), personal performance can also impact satisfaction evaluations (Du, Jordan, & Funk, 2015). Furthermore, these scholars found that personal performance was a greater determinant of overall satisfaction with the MPSE experience than service quality (Du et al., 2015). In this regard, the present study intended to verify the effect of Personal Performance Expectation (PPE), defined as the extent that the participant achieved a pre-determined performance goal, on overall satisfaction with a distance running event and post-event behavioral intention.

According to Funk et al. (2011), participants tend to have motivations to increase their exercise level before the event in order to prepare for and participate in the MPSE and can spend considerable time in the preparation cycle (Lane, Murphy, & Bauman, 2008). While preparing for the MPSE, participants often set personal performance goals (i.e., expected finish time) based on previous event experience and performance during the preparation phase (Du et al., 2015). Furthermore, there is a positive relationship between personal goal achievement and satisfaction (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999). Given this, the following hypothesis is put forward.

H1: Personal performance expectation will affect event satisfaction

Also, verifying the effect of PPE on post-event behavioral intention would be important for continuing success of events. However, the direct effect of PPE on post-event behavioral intention has received little attention in sport management research. Du et al. (2015) examined it, but behavioral intention in that study was confined to intention to recommend and intention to repeat participation in the event. Therefore, the following additional hypotheses are tested.

H2: Personal performance expectation will affect post-event exercise intention
H3: Personal performance expectation will affect word of mouth intention
H4: Personal performance expectation will affect intent to participate in future events

Data from a distance running event was used for this research. A total 1,752 event participants completed a post event survey. Respondents were classified into three groups according to PPE, ‘did not meet’, ‘met’ and ‘exceeded’ expectations. Post-event behavioral intention measures consisted of post-event exercise intention (Funk et al., 2011), word of mouth intention (Du et al., 2015) and intent to participate in future events. Three items from Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) were adapted for a distance running event to measure overall satisfaction (Oliver, 1980).

With the exception of age and gender, the three groups were similar in terms of demographic and behavioral traits. The average age of respondents was 39.4 years old and respondents of ‘exceeded’ group were significantly younger than the other two groups. 49.1% were male and ‘met’ group has significantly more females than the other two groups. 82.6% of respondents were well-educated (4 year college and above). The average annual household income of respondents was $93,200. Also, respondents spend 3.75 days per week on running. They usually run 20.99 miles per week.
MANOVA was conducted to verify H2, H3 and H4 while one-way ANOVA was used for H1 as satisfaction with the MPSE and other post-event behavioral intentions were highly correlated (r=.438, p=.000). Several interesting results were found in this study. First, PPE showed significant effects on overall satisfaction (F=30.315, p=.000, $\eta^2=.034$) supporting H1. According to Dunnett T3 post hoc test, the ‘exceeded’ group was significantly more satisfied with their event experience than the ‘did not meet’ and ‘met’ group (p=.000). There was no difference in satisfaction between ‘did not meet’ and ‘met’ group (p=1.000).

Second, according to MANOVA analyses, there was a significant multivariate effect ($\lambda=.972$, F=8.330, p=.000, $\eta^2=.014$). There were violations in homogeneity of between group variance for all three dependent variables. But Brown-Forsythe F and Welch’s F adjustments showed that these had no impact on the observed outcomes. According to univariate independent one-way ANOVA, PPE had no effect on post-event exercise intention (F=1.947, p=.143, $\eta^2=.002$), so, H2 was not supported. However, PPE positively influenced word of mouth intention (F=19.107, p=.000, $\eta^2=.021$) supporting H3. In addition, PPE had significant effects on intent to participate in future events (F=4.950, p=.007, $\eta^2=.006$) supporting H4. These results, however, need to be interpreted with caution, because partial eta-squared showed that effect size was relatively small for every hypotheses. According to Dunnett T3 post hoc test, word of mouth intention was not different between ‘did not meet’ and ‘met’ group. But ‘exceeded’ group showed significantly high word of mouth intention. Future event participation intention was not different between ‘met’ and ‘exceeded’ group. Interestingly, however, ‘did not meet’ group showed much higher intention to participate in future events than ‘met’ and ‘exceeded’ group.

Findings from this study demonstrate that overall satisfaction with the event was significantly high in the ‘exceeded’ group which is consistent with the work of Du et al. (2015). Also, the results of this study indicate that PPE positively affected word of mouth recommendations regarding the event, negatively affected intent to participate in future events and had no impact post-event exercise intention. In addition to the positive relationships between PPE and satisfaction, satisfaction and word of mouth (Du et al., 2015; Bitner, 1990), the current study found the direct effect of PPE on word of mouth. Although this finding differs from the result of Du et al.’s (2015) work, it may be because the composite score of word of mouth intention and re-participation intention was used in their study. The most interesting result in current study was that future event participation intention was significantly high in ‘did not meet’ group. Suggesting the not meeting a PPE might increase the likelihood to participate in future events in an attempt to meet pre-determined performance goals. Findings from the work could benefit event organizers by helping them develop programming intended to support the training for and participation in a running event.