Event Factors and Experience Affecting (Repeat) Participation in an International Youth Hockey Tournament

Alexander DiBiase, University of Windsor
Marijke Taks (Advisor), University of Windsor

Sport tourism Abstract 2016-230 Saturday, June 4, 2016 Poster 8:30 AM (Legacy North)

Sport event tourism has increased in recent years and can be attractive to communities for providing multiple positive impacts (e.g., Gibson et al., 2012; Hinch & Higham, 2011). Youth sport events have been found to provide more economic impact than those targeting adults (Turco, 1997), due to parents accompanying youth athletes, pairing family vacations with sport events (Scott & Turco, 2007), and reluctance to take away a child’s sport participation (Dickson, 2009). Despite being the primary decision makers, parents and other decision-makers (e.g., team staff) have received scant attention in previous sport tourism research. With the significant number of attendees youth team sport event attract, it is vital for event organizers of recurring events to understand how to drive revisit intention. Therefore, it is critical to understand factors influencing event experience, developing a sustainable consumer base and, ultimately, positively impacting future behavioural intentions through positive event and destination image.

The aim of the research was to gain an understanding of decision-making factors for participation in youth sport events, analyzing the overall experience of participants and their travel party group. Two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study: 1) Positive perceptions of event features and experience will positively impact revisit intention of participants; and 2) Positive perceptions of event features and experience will positively impact likelihood to recommend the event to other potential participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted (n=3) with key members of the organizing committee for a youth ice-hockey tournament, in order to understand the history, objectives, factors, and strategies of the event and assist in developing a framework to create a comprehensive research survey. Survey participants were drawn from the decision-making population, parents and team staff, and an online Sport Event Experience Survey was distributed post-tournament, including four sections: (1) respondents’ characteristics; (2) factors affecting decision-making for participation (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2010; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2010); (3) evaluation of event experience (Ko, et al., 2011; Tsuji, et al., 2007); and, (4) behavioural intentions. Logistic regression was used to identify which factors explain revisit intention (dummy variable); the model was not significant (Hosmer and Lemeshow Chi-square=6.93, df=8, p =n.s.). Hierarchical regression was used to determine which factors predict likelihood to recommend (5-point Likert scale); the model was significant (F(11,258)) = 18.832, p<.001) and explained 42.2% of the variance. Qualitative questions were also analyzed to identify deeper themes that may not have been included in the survey.

Contrary to past assumptions (Scott & Turco, 2007), the survey data (n=270) majorly identified team staff as main decision-makers for tournament participation (n=197). In line with Kaplanidou and Gibson (2010) our findings revealed that high evaluations of event experience were linked to positive future behavioural intentions. Core event features (e.g., staff/volunteers, team scheduling, and game experiences) positively and significantly explained the likelihood to recommend the tournament. Peripheral features (e.g., trophies, pin trading, and city attractions) as well as recruitment/registration were also significant, albeit to a lesser degree.

Therefore, event organizers need to focus on developing strong networks and relationships with team staff, develop high standards for scheduling, and prioritize training for volunteers and staff to positively impact game experience. It is also crucial to blend the event with a festival atmosphere (Green, 2001), providing participants and spectators opportunities to celebrate the game. Taking into account that the number of youth sport events being hosted are increasing, it is vital to an event’s success, profits, and survival for event organizers to identify the decision-makers for participation and understand factors that provide positive experiences.