Exploring the Relationship between Volunteer Management & Corporate Sponsorship: Empowerment, Social Capital, and Application Value

Go Un Ji, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies
Seung Pil Lee (Advisor), Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

Management - Volunteers (Volunteers)  
20-minute oral presentation (including questions)  
Abstract 2017-175

Friday, June 2, 2017  
1:25 PM  
Room: Harvard

Significance of the Topic to Sport Management
Volunteers are indispensable human resource for the successful delivery of a sport event. As the demand for volunteers increased, recruiting and retention strategy of volunteer management has become the core challenge for the event organization (Pauline, 2011). The past studies examined volunteers’ social-demographic and psychological characteristics including their attitude, values, motivation, and satisfaction (Bang & Ross, 2009; Kim, Chelladurai, & Trail, 2007; Pauline, 2011; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). There has been consistent research on individual volunteer’s motivation influencing the satisfaction of volunteer needs (Cheung, Tang, & Yan, 2006; Galindo-kuhn & Gazley, 2002). However, volunteer management is still having difficulties in retention (Cuskelley, 2004; El Nassor, 1997; Wymer & Starnes, 2001). As a new source for developing a retention strategy for volunteer management, the engagement of corporate sponsorship might be considered. Notably, McDonald’s sponsored as an official ‘volunteer support partner’ for the 2012 London Olympics, creating a unique form of corporate sponsorship to train volunteers (Stevens, 2010). The purpose was to train 70,000 volunteers specialized in good service-mind and fast-paced working abilities. Volunteers’ understanding and dedication for the volunteer-work during the games was beyond expectation and they played essential role during the event (Crush, P. et al., 2014). The case of McDonald’s shows how corporate engagement in volunteer management can bring positive impact to not only the volunteers and event organizers, but also to the corporate itself. Yet to this point, little empirical research has been done to examine the relationship between volunteer management and corporate engagement in the context of sport event.

Review of Relevant Literature
Kim, Chelladurai, & Trail (2007) provided volunteer-retention model of volunteer engagement in two dimensions; person-task fit (P-T fit) and person-organization fit (P-O fit). Their research on examining psychological congruence of cognitive empowerment (volunteer meaning, competence, self-determinants, and impacts) with P-T fit and P-O fit provided positive insights on volunteer retention. Examining empowerment of volunteers as a motivational factor might be also relevant to look at their social benefits of social capital and human capital from volunteering. Lee, Cornwell, & Babiak (2013) found that the frequency of exposures to community-oriented sport activities enhance social capital (e.g., public goods, social development) and human capital (e.g., individual abilities, personal development).

According to social identification theory, individuals commit themselves to support the organization as far as they are identified with the organization itself (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). For example, when individuals are identified with one’s favorite sport team, they show consistent patronization to the success and failure of the team (Branscombe & Wann, 1991). In addition, there are several studies about company-sponsored volunteerism and employer branding (Caligiuri, Mencin, & Jiang, 2013; Cornwell & Coote, 2005; Pajo & Lee, 2010). Especially, adapting the work of employer attractiveness (Berthon, Ewing and Hah, 2005), Cornwell and her colleagues examined the role of sponsorship in five dimensional values of employer branding (Cornwell et. al, 2015). Among the five different dimensions of economic, social, interest, development and application value, we argue that application value can be the most relevant construct from volunteer management. Application value is defined as an opportunity for employees to apply what they have learned and use it to teach others (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005; Sivertzen, Nilsen, & Olafsen. 2013). If we apply the concept of application value as an employer branding into volunteer management, we can assume that individuals with motivation to enhance their capabilities through volunteer experience may build positive image toward and become more attracted to the sponsoring corporation. This may increase the possibility of the volunteer retention in the event and provide a strategic recruiting platform for the corporates from the internal marketing perspective.
Objectives & Hypotheses
Thus, the objective of this study is to explore the structural relationship between volunteer management and corporate sponsorship, including 1) P-T fit, P-O fit, empowerment, and social capital of volunteer management and 2) social capital, human capital and application value of employer branding. In light of the aforementioned, the hypotheses of the current study are generated as following: H1) Volunteers’ P-T fit and P-O fit will have positive relationship with social capital through the mediation effect of empowerment, H2) Volunteers with social capital experience or human capital experience will have positive influence on application value.

Methods
In order to test the hypotheses, we collected data from a sample of 470 volunteers who participated for the 28th Southeast Asian Games held in Singapore through on-line survey. The survey instrument was developed to examine how the volunteers’ characteristics and exposures to sport events can influence individual volunteer’s social benefits of social capital and human capital and how the perceived social benefits can influence the value of corporate partners of the sport event. The measures of P-T fit, P-O fit, and empowerment were adopted from previous research on volunteer management (e.g., Jackson & Schuler, 1992; Kim, Chelladurai, & Trail, 2007), and the measures of social capital and human capital were adopted from the work of Lee, Cornwell, & Babiak (2012). The measures of application value were adopted from the works on employer branding (e.g., Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005).

Results & Discussions
The efficacy of the proposed model was analyzed using PASW Statistics 18 and AMOS 24. The results showed that the measurement model including confirmatory factor analyses found to be in good fit with the data (n=470, CMIN/DF=3.511, GFI=.846, CFI=.905, TLI=.891, RMSEA=.073). The structural model of the study also showed good fit with the data (n=470, CMIN/DF=3.128, GFI=.846, CFI.913, TLI=.902, RMSEA=.067). As hypothesized, the structural equation model demonstrated that P-T fit and P-O fit have positive influence on social capital and human capital through the mediation effect of empowerment. Further, interestingly, it showed that P-T fit and P-O fit have positive influence on application value of employer branding through the serial mediation effects of empowerment and social capital, not human capital.

The findings of the study have significant implications on the role of corporate sponsorship in volunteer management. Briefly, this study offers empirical evidence on why corporations should consider sponsoring for volunteers of sport events and what benefits they can receive. Based on the findings, it will be possible for the corporate sponsors to utilize volunteer management as an internal marketing tool.