Identifying the Prevalent Motivations among Participants Who Take Part in the Nutrience Oakville Half Marathon

Ayobami Ogunlana, University of Windsor
Jess Dixon (Advisor), University of Windsor

Marketing - Motivation (Community Sport) Saturday, June 3, 2017
Poster 9:40 AM
Abstract 2017-288 Room: Sopris

Researchers have sought to understand the motivations behind participants’ decisions to register for sporting events (Bennett, Mousley, Kitchin, & Ali-Choudhury, 2007; Filo, Funk, & O’Brien, 2008; Scott & Solomon, 2003; Won, Park, & Turner, 2010). However, much of this research has focused on motivations among charity sport event (CSE) participants. A CSE is defined as any sport event where a significant portion of the proceeds benefit a specified charity (Filo, Funk, & O’Brien, 2009). On the contrary, there has been limited research conducted on the factors motivating participants of charity-affiliated sporting (CAS) events. A CAS event is defined as a mass sporting event with connections to one or more charities (Bennett et al., 2007). Thus, the purpose of this study was to identify the prevalent motivations among participants who take part in a charity-affiliated sporting event, namely the Nutrience Oakville Half Marathon (NOHM). The NOHM is an annual Fall running event created and managed by Landmark Sport Group Inc. This event includes a charity aspect, where local and national charities can partner with the event and use it as a platform to raise funds.

Five motivational factors for participating in charity-affiliated sporting events were identified based on previous studies conducted on sport participation, participation motivations, and charity sport events: 1) Involvement with the Sport; 2) Involvement with Charities; 3) Desire to Mix Socially; 4) Benefits, and; 5) Desire to Experience Fun and Enjoyment. The rationales for choosing these five motivational factors to identify the prevalent motivations among NOHM participants are as follows. First, Bennett et al. (2007) found that a desire to enjoy sport and a motivation to pursue a healthy lifestyle were some of the main reasons people chose to participate in CAS events. For events with high physical demands, such as marathon races, the desire to enjoy sport was an especially important factor for participation (Won & Park, 2010). Second, many individuals are influenced to participate in an event that supports or is affiliated with one or more charities (Bennett et al., 2007). Research shows that the more involved an individual is with a specific cause, the more likely he/she is to register in an event affiliated with that cause (Bennett et al., 2007; Scott & Solomon, 2003). Third, a desire to mix socially with others who share the same passion, and a desire to enjoy each other’s company, have been found to be significant factors for attracting event participants (Funk, Mahony, & Ridinger, 2002). Fourth, the need for tangible benefit is another motivational factor that may influence a person’s decision to participate in a CSE (Won & Park, 2010; Won et al., 2010). Participants may receive benefits from the event itself, in the form of t-shirts, awards, medals, or other speciality items, as well as from the affiliated charity, such as tax advantages/deductions. Lastly, the need for fun and entertainment was identified by Won et al. (2010), as an important motive for people to participate in CSEs. Entertainment is usually provided by means of music, concerts, and a variety of fun games that are made available for children and adults (Won et al., 2010).

Quantitative research consisting of an online survey was conducted to identify the prevalent motivations of the 2016 NOHM participants. This survey link was sent via e-mail to the entire 2016 NOHM participant database (N = 1,246) the morning following the race. The survey consisted of five questions. The first four questions asked participants for their age, sex, number of times they had previously participated in a NOHM event, and if they fundraised and/or donated to a charity affiliated with the NOHM. The final question asked participants to respond to 26 items measured on the seven-point Likert scale (1 = ‘strongly disagree’ to 7 = ‘strongly agree’). These items reflected the five different motivational factors that were adapted from two previous studies that focused on CSE and CAS events (i.e., Bennett et al., 2007; Won & Park, 2010).

After excluding three incomplete surveys, the final sample consisted of 70 respondents, resulting in a response rate of 5.6%. All five motivational factors had Cronbach’s alpha scores of .70 and higher, ranging from .70 to .90. Respondents reported that ‘Involvement with the sport’ (M = 5.93, SD = 0.82) was the most important factor for
participating in the NOHM. The second most important factor was ‘Desire to experience fun and enjoyment’ (M = 5.64, SD = 0.70), followed by ‘Desire to mix socially’ (M = 4.59, SD = 1.04), ‘Involvement with charities’ (M = 3.52, SD = 1.34), and ‘Benefits’ (M = 2.60, SD = 1.29). Nonparametric tests were also conducted to examine the effects of the demographic variables (i.e., sex, age, previous participation, and whether participants fundraised and/or donated) on these five motivational factors. Nonparametric tests were employed because the five motivational factors failed to meet the normality assumptions needed to conduct parametric tests. Two motivational factors revealed significant differences with the variable ‘fundraise and/or donate.’ Specifically, participants who claimed to have fundraised for and/or donated to the various charities associated with the NOHM reported significantly higher mean scores on their ‘Involvement with charities’ (p < .001) and their ‘Desire to mix socially’ (p = .037).

The results from this study are generally consistent with previous CSE and CAS research that explored participants’ motivations. However, the results for ‘Involvement with charities’ is somewhat inconsistent with previous CSE and CAS research, where this motive was found to be a highly important motivational factor (i.e., Bennett et al., 2007; Won & Park, 2010). This motivational factor is often tied to people’s support or level of involvement for a charity cause. The inferior ranking of ‘Involvement with charities’ in this study could be a consequence of the low percentage (7.1%) of respondents who claimed to have fundraised for and/or donated to a charity affiliated with the NOHM.

This study has several practical implications. First, the results of this study provides NOHM event organizers with insight into participants’ motivations for registering for a NOHM event. These results can help event organizers to effectively develop marketing campaigns to target and satisfy participants’ motivations of their involvement with the event. Limitations of this study are as follows. First, the low response rate (n = 70; 5.6%) made for a very small sample size and, thus, caution should be used when generalizing these results to the entire population of NOHM participants. Also, the target population was restricted to NOHM participants which itself should not be generalized to all CAS event participants. Future studies on this topic could explore other potential motivational factors that could influence people to participate in CAS events.