Sport Spectatorship and Population Health: A Case of Japanese Professional Golf Tournament

Yasuhiro Watanabe, Hiroshima University of Economics
Tyreal Yizhou Qian, Louisiana State University
Jerred Junqi Wang, University of West Georgia
N. David Pifer, Texas Tech University
James J. Zhang, University of Georgia

Marketing - Service Quality (Professional Sport)
virtual asynchronous
20-minute oral presentation (including questions)
Session: Population Health/Civic Engagement

Abstract 2020-189

It has been well-argued that professional sport or mega sport events could serve as a catalyst for sport participation behaviors through direct and indirect trickle-down effects (Misener, Taks, Chalip, & Green, 2015; Potwarka & Leatherdale, 2016; Weed et al., 2015). However, there is limited research exploring the impact of spectator services during sport events on personal and collective well-being (Inoue et al., 2015). Elaborating on the social-ecological model (Sallis et al., 1998) and the concept of market demand (Zhang et al., 2003), this study attempted to fill the gap in the literature by measuring core product (player attraction, event attractiveness, and course characteristics) and peripheral spectator services (event services, event information, event amenity, and parking and transportation) of a professional golf tournament hosted in Japan and examining how these services factors would influence spectators’ length of stay at a golf event, physical activity as measured by step counts, self-rated health, and life satisfaction.

An on-site survey was conducted at the 2018 Bridgestone Open golf tour tournament in Japan (N = 306). To assess the impact of spectator services, we employed structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze the data. Results showed that core product services positively correlated with spectator’s length of stay, step counts, and life satisfaction, while peripheral services negatively correlated with step counts at the tournament. Moreover, we found that step counts positively associated with self-rated health, which further positively linked to life satisfaction. Overall, the structural model explained 16% of the length of stay, 17% of step counts, 12% of self-rated health, and 31% of life satisfaction.

The current research sought to make two major contributions to the literature. First, this study provided new evidence for the health benefits accrued from golf spectatorship by clarifying and adding new knowledge to previous research on how sport could be managed and marketed to provide health-related benefits (Inoue et al., 2017; Murray et al., 2019). Second, given growing interest in understanding the influence of people’s interactions with physical and sociocultural surroundings on health-related behaviors, as well as inconclusive evidence regarding how tournament services could enhance spectators’ physical activity and subjective well-being (Inoue et al., 2017; Sato et al., 2016, 2019), this study made an initial effort to identify the social and physical environmental elements through which health-related behaviors occurred in golf spectatorship.

Managerially, golf sets itself up as a rare form of sport where spectators generally remain on the move to follow star players around the course or see the intricacies of a course’s different holes. Event organizers and promoters can leverage the core product services while encouraging healthier habits among their spectators who may not be aware of the associated health benefits and how a physically active lifestyle can lead to higher levels of satisfaction in life.