

2019 Sport Marketing Association Conference (SMA XVII)

Determinants of Charity Spectator Sport Event Participation

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Wednesday, November 6, 2019
4:30-4:55 PM, Illinois River

25-minute oral presentation
(including questions)

Despite its momentum and potential for social and business leveraging, the Charity Spectator Sport Event (CSSE) sector of the sport industry has been under researched in the field of sport marketing. With increasing attention on social issues and resulting athlete social responsibility (Agyemang, 2014; Babiak, Mills, Tainsky, & Juravich, 2012; Inoue & Havard, 2015), CSSEs are regarded as one important mechanism not only to fulfill athletes' personal convictions (i.e., charitable dispositions), but also to maximize athlete brand value (Arai, Ko, & Kaplanidou, 2013). Specifically, CSSEs can play a role in garnering public attention for social causes (Inoue & Kent, 2012; Kim & Walker, 2013), bolstering charitable initiatives (Langford, Bowsher, Maloney, & Lillis, 1997), and residually enhancing how supporting athletes are perceived by the public and media (Arai et al., 2013). Prior research on the topic has almost solely focused on participatory sport events (Filo & Coghlan, 2016; Filo, Fechner, & Inoue, 2019; Goodwin, Snelgrove, Wood, & Taks, 2017; Inoue, Heffernan, Yamaguchi, & Filo, 2018; Woolf, Heere, & Walker, 2013) as the mechanism through which to elicit favorable consumer responses.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to extend prior work on the motivations of CSSE participants to examine the effects on prosocial and patronage behaviors resulting from CSSE participation. Accordingly, three research questions were developed to guide the investigation: (1) do charity-, spectator-, and athlete-relevant motives explain CSSE event participation; (2) do the motives for CSSE participation explain actual charity giving; and (3) do the motives for CSSE participation have spillover potential for participant attitudes toward affiliated organizations?

Literature Review

The Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) will be used as the framework to explain event attendee involvement with the CSSEs. The PCM is helpful when conceptualizing different ways fans and spectators relate to a sport object. The PCM consists of a four-step hierarchy of fan affinity: awareness, attraction, attachment, and allegiance (Funk & James, 2001, 2006). Each step represents a level of the psychological relationship that a

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consumer builds with the object throughout his/her life cycle (Funk & James, 2001). As a representative sport figure, an athlete and a CSSE organized by the athlete can be objects of the PCM model to explain consumer involvement level and its consequences.

Charity sport event motives. For years, researchers have studied charity sport event participant motives. For example, Filo, Funk, and O'Brien (2010) showed that reciprocity, self-esteem, need to help others, and desire to improve charity explained future event participation, sponsor image, and intent of the sponsor consumption. Similarly, Filo, Funk, and O'Brien (2011) compared participant motives for a charity and recreation events on participant attachment. Goodwin et al. (2017) examined the causal and physical motives of social opportunity and event uniqueness as antecedents of future cause-related activities across three different CSSEs. The charitable motives in the previous research are proper to orient the framework for the current study.

Athlete attribute motives. Given the unique star power underpinnings, athlete-attribute motives are a critical factor for attracting people to attend an event, consume a product, and support ancillary athlete ties. Arai et al. (2013) tested the Model of Athlete Brand Image (MABI) based on Keller's Customer-based Brand Equity Framework (Keller, 1993). The authors found that psychological commitment was among the most important components in fan loyalty (Biswas & Sherrell, 1993; Gladden & Funk, 2001). In the current research, the MABI will be applied as a predictor reflecting athlete attribute motives; namely, as a factor to attract people to attend a charitable spectator sport event organized by an athlete.

Sport Consumption Scale. While previous research has confirmed the role of motives from general charitable engagement (Dawson, 1988; Gladden, Mahony, & Apostolopoulou, 2005) and recreational (Beard & Ragheb, 1983), the perspectives outlined in the CSSEs context might prove spurious to explain CSSE participation. This limitation stems perhaps from the multiple and varying perspectives in participatory and spectator sport in that different purposes and concepts in each sport consumption type require distinctive scales to capture more elaborated attribution (Trail & James, 2001). Based on literature for sport spectatorship motives (Kahle, Kambara, & Rose, 1996; Milne & McDonald, 1999; Wann, 1995), Trail and James (2001) developed the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC), including nine factors representing motives for consuming sport. Given the overlapping trait as a spectatorship event, the MSSC would be an important tool to help us better understand charity spectator sport event motives.

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Method

Data will be collected in an actual charitable spectator sport event organized by an active athlete of National Football League (NFL) in May 2019. The target event is annually held in Southern region of the United States, with the aim of fund-raising for youth sport development. Event participants will be randomly selected to answer questions including their motivations (i.e., athlete-, charity-, and sport-relevant) as predictors and prosocial and patronage behavioral intentions as outcomes with several control variables, one week after the event via email survey distribution. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) will be employed to test confirmatory factor analysis and structural model.

Anticipated Results

The current research will contribute to the academic and practical literature regarding athlete charity and event organization. In academia, the findings should provide further insights regarding the motivations of the athlete organizing charitable spectatorship event participants beyond general sport spectatorship motivations (Silveira, Cardoso, & Quevedo-Silva, 2019) and charitable participatory sport events (Filo et al., 2010) with uniqueness (Goodwin et al., 2017) of an athlete as an organizer. What is more, the findings will help identify the spill-over effects of the athlete's charitable event toward an affiliated team and endorsement firms (Filo et al., 2010). The research will also yield managerial implications to assist practitioners with understanding how consumers and event stakeholders respond to athlete philanthropy and how it adds value to athlete brand. Finally, the results will be framed around effective implementation strategies for charitable spectatorship events with a focus on integrative branding strategies for athletes.

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