Volume : 2 | Issue : 12 | Dec 2013 • ISSN No 2277 - 8160

Research Paper | Physical Education

The Role of Involvement and Attachment in Predicting Intention to Repeated Participation in Charity Sport Events

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ABSTRACT

Charity sport events constitute a dynamic type of sport events. The aim of the present study was to explore the role of involvement and activity attachment as predictors of intention to repeated participation in charity sport events. Members of a UK charity took part in the survey. Kyle, Graefe, Manning and Bacon's (2004) questionnaire was used to measure involvement and Funk and James' (2006) questionnaire was used to measure attachment. Results revealed three dimensions for involvement and three dimensions for attachment. A hierarchical regression analysis was used to predict the intention to re-participate at the charity sport events. The dimensions of involvement predicted 13,7% of the variance in the intention variable [(F (3,107) =5.68, p<.001)] and the dimensions of activity attachment increase the prediction of intention to 24,3% of the variance [(R2 =.106, F change (3,104)=4.84, p<.005)]. The present study could help charities n their efforts to develop this area in the future.

KEYWORDS : involvement, attachment, charity sport events

Introduction

Participation in a specific sport is a personal expression that reflects the participant's culture and emotions, who many times reveals noble causes (Filo, Funk and O' Brien, 2008). In those cases it is not only a typical participation in an activity or a sport but it is directly connected with the development of social charity action (Polatidou, Alexadris, and Kouthouris 2006).

During the past 15 years the involvement of sport and sport tourism with charity causes presented an enormous growth. It was usual, in the past, for a person that wanted to help a charity to just donate money or participate at a charity event, usually of culture character. Nowadays this person has the opportunity to participate at a multi-day excursion, which includes an outdoor activity, in several well-known tourist destinations (Annapurna Trek, Trek, Kilimanjaro Trek, Machu Picchu Trek Open Challenge κ.α) and raise money for the charity at the same time. He can participate in a great variety of sports as run the Race for Cure, a race dedicated in the awareness for breast cancer (Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure ®, n.d.), or "walk a mile in her shoes (The Walk a mile in her shoes®, n.d.) to raise awareness against violence at women, to run from a semi marathon of 21 kilometers up to the 246 kilometers of the Spartathlon race in order to raise money for a charity. According to Ebenkamp and Stark (1999) the popularity of participating in athletic events for charity is the result of the ethical, social and intellectual sensitivities that persons- customers have developed. The aim of this study was to explore if the involvement of persons that participate in charity athletic events and their attachment to the charity events can contribute at the prediction of repeating their participation.

Theoretical Background: *Involvement*

Involvement is a person's personal connection with an activity and the way that he is expressing himself and communicating thought-out his participation in it (Kyle and Chick, 2004). During the past years leisure researchers have adopted the concept of involvement in order to study the attitudes and behaviors of participants in leisure activities (Dimance, Havitz, and Howard, 1993; Kim, Scott and Crompton, 1997; Mardrigal, Havitz and Howard, 1992). Laurent and Kapferer (1985) research has been crucial in the field of involvement. The two researchers argue that involvement has the below facets a) the perceived importance of the product, b) the perceived risk associated with the product purchase which includes two facets i) the perceived importance of negative consequences in case of poor choice and ii) the perceived probability of making such a mistake, c) the symbolic – sign value attributed by the consumer to the product and d) the hedonic value of the product, its ability to provide pleasure and affect. McIntyre (1989) and Schubert (1993) argued that the dimensions of pleasure, importance, and sign, along with centricity that it has in their way of life are the ones that best describe leisure involvement, while Dimanche et al. (1991) also include the dimension of risk, proposed by Laurent and Kapferer (1985). Havitz and Dimanche (1990) added that in the case of leisure involvement the facets of physical, social and economic risk should be considered. The results of several studies (McIntyre, 1989, McIntyre and Pigram, 1992, Dimanche et al., 1991b, 1993, Havitz et al., 1993) revealed the tendency of the dimensions «importance of the activity» and «pleasure that originates from the importance» to embed in one dimension. So the facet of attraction was presented. Based on the above researchers Kyle, Graefe, Manning and Bacon (2005) argued that the three dimensions of involvement, attraction (the pleasure that a person feels while participating in a leisure activity), centricity (the role that the activity has in the person's life), and self- expression (the persons self- expression thought the activity participation and the image he wishes to impose at others throughout this participation).

Activity attachment.

According to Funk and James (2006) attachment represents an emotionally complex internal process that creates a well formed attitude toward recreational experiences. This process, as Beaton, Funk and Alexandris (2009) argue, can explain how a meaningful relationship between an individual and objects develop. In leisure field the process of attachment describes how a recreational activity elicits strong attitude evaluations and becomes congruent with fundamental core values learned from sport experiences (Filo, Funk and Obrien, 2008).

Kleine and Baker (2004) argued that attachment is a multilateral concept that reflects a person's the relation with an object, a relation that I due to their interaction. Sport attachment presents as strong psychological connection that reveals when a person give emotional, symbolic and functional meaning to a recreational object (Beaton, Funk and Alexandris 2009, Funk and James, 2006). Funk and James (2006) presented «activity attachment» which shows the functional, emotional

and symbolic meaning of a leisure activity that guides a person's future behavior. More specific, activity attachment consists from three dimensions a) the knowledge (functional meaning), b) the importance (symbolic meaning) and the influence (emotional meaning).

The role of involvement and activity attachment in predicting future participation.

During the past years many researches have proven that a person's involvement with recreational activities contributes to the attachment with specific destinations and the intention to revisit (Kyle, Bricker, Graeffe and Wickham, 2004; Kyle, Graefe, Manning and 2003). As some of them argue (Bricker and Kerstetter, 2000, Mowen, Graefe and Virden, 1997), the higher a person's involvement to an outdoor activity is, the more specific preference in destinations they present. Some years earlier researches showed the important role of involvement in the development of brand associations (Beatty, Kahle and Homer, 1988) a concept that according to Kyle, Bricker, Graeffe and Wickham (2004) is very close to the activity attachment. The results of a research that took place in Greece in the field of a mountain bike event showed that the involvement with specific the outdoor event (mountain bike race) were positively correlated with the intention to participate again (Polatidou, Balaska and Alexandris, 2012).

Aim of the study

The aim of the present study was to investigate the role that a person's involvement to charity sport events and his attachment to those charity sport events play in predicting his intention to re-participate.

Method

One hundred and ninety three participants at the charity adventure trip "The mountain Olympus Challenge", organized by Scope Charity, VSO Charity and Hope Charity took part in the present study. The questionnaire was send to the participants by e-mail three months after the end of the program. One hundred and forty three questionnaires were returned back (74%).

Kyle, Graefe, Manning and Bacon (2004) questionnaire was used to investigate participants involvement with the charity sport event. The questionnaire presents 3 dimensions, a) attraction (5 items), b) centricity (3 items) and c) self-expression (4 items).

Funk and James (2006) questionnaire was used to investigate activity attachment. The questionnaire presented three dimensions, a) Functional meaning (3 items), Symbolic meaning (3 items) and c) Emotional meaning. The answers to both questionnaires were given in a 5 point Likert scale anchored with "I disagree very much" to "I agree very much" (1 to 5).

The questionnaire also included a question for the intention to participate in a charity sport event (the probability I'll participate in a charity sport event in the future is). The answers were given in a seven point Likert scale anchored with "very low" to "very high" (1 to 7). Demographic questions were also included.

Results.

Demographics.

Fifty eight participants were women and 85 were men. The 58,7% were married and the 37,8% were between 31-40 years old. One hundred and twenty nine participants were from the Great Britain civilians and 14 citizens of the United States of America. The 69,2% were university graduates, the 14.7% had a MSc or a Dr degree, while 16,1% were high school graduates.

Statistical analysis.

KMO and Bartlett test of sphericity were contacted to test the competence of the study's sample. The results showed values above .50, while the test was statistical significant at both concepts. Results are presented in table 1.

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's tests results.

	Attraction	Activity attachment
KMO	.832	.740
Bartlett's test	Chi-Square: 797.1 P<.001	Chi-Square 816.5 p< .001

Exploratory factor analysis with principal components analysis, followed by varimax rotation (eigenvalue greater than 1.0) was performed. Results showed three involvement dimensions i) attraction (5 items, m:3.12, sd:.62, ii) centricity (3 items, m:2.25, sd:.81 and iii) self-expression (3 items, m:2.65, sd:.74). The three dimensions explain the 70.22% of total variance,

Table 2. Exploratory factor analysis of Involvement and items leadings.

Involvement	Attraction	Self Expression	Centricity
Charity adventure events is important to me	.718		
Participating in charity adventure event activities is one of the most enjoyable things to do	.873		
Participating in charity adventure event activities is one of the most satisfying things to do	.736		
Participating in charity adventure event activities offers me relaxation when pressures build up	.737		
I have a lot of interest in charity adventure events	.701		
Participating in charity adventure tourism event activities says a lot about who I am		.834	
When I participate in charity adventure events others see me the way I want them to see me		.817	
You can tell a lot about a person be seeing them participating in charity adventure tourism event activities		.717	
When I participate in charity adventure event activities I can really be myself		.703	
I find a lot if my life is organized around charity adventure events			.763
Eigenvalues % of total variance Total variance	5.89 49.11	1.39 11.60	1.14 9.52 70.23%

The same analysis showed three activity attachment dimensions i) functional meaning (3 items, m: 2.03, sd:.86), ii) symbolic meaning (3 items, m: 2.99, sd: .84 and iii) emotional meaning (3 items, m: 3.03, sd:.59. The three dimensions explain the 85.95% of total variance. Tables 2 and 3 present the items loadings. All dimensions had acceptable values of alpha (>.70). Alpha values, mean scores, standard deviations and number of items of each dimensions are presented in table 4.

Table 3. Exploratory factor analysis of activity attachment and items leadings

Activity Attachment	Functional meaning	Emotional meaning	Symbolic meaning
I possess a great deal of knowledge about charity adventure events	.933		
Compared to other leisure activities, I consider myself an expert on charity adventure events	.939		
If I were to list everything I know about charity adventure events the list would be quite long	.927		
Charity adventure tourism is important to me		.889	
Participating in charity adventure event activities is very important to me		.957	
Compared to other activities, charity adventure events is very important to me		.773	
Others think well of me if they know that I participate in charity adventure event activities			.917
People have a positive impression of me if they know that I participate in charity adventure event activities			.929

Participating in charity adventure event activities helps me project a good image to others			.830
Eigenvalues % of total variance Total variance	4.00 44.41	2.11 23.45	1.63 18.09 85.95

Table 4. Cronbach's a, mean scores, standard deviations and item numbers of involvement and activity attachment.

Involvement	a	mean	s.d	items
Attraction	.749	3.12	.62	5
Self expression	.741	2.65	.74	4
Centricity	.824	2.25	.81	3
Activity attachment				
Functional meaning	.941	2.03	.86	3
Symbolic meaning	.902	2.99	.84	3
Συναισθηματική σημασία	.880	3.03	.59	3

Hierarchical regression analysis was used to explore the intention of repeated participation in charity sport events from the dimensions of involvement and activity attachment. The three dimensions of involvement, that were put in the model in the first step, explained the 13.7% of intention to repeat participation in charity sport events ($F_{(3,107)}$=5.68, p<.001). Activity attachment followed in the second step raising the prediction percentage by 24,3% (ΔR^2 =.106, F change$_{(3,104)}$=4.84, *p<.005)*. The involvement dimensions of self-expression (p<.005) and centricity (p=.001), as well as the activity attachment dimensions of emotional meaning (p<.005) were statistically significant (table 5.)

Table 5. Results of prediction for repeated participation in charity sport events.

	B	Beta	t
1st step Involvement			
Self Expression Centricity	.478 -.868	.210 -.402	1.803* -3.537**
2nd step Involvement	B	Beta	t
Self expression Centricity	.752 -1.069	.330 -.494	2.765** -3.257**
Activity attachment Emotional meaning	-.823	-.335	-2.995**

Note: R^2= .137, for 1st step, R^2=.106, for 2nd step, *p<.001, **p<.005

Discussion

It has been previously noted that small scale sport event can have a greater impact in local societies that host them than mega sports (Gibson, Willming and Holdnak, 2003, Kaplanidou and Gibson, 2010). This fact shows how important a person's repeated participation in a charity sport events is, as it highly contributes to organize those events again in the future. The results of the present study confirmed the involvement (Kyle, Graefe, Manning & Bacon, 2004) and activity attachment (Funk & James, 2006) scales that were used. Both scales presented high reliability as the original.

Filo, Funk and O' Brien (2008, 2010) contradicted an research during a charity sport event of Lance Armstrong Foundation. The results showed that attachment leads to participate in alike charity sport events in future. This finding confirms the results of the present study which show the positive contribution of activity attachment to predicting future participation in charity sport events. A research of Polatidou, Balaska and Alexandris (2012) during a mountain bike sport event (an outdoor activity usually found in charity sport events, Filo, Funk, and O'Brien, 2008, 2010) showed the positive effect of involvement as well as the positive attribution of activity attachment in predicting future participation. Alexandris, Funk and Prictchard (2011) also argued the positive attribute of activity attachment at the prediction of future participation. The researchers note that participants who assign a positive functional and emotional meaning to the activity do have positive intention repeated participation, a finding consistent with the positive affect of emotional meaning found in the present study.

In conclusion, the present study reveals that charity sport events are consciously followed by people that develop high levels of involvement and attachment with those types of events, and thus tend to have a positive intention to future participation. However it has to be pointed out that the study is based on a specific case, "The Mountain Olympus Challenge". As previously noted, charity events run in different settings and can be classified in different categories, according to their type, size, objectives, organizing associations, and locations in which they take place. Subsequently, our results cannot be generalized with confidence. They have to be replicated in similar charity sport events, with the use of quantitative or qualitative methods, using also different samples in terms of nature (e.g., type of activity) and characteristics (e.g., nationalities).

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