Impact of Sport Tourists’ Involvement and Emotions on Their Satisfaction of the Sport Event and Loyalty Toward the Host City

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As sport tourists can potentially bring economic benefits to the host cities of a sport event, many researchers have investigated various reasons that cause and channel their behaviors, such as destination image, even quality, conceivable risks, and perceived value as antecedents to tourists’ visit, revisit, and spending behaviors (Eid, 2015; Jeong & Kim, 2019; Liu, 2013, 2015). Yet, less is known about sport tourists’ affective involvement and emotions and their influences. By employing the stimulus–organism–response (SOR) model to elucidate sport tourists’ behaviors, the purpose of this study was to examine the impact of sport tourists’ involvement and emotions on their satisfaction of the sport event and loyalty toward the host city.

The SOR theory proposes that individuals tend to react to environmental settings emotionally, oftentimes leading to sequential relationships among input (stimulus), processes (organism), and output (response) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In addition to physical environments (e.g., scenery) and event atmosphere as stimulus, a consumer’s high level of involvement can help elevate desire and interest for participating in event activities (Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003). Due to its experiential nature, emotions arisen from sport tourists’ experience is an important construct that ultimately influence outcome variables, which is considered as organism in this study. The level of involvement plays a key role in boosting favorable emotions when experiences are satisfactory (Hightower et al., 2002). Furthermore, a positive association between involvement and outcome variables and between emotions and outcome variables are supported by several studies (e.g., Faullant et al. 2011; Lee & Beeler, 2009). Positive relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty has been documented by numerous studies (e.g., Jeong & Kim, 2019). Accordingly, it was hypothesized for this study that involvement would have a positive effect on tourists emotions, event satisfaction, and destination loyalty; emotions would have a positive effect on even satisfaction and in turn on destination loyalty.

Research participants (N = 383) were international tourists at the FINA World Masters Championships event held in Gwangju, South Korea in 2019, who responded to a survey form measuring the specified concepts. CFA revealed satisfactory fit of the overall measurement model (χ²/df=2.537, SRMR=0.034, GFI=0.914, IFI=0.966, CFI=0.966, RMSEA=0.063). Factor loadings, CR, and AVE were also satisfactory. The hypothesized relationships were analyzed by conducting SEM analyses, which revealed an acceptable fit of the structural model (SRMR=0.034, GFI=0.928, IFI=0.968, CFI=0.968, RMSEA=0.079). The findings displayed positive effect of involvement on a tourist’s emotion (0.384, p<0.001), event satisfaction (0.292, p<0.001), and destination loyalty (0.322, p<0.001). Likewise, sequential relationships among tourist emotion, event satisfaction (0.359, p<0.001), and loyalty (0.346, p<0.001) were found. All of the hypotheses were supported.

The findings indicate that internal state (involvement) can be incorporated as stimulus within the SOR framework, confirming that sport tourist’s involvement and emotions are critical constructs that affect their event satisfaction and destination loyalty (Parkinson et al., 2018; Prayag et al., 2013). Sport event marketers should find ways for potential visitors to get involved actively in event activities in an effort to generate positive emotions both inside and outside the sport arenas.