

## Comparison of Sport Tourist and Local Participants' Sponsorship and Charity Recall and Intentions

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### Abstract

Running events have proliferated in the last decade and rely on sponsorships for income. However, more needs to be discovered about how effective these sponsorships are in encouraging purchase behavior and connecting to charity organizations. This study aims to develop a stronger understanding of running event participants and their attitudes toward sponsorships and charity organizations. Local participants were compared to sport tourists to determine if differences existed in the recall or potential use of the sponsor's product. Also, this study used self-determination theory to determine the impact of motivation on sponsorship recall and purchase intentions. A total of 201 respondents completed a survey at a major running event. Results indicated sport participants were likely to recall sponsors with a high level of perceived fit. Additionally, participants intended to purchase products from the running shoe company. Participants also had a high level of recall for the main charity and intended to donate money. Local participants were more likely to donate time to charity and purchase sponsor products than sport event tourists. Finally, autonomously motivated participants were more likely to recall sponsors.

**Keywords:** Sport, Sponsorship, Charity

### 1. Introduction

The popularity of road races has skyrocketed with the number of running event finishers increasing from 8.62 million in 2000 to 18.75 million in 2014 (Running USA, 2015c). As the industry continues to grow, so too have the commercial opportunities for businesses to associate their brands with these events. For example, one of the most recognizable series with 30 international marathon/half marathon events, the Rock 'N Roll Marathon Series, lists 22 series sponsors on its website. Additionally, marathon participants are a prime market segmentation as the majority are college educated (75%) with a household income greater than \$75,000 annually (73.2%), and spend \$200 or more annually on running apparel alone. Running participants' level of spending increases considerably when including registration fees, travel and accommodation, technology purchases (e.g., GPS watch), and charitable contributions.

While sponsorship opportunities are plentiful and the running consumer aligns with many organizations' target markets, little is known about running participants as consumers (Lough, Pharr, & Owen, 2014) or how road race participants feel toward sponsors of the event (Eagelman & Krohn, 2012). For sponsoring organizations, it would be ideal to promote products to consumers who are interested in the particular product and whose lifestyle and characteristics align with the product's target market (Nicholls, Roslow, & Dubliss, 1999). For many companies, road races provide sponsoring organizations the opportunity for two-way communication to promote their product not provided in many other outlets. Furthermore, sponsors at events like marathons have a unique opportunity to integrate their products into the participants' experience of the event (McKelvey, Sandler, &

Snyder, 2012).

Assessing the effectiveness of sponsorships is a necessary endeavor for both the sponsor and the road race. While research on sponsorship effectiveness in spectator sport has been conducted, little research in participant sport sponsorship exists leading Eagleman and Krohn (2012) to call for more research into sponsorship recall and recognition in participant sport. Additionally, there is a paucity of research comparing sport tourists to locals in regards to sponsorship recall and recognition and intentions to purchase products from sponsors. Research in this area could improve targeting of sponsorship messages and choices in sponsors for sport events.

This study aims to develop a stronger understanding of the running event participant and their attitudes toward sponsorships and charity organizations. One of the main purposes of this study is to address the gap in the literature comparing the sponsorship recall and purchase intentions of local participants to sport event tourists. To do so, this study compares local participants to sport tourists to determine if differences exist in the evaluation or potential use of the sponsor's product. Next, research has indicated the level of involvement and identification affects sponsorship recall. To expand on this line of research and provide a theoretical foundation to support these relationships, this study will utilize self-determination theory to determine the impact of motivation on sponsorship recall and purchase intentions. Finally, research on sponsorship in sport events will be extended by this study, which will specifically examine charity recall and intentions to support the charity. This research will inform participant sport event marketers, giving them data related to the effectiveness of sponsorships. Additionally, it could provide guidance for organizations evaluating potential sponsorship opportunities with running events by uncovering the types of sponsorships sport tourists, charity-minded individuals, and event participants identify and plan to purchase products.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical framework

In the realm of social psychology, congruity theory has been used to explain how memory and attitudes are formed, and in the sport sponsorship literature, researchers utilized congruity theory as a theoretical foundation for understanding recall and recognition (Jagre, Watson, & Watson, 2001). According to Jagre et al. (2001), when it comes to memory, storage and retrieval are impacted by prior expectations. For instance, if an individual perceives there to be a match between the sponsor and the event, this relationship will impact their ability to recall or recognize that sponsor in conjunction with the event. Congruity theory suggests that congruent information is remembered better than incongruent information (Jagre et al., 2001). However, these researchers suggested extremely incongruent sponsor-event fit would actually lead to greater recall and recognition rates, while completely consistent sponsor-event fit would result in lower recall and recognition rates based on consumer behavior and advertising research. The opposite relationships are expected when consumers possess favorable attitudes toward the sponsor. Cornwell, Weeks, and Roy (2005) and Spais and Johnston (2014) stated congruency theory was a frequently examined theoretical concept in sponsorship research. Across many studies, congruence has been found to have a significant positive relationship with sponsorship recall and other sponsorship outcomes (Cornwell et al., 2005).

Speed and Thompson (2000) provided an alternative theoretical foundation, classical conditioning theory, to explain consumer response to sponsorships. They outlined three ways this theory could be applied to research on brand recall and preferences toward a brand including people's attitudes toward the sporting event in question, their attitudes toward the sponsor, and their perception of the congruence between sponsor and event. They hypothesized that a greater level of fit between the event and sponsor would result in greater consumer response to the sponsorship.

The application of congruity theory and classical conditioning theory to sport sponsorship focuses on the fit between the sponsor and the event. Jagre et al. (2001) defined fit in two ways. The first type of fit is the match between the audience and the company's customers of interest. The second type of fit is that between the sponsoring company's brand or product and its closeness to the event as perceived by customers. Walraven, Koning, and van Bottenburg (2012) found consumers were more likely to recall a sponsor when there was a higher level of perceived fit with the organization.

Fit can be an important factor for solidifying a connection between a brand and an event (Gwinner, 1997). For example, Gwinner (1997) posited that a perceived similarity between events and sponsors helps the consumer link the two together. McDaniel (1999) bolstered these results when he found matching sponsors to sport brands could impact the response of a consumer to a sponsor's message.

### 2.2 Measuring sponsorship impacts

The effectiveness of sponsorships should be evaluated to provide support for the expenditure. If the goal of sponsorship is brand awareness, then Grohs, Wagner, and Vsetecka (2004) suggested organizations answer how

well the consumer remembers their product. Barros, De Barros, Santos, and Chadwick (2007) found that sponsor recall was enhanced by prior knowledge of the sponsor and preference for the sponsor's products for spectators at a soccer event. They also determined that perception of sponsorship fit and the attitude toward the event affected the recall of sponsors.

Similarly, Speed and Thompson (2000) found that response was impacted by sponsor-event fit, attitudes toward the sponsor, and attitudes toward the event. Response is stronger when there is a higher level of perceived fit. Grohs et al. (2004) studied the effects of brand prominence, event-sponsor fit, event involvement, and exposure on recall of sponsors for a skiing event. Their results indicated all factors except brand prominence had significant positive effects on sponsor recall. Specifically examining road race participants, McKelvey et al. (2012) discovered that runners were able to identify the majority of official sponsors correctly. Using aided recall, 97% of respondents in their study recalled the financial institution and energy bar, 91% recalled the water company, 80% recalled the running shoe company, 79% recalled the pasta company, 78% recalled the airline, and 60% recalled the rental car. Moreover, the highest percentages in correct aided recall and recognition were for sponsors that had good fit with the running culture

Sponsors' goals also commonly include increased purchases. Purchase intentions are useful measures of sponsorship's impact on future sales (Crompton, 2004). In a study on participant sport, Filo, Funk, and O'Brien (2010) found that sponsor image and event attachment impacted purchase intentions. Also, charity motives and attachment to the event had an effect on sponsor image. Miloch and Lambrecht (2006) bolstered this assertion in that 44% of survey respondents at a niche and grassroots sports event were likely to purchase a sponsors' product.

Researchers also suggested that consumers who experience repeated exposure to sponsor messages are more involved (i.e., visited the stadium more) and more likely to recall sponsors. For instance, Bennett (1999) established season ticket holders in European football indicated higher levels of sponsor recall compared to non-season ticket holders. Furthermore, Biscaia, Correia, Rosado, Ross, and Maroco (2013) determined it was likely the repeated exposure fans got to sponsorship messages at games allowed them to recall a sponsor. Thus indicating the more often spectators visited the facility, the more likely they were to recall the sponsors.

Additional factors might impact sponsorship recall and recognition. For example, if participants are more interested in the event, they are more likely to recall or recognize a sponsor (Miloch & Lambrecht, 2006). In fact, sponsors can improve consumers' response to their sponsorship by sponsoring events that are well-liked by their target market (Speed & Thompson, 2000). Personal liking of the event also relates to the benefits an individual receives from the event (Speed & Thompson, 2000). For running events, individuals are receiving a benefit by participating and actively choosing to register for the race, potentially increasing the benefits to the sponsors because of their association with the event.

To support this assertion, Eagleman and Krohn (2012) found organizations that sponsored a road race series for longer periods of time and engaged the consumer with on-site presences benefited from greater levels of recognition. Furthermore, individuals who visited the race series' website or Facebook page more frequently were more likely to identify sponsors correctly, more identified with the series, and more likely to purchase sponsor products.

### *2.3 Sponsorship and motivation to participate*

Researchers have begun to utilize self-determination theory to identify various motivational factors associated with event participation (Aicher & Brenner, 2015). Self-determination theory addresses fundamental issues related to "personal development, self-regulation, universal psychological needs, life goals and aspirations, energy and vitality, non conscious processes, the relations of culture to motivation, and the impact of social environments on motivation" (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Deci and Ryan (2008) further argued individuals are driven by three forms of motivation: autonomous, controlled and amotivation. Autonomous motivation occurs when an individual identifies with and integrates the value of the activity into his/her sense of worth. Alternatively, controlled motivation occurs when an individual feels compelled to engage in an activity because of external pressures or forces. The integration of the activity into one's own identity identifies the transition from controlled to autonomous motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Finally, amotivation is the lack of desire to engage in the activity.

Evaluating prior research and the relationship between motivation and other behavioral and attitudinal constructs, it is feasible motivation may impact sponsorship recall and purchase intentions. For example, Lough et al. (2014) determined individuals with high runner identity also had significantly higher intentions to purchase and were more likely to recall or recognize a sponsor. Additionally, McKelvey et al. (2012) also found more involved runners were more likely to identify sponsors correctly. Athlete identity (Aicher & Brenner, 2015) and involvement (Beaton, Funk, Ridinger, & Jordan, 2011) have previously been argued and found to be related to

motivation; adding credence to the assertion motivation will impact sponsorship recall and purchase intentions.

#### *2.4 Sponsorship, charitable organizations, and gratitude*

Charity-based motives impact sport event participants' attachment to a sport event, even in cases where the connection between the charity and event is not the main focus of the event (Filo, Funk, & O'Brien, 2011). The social awareness of sport event participants also should encourage sponsors to sponsor events that elicit meaning for participants, because this can improve sponsors' images (Filo et al., 2010). In general, consumers are seemingly sensitive to sponsorship as a philanthropic corporate activity (Speed & Thompson, 2000). A common aspect of many road races is the existence of a charitable organization that is the beneficiary of at least some of the proceeds gathered. Potentially, this is beneficial for sponsors because participant sport consumers are likely to feel grateful toward the sponsors for supporting the event (Kim, Smith, & James, 2010).

Kim et al. (2010) examined the role of gratitude in participant sport event sponsorship. They found a strong relationship between feelings of gratitude and purchase intentions. Additionally, gratitude mediated the relationship between consumer perceptions of the sponsorship and purchase intentions. They suggested that gratitude through sponsorship could be generated if the sponsors' motives were seen to be sincere, consumers perceived the sponsorship value to the event to be high, and consumers' perception of the amount of sponsorship investment by the sponsor was enhanced. Likewise, Gwinner (1997) suggested sponsoring brands seen as benefactors were perceived more favorably by attendees, who may then feel the need to purchase from the brand. Filo et al. (2010) found participants placed greater importance on an event because it gave them the opportunity to support a charity that benefitted them. These charity motives and increased attachment to the event also benefitted sponsors by increasing participants' positive opinions of sponsors. They suggested the alignment between sponsors and the charitable aspects of sport events can deliver benefits to the sponsoring organization.

An important piece of classical conditioning theory highlighted by Speed and Thompson (2000) was the impact of the attitudes consumers had toward the sponsor on sponsorship effectiveness. Consumers' positive attitudes could be enhanced by feelings of gratitude toward a sponsor of a charitable event. If a consumer has a positive association with the event and the sponsor because of the charitable connection, they might have a stronger affinity for the event and sponsor. Filo et al. (2010) suggested future research examine participant awareness and perceptions of sponsors in the charity-sport event context.

Congruity theory and classical conditioning theory both suggest that fit is important for a sponsorship to be effective. Common metrics of sponsorship effectiveness are brand recall, brand recognition, and intentions to purchase sponsors' products. As the literature review explained, research in sport supports the importance of having proper fit for performing well on these metrics, but little has been done in the participant sport realm. Additionally, the literature review found gaps in the literature on the impact of charitable events, the differences between sport tourists and locals, and the impact of motivation on sponsorship outcomes.

The purpose of this study was to examine the recall, recognition, and purchase intentions of sport participants at a running event. The following research questions and hypothesis were examined:

RQ1: Will race participants report high levels of sponsorship recall or purchase intentions?

RQ2: Will participation impact charity recall, charitable contributions, or intentions to volunteer?

RQ3: Does participant motivation impact the levels of sponsorship recall or purchase intentions?

RQ4: Does a difference exist between sport tourists and local participants in terms of sponsorship recall and purchase intentions?

RQ5: Does a difference exist between sport tourists and local participants in terms of charity recall and involvement intentions?

### **3. Method**

#### *3.1 Procedures*

Through a partnership with a marathon event in the Southwestern United States, the event organizer distributed an email that requested participants in the most recent event to complete the online questionnaire. In total, the email was distributed to 1,183 people who participated in either the half or full marathon during this event, registered online, and provided a valid e-mail address. After one week of data collection, a follow-up e-mail was distributed to participants and a final call was sent one week later. It is important to note this data collection occurred six months after the completion of the event indicating measures of recall would be long-term.

#### *3.2 Participants*

A total of 311 marathon runners from 13 different zip codes responded to the questionnaire, and 201 provided completed questionnaires yielding a 64% completion rate. Participants who indicated they lived in a zip code

outside the county where the event was hosted were treated as sport tourists (N=96), while those within the county were considered residents (N=105). This strategy allowed us to account for those participants who traveled away from their home community, which aligns with Gibson's (1998) definition of active sport tourists. Participants were comprised of mainly females (72%) with the following age distribution: 26-35 years of age (31.8%), 36-45 years of age (30.3%). College (73.6%) was selected most often as the education level attained. Annual household income for participants was reported to be \$75,000 or more by 63% of the participants. While the sample size may be low, these demographics are consistent with the local event, as well as marathon events in the United States (Running USA, 2015a; Running USA, 2015b).

### 3.3 Measurement

The survey questionnaire was composed of three sections: sponsorship and charity recall/intentions, motivation to participate, and demographic items. Participants were first asked to complete an aided sponsorship recall, as they were provided with six actual sponsors and six organizations commonly associated with running events or large organizations within the host community. Next, they were asked to indicate the prominence of the sponsor (1 = not very prominent to 7 = very prominent), the fit of the sponsor (1 = not very related to 7 = very related), and their purchase intentions. Similar methods were used for charity recall. In total, respondents were provided with six different charity organizations (three were correct; three were not). Next, participants were asked to indicate how likely they were to volunteer time and donate money to the different charities.

The Sport Motivation Scale (SMS-II; Pelletier et al., 1995) was administered to all participants to measure motivation. This scale was validated in different sport studies (e.g. Hu & Bentler, 1999; Li & Harmer, 1996; Martens & Webber, 2002). The SMS-II asked participants to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with 28 different reasons for which they participated in the marathon (see Pelletier et al., 1995 for items). The SMS scale consists of the several subscales outlined above consisting of 4 items each anchored with 1=Strongly disagree and 7=Strongly agree.

## 4. Results

Before testing the research questions and hypotheses, internal consistency was calculated for the SMS-II scale. Results indicated the subscales were all reliable: Motivation to know ( $\alpha = 0.81$ ); Motivation to experience stimulation ( $\alpha = 0.74$ ); Motivation to accomplish ( $\alpha = 0.75$ ); Identification ( $\alpha = 0.71$ ); Introjection ( $\alpha = 0.76$ ); External regulation ( $\alpha = 0.77$ ); Amotivation ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ). Next, mean scores were calculated for autonomous motivation by combining the motivation to know, experience stimulation, and accomplish scores with identification. Controlled motivation was calculated by combining introjection and external regulations.

The first research question asked whether race participants would show high levels of sponsorship recall and intentions to purchase sponsors' products. The results indicated participants were able to identify and recall the sponsors of the event including the event title healthcare provider sponsor (99%), running shoe company (86%), local restaurant (53%), t-shirt provider (50%), local university blog (37%), and retail store (19%). A non-parametric chi-square analysis indicated the healthcare provider ( $X^2 = 193.08, p < .001$ ), and the running shoe company ( $X^2 = 125.78, p < .001$ ) were recalled by significantly more than 50% of respondents. The restaurant sponsor ( $X^2 = 3.11, p > .05$ ) and t-shirt sponsor ( $X^2 = 1.12, p > .05$ ) were recalled by the expected amount of participants (50%). Finally, the audio company ( $X^2 = 79.38, p < .001$ ) and local website ( $X^2 = 8.45, p < .001$ ) were recognized by significantly fewer than 50% of respondents. Next, a series of one-sample t-tests using 4 (midpoint of the scale) as the test value were performed on participants likelihood to purchase products or services from the sponsors. Results indicated the running shoe company returned the highest level of purchase intentions ( $t [199] = 27.72, p < .001, M = 6.30, SD = 1.17$ ) and the local website the lowest ( $t [197] = 2.61, p < .05, M = 4.35, SD = 1.88$ ). A full display of the t-test results are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. T-test results comparing purchase intentions to the midpoint of the scale

Company	Mean	SD	t value
Event title healthcare provider	4.78	1.86	5.90**
Running shoe company	6.30	1.17	27.72**
Local restaurant	4.78	1.70	6.45**
T-shirt provider	5.07	1.71	8.33**
Local university blog	4.35	1.87	2.62*
Retail store	3.70	1.76	-2.40*

\*\* Significance at the .001 level

\* Significance at the .01 level

The second research question asked whether participants would show a high level of charity recall and would be willing to donate time or money to charitable organizations. Similar to sponsor recall, a non-parametric chi-square analysis was conducted to test charity recall. Recall for the Main Charity Sponsor was also very high (98%). Approximately one-third of respondents recalled Local Youth Charity 34% and one-fourth recalled Local Education Charity (23%). A non-parametric chi-square analysis indicated the main charity was recalled significantly higher than not recalled ( $\chi^2 = 185.32, p < .001$ ), while the two local charities were significantly lower ( $\chi^2 = 21.02, p < .001$ ;  $\chi^2 = 59.12, p < .001$  respectively).

When asked about donating to the charities involved with the event, the mean score was greater than the midpoint for each charity indicating participants were likely donate to the Main Charity ( $t [198] = 15.87, p < .001, M=7.03, SD=2.86$ ), Local Youth Charity ( $t [198] = 8.89, p < .001, M = 5.78, SD = 2.83$ ), and Local Education Charity ( $t [198] = 6.85, p < .001, M = 5.37, SD = 2.82$ ). In terms of volunteering, participants indicated they would likely volunteer for the Main Charity ( $t [198] = 7.29, p < .001, M = 5.63, SD = 3.16$ ), and the Local Youth Charity ( $t [198] = 3.84, p < .001, M = 4.81, SD = 2.97$ ); however, the mean score for the Local Education Charity (Charity  $t (198) = 1.87, p > .05, M = 4.39, SD = 2.96$ ) was not significantly higher than the midpoint.

To examine the third research question, whether participant motivation impacts sponsorship recall, a binary logistic regression was calculated using the title sponsor recall as the dependent variable. This variable was selected as it received a high level of recall. Results indicated the equation accounted for 14% of the variance in recall (Naglerkerke  $R^2 = 0.14$ ). Autonomous motivation was positively related to recall ( $\beta = 1.53$ ), while amotivation ( $\beta = -.10$ ) and controlled motivation ( $\beta = -.77$ ) were negatively correlated with recall.

Next a linear regression was calculated to examine whether autonomously motivated participants reported higher levels of sponsorship purchase intentions. First, the purchase intentions for the title sponsor and running shoe company were combined to create an overall purchase intention score of the two sponsors with the greatest recall. Next, we controlled for the prominence and relatedness of the sponsors, and regressed purchase intentions on the three forms of motivation. Results indicated the equation accounted for 13% of the variance ( $R^2 = .13, \Delta R^2 = .07, F [3,194] = 5.36, p < .01$ ). Autonomous motivation was the only significant predictor in this equation ( $\beta = 0.40, p < .001$ ) among the forms of motivation. Relatedness ( $\beta = 0.35, p < .05$ ) was also a significant predictor in the relationship. Full results are displayed in Table 2. A follow up regression model with these variables in the model was computed. Results indicated the model was significant ( $F [2,198] = 12.80, p < .001$ ) and explained 11% of the variance.

Table 2. Combined purchase intentions regressed on the three forms of motivation

	B	SE	t	Sig.
Combined Prominence	0.08	0.06	1.35	0.18
Combined Relatedness	0.35	0.15	2.33	0.02
Amotivation	0.01	0.08	0.08	0.94
Autonomous	0.40	0.11	3.65	0.00
Controlled	-0.06	0.09	-0.72	0.47

Finally, to answer research questions four and five a MANOVA was utilized to test for differences in sponsorship recall and purchase intentions among sport tourists and locals, as well as charity recall and donation/volunteer charity intentions. The combined purchase intentions score for the title and running shoe company sponsor, and the donate money and time for the main charity sponsor were loaded as dependent variables. Results determined local participants were more likely to purchase products from the sponsor ( $F [1, 196] = 8.58, p < .01, \eta^2 = .04$ ), and donate time to the local charity ( $F [1, 196] = 8.71, p < .01, \eta^2 = .04$ ); however, they were not more likely to donate money ( $F [1, 196] = 0.62, p > .05, \eta^2 = .003$ ) compared to sport tourists. Mean scores and standard deviations are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviations of charitable and sponsor intentions

Variable	Residency	Mean	SD
Donate Money Mercy Project	Resident	7.33	2.82
	Tourist	7.02	2.74
	Total	7.19	2.78
Donate Time Mercy Project	Resident	6.27	3.08
	Tourist	4.97	3.11
	Total	5.66	3.15
Combined Sponsor Purchase Intention	Resident	5.80	1.27
	Tourist	5.30	1.14
	Total	5.57	1.23

## 5. Discussion

Running events provide an opportunity for sponsors to reach participants who might actually utilize their products post-event. However, whether or not sponsors are successfully increasing awareness and intentions to purchase products has not been studied extensively in previous participant sport literature (Eagleman & Krohn, 2012; Lough et al., 2014). The results of the current study indicated running event participants were most likely to recall the event title sponsor (a healthcare provider), followed by a running shoe company, local restaurant, and t-shirt company. These results support the proposition of Speed and Thompson (2000) that the perceived congruence between the sponsor and the product will impact recall. Running event participants are likely to remember a running shoe company, t-shirt company, local restaurant, and healthcare provider because these relate to running, fitness, or fuel for activity. Additionally, it appears the level of sponsorship impacts the level of recall. The event title sponsor was recalled by almost 100% of respondents. For companies deciding to sponsor running events, it appears investing in the title sponsor is worthwhile, especially if the goal is brand or product awareness.

Respondents were most likely to purchase products from the running shoe sponsor, which also supports the theory that congruence between the event and sponsor will improve the effectiveness of the sponsorship. Running event managers could utilize this information to approach and encourage running shoe or apparel stores, fitness facilities, nutrition stores, and other health and fitness companies to sponsor their event. Similarly, organizations in the competitive health and fitness industry may consider seeking out running events in their area to sponsor to increase awareness and encourage purchases.

Similar to spectator sport literature, fit is an important consideration for participant sport events. While this is not surprising, the levels of recall for congruent sponsors in this study are very high (over 75% for the top two sponsors). This might indicate that participants in running events are an opportune target market for sponsors. Future research should consider examining the difference between sport event participants and non-participants that attend such events. Likely, utility of products to participants has an impact on purchase intentions and recall and should be studied as well.

Many running events are attached to a charitable organization, either through a partnership (e.g., St. Jude Memphis Marathon Weekend) or donations from the participants in the event (e.g., Team in Training). In the case of this event, multiple charitable organizations were beneficiaries. However, little research on charity organizations attached to events exists. In this study, the recall of the main charity partner and founding charity were high (higher than 90%); however, recall of the local charities was much lower (less than 35%). Participants also were likely to donate to charities associated with the event, and were likely to volunteer time for the main charity and the local education charity. These findings are important because respondents seem intensely aware of the charity-event connection and are interested in charitable giving.

Since respondents are so keen to connect with charities, other organizational sponsors may be able to capitalize on this charitable connection; especially as Gwinner (1997) and Kim et al. (2010) found that feelings of gratitude impacted individuals' purchase intentions. If sponsors can capitalize on these feelings of gratitude, they can potentially benefit from increased participant purchases. Additionally, Filo et al. (2010) found charity motives and increased attachment to events by participants can increase the way participants feel about event sponsors, which gives event sponsors an additional benefit from positive associations with the charity the event is connected. Finally, the recognition and awareness of charitable organizations is beneficial for the event itself because participants will be more attached to the event (Filo et al., 2010); thus increasing their likelihood of returning to the event. In the long-term, this benefits sponsors who are more likely to be recognized and patronized by participants who have been repeatedly exposed to their brand through sponsorships over time

(Bennett, 1999; Biscaia et al., 2013; Eagleman & Krohn, 2012).

This study further adds to our knowledge on how the internalization of individuals' sport participation impacts other attitudes and behaviors. Self-determination theory argues that as an individual begins to internalize their participation in an activity, they transition from controlled to autonomous motivation. Building on research that demonstrated involvement with the sport (McKelvey et al., 2012; Beaton et al., 2011) impacted sponsorship recall, this study found that autonomous motivation was a significant predictor in the relationship. As event organizers, it is important to develop mechanisms to elevate participants' autonomous motivation. This may be accomplished through many aspects, as outlined by Aicher and Brenner (2015), such as the challenge of the course or socialization opportunities. Further research should be conducted to substantiate these results.

This study endeavored to compare the sponsorship recall and purchase intentions of local participants to sport event tourists. Local participants were more likely to purchase products from sponsors and donate their time to the main charity. Because they live closer to these organizations, it is not surprising they were more likely to purchase products or donate time. When identifying the types of sponsors to target, event organizers would do well to identify organization who want to further develop the local market or create awareness within the market rather than concentrating on national brands. In doing so, they would create a strong return on investment for those organizations.

Alternatively, local participants were not more likely to donate money than sport event tourists. In fact, scores for the likelihood to donate money were high in both groups, indicating that the charitable aspect of the event is important to all participants. With the design of the current event focused on creating a revenue stream for the main charity, this event is likely cultivating significant funding for the organization. Other events that are focused on raising funds may benefit from stronger associations with the event among all participants in their events as well.

An important contribution of this study is the examination of sport event participants and their intentions to donate time and money to charity. Event participants want to ensure the event continues and would rather donate money than time. Races potentially could offer donation packages to capitalize on these feelings of gratitude and the desire to financially support the charity. Additionally, races could offer reduced entry fees for runners who raise specified amounts of money or create a competition for teams of runners who wish to raise money for charity. While some running events have already tried these tactics, this research supports this as a beneficial strategy for races attached to a charity.

## **6. Limitations and Future Research**

As with any research study, the current investigation has several limitations. First, the sample size was low. While the demographics aligned well with the event and running statistics in the United States, the generalization of these findings should be interpreted with caution. Secondly, the event did not provide a broad range of non-locals compared to other larger running events (e.g., New York Marathon, Chicago Marathon). Therefore, while the non-locals fit Gibson's (1998) definition, they were still from the same state as the event. Additional research should be conducted with larger events that provide a broader range of participants to support the findings in this investigation. Finally, measuring purchase intentions as a behavioral measure has recently been called into question, and other measures of intent have been noted as more accurate (e.g., would you recommend the product). Follow up research should incorporate various behavioral measures to determine the participants' potential purchase or use behaviors of sponsors.

## **7. Conclusion**

This study centered on determining various attitudes and behaviors associated with sponsorship and a participant drive sport. The results of the study provided some initial findings that are valuable to this line of research. First, the recall of sponsors and the main charity for the event was in-line with previous research on sponsorship recall. The sponsors with the greatest fit were also recalled more frequently and were the benefit of higher purchase intentions. Evaluating the participants' level of motivation indicated the participants who were autonomously motivated were more likely to recall the sponsors, as well as had higher purchase intentions. Finally, local participants also indicated high purchase intentions compared to their non-local counterparts. These finding continue to develop our understanding of congruity theory as well as provides initial evidence motivation may be a moderator to the relationship between congruence and recall.

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