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Promoting Word-of-Mouth communication: The moderating role of leisure sport social media*

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Abstract

Purpose: Usage of leisure-sport social media would lengthen and strengthen the effects of positive event experiences on WOM behavior. This study is to examine the extent to which leisure sport social media use has the moderating potential to enhance the direction of the relationship between post-event emotions and event WOM behavior. **Research design, data and methodology:** A running event located in a major metropolitan area in the southeastern United States was selected. Participants of the running events completed the survey. Descriptive analysis and correlations between primary variables of interest were conducted. To examine interactions within the context of moderated regression, a hierarchical regression analysis was employed. **Results:** The results confirmed direct effects of a sense of achievement and event satisfaction on event WOM intention, supporting H 1 and H2. In specific, result revealed that the amount of time spending on social media for running content moderated the effect of a sense of achievement on event WOM intention, supporting H3, however, H4 was rejected. **Conclusions:** There are managerial implications of these results, particularly which pertain to how organizers may be able to use perceived benefits (i.e., a sense of achievement and satisfaction) and social media to increase positive WOM intention.

Keywords: Leisure Sport Social Media, Sense of Achievement, Event Satisfaction, Post-Event Benefits, Event WOM

JEL Classification Code: I12, I31, M31, Z21, Z32

1. Introduction

U.S. Running Trends (2019) reported that the running-related industry peaked in 2013, when 19 million runners crossed the finish line at U.S. running events over all distances. The related economic potential lead to increasing the number of events. However, the number of runners registering for organized races in the U.S. was down slightly in 2018, continuing a five-year gradual drawback of mass participation in recreational road racing (U.S. Running Trends, 2019). 6 percent of races with

over 500 participants didn't come back for 2018 (The New York Times, 2019). Despite the increasing cost of running race, the road race business is still competitive and host destinations face huge challenge for future retention of runners.

The increasingly competitive environment every participation sport event faces makes it necessary for event providers to reach new participants by spreading positive words about the event. Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication represents consumers' experience sharing (Han, Choo, Lee, & Hwang, 2017). Notably, marketing literature found that WOM communication has the potential to shape attitudes and behaviors of consumers and thereby influence their making decision (Asada & Ko, 2019; Sipilä, Herold, Tarkiainen, & Sundqvist, 2017). Given the experiential nature of participation sport event, in this regard, WOM communication is appeared to provide a good opportunity of sharing experiences among runners and it further has persuasive effects for potential participants. However, WOM behavior has not been extensively examined in sport event distribution literature in spite of its capacity for event market development.

Despite lack of research on WOM behavior in literature, Kaplanidou, Jordan, Funk, and Ridinger (2012) proposed

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that attributes of recurring sport events have the potential to induce the engagement of WOM communications. Furthermore, extant marketing communication literature suggests that positive experiential perceptions promote positive WOM conversations (Asada & Ko, 2019; Royo-Vela & Casamassima, 2011; Sweeney, Soutar & Mazzaro, 2014). Taken together, it seems true that positive event experiences increase the likelihood to spread positive words about the event. However, WOM communication could be likely more facilitated when participants have the networks to access and to interact (Kucukemiroglu & Kara, 2015). This is because consumers feel more engaged with products and organizations when they are able to interact with other consumers by sharing experiences, information, and knowledge (Carlson, Rahman, Voola, & De Vries, 2018). Therefore, the current study suggests that in absence of networking platforms, the effects of positive post-event experience on WOM communication would shrink over time. Especially, this diminishing effect will be evident when participants have scarce interactive opportunities online to share their experiences or their conversations only take place offline. From event marketing communication point of view, hence, supplementary networking venue online should be equipped to sustain the relationship between experiential outcomes and WOM behavior.

As an accessible and open WOM networks, social media has gained an increasing attention from industry and academia (Allsop, Bassett, & Hoskins, 2007; Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007; Chun & Lee, 2016; Hooda & Ankur, 2018; Hu, Ha, Mo, & Xu, 2014; Kim & Kim, 2018; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Royo-Vela & Casamassima, 2011). With the increasing participation rates in mass participation sport event (MPSE), the exceeding popularity of social media appears to lead to the dramatic growth of leisure-sport social media usage (Kwon & Oh, 2019; Mahan, Seo, Jordan, & Funk, 2015). Given the evidences observed in communication literature, it is believed that leisure sport social media including facebook, linkedin, twitter, athlinks, and marathonguide allow people to interact with each other on a particular activity (i.e., distance running) as a form of experience exchange (Lee, 2017).

Given the influences of WOM on consumers' attitude formation and their making decision (Asada & Ko, 2019; Sipilä, Herold, Tarkiainen, & Sundqvist, 2017), spreading positive word about event is shown to facilitate market opportunities which caused to sustain events. From an event distribution perspective, the presented evidences seem to support the notion that leisure sport social media could serve as a WOM platform which allows the satisfied participants to promptly distribute their positive words to other network members. In this vein, it is deemed that usage of leisure-sport social media would lengthen and strengthen the effects of positive event experiences on

WOM behavior (i.e. event recommendation). However, there is surprisingly lack of research investigating the moderating role of SNS in the context of mass participation recurring sport events. Empirical evidences are needed for researchers and practitioners. This motivates the need to study how leisure sport social media can serve as a communication vehicle to enhance the effects of post-event emotions (e.g., a sense of achievement and event satisfaction) on WOM behavior.

Given the above logic, the purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which leisure sport social media use has the moderating potential to enhance the direction of the relationship between post-event emotions and event WOM behavior. The current study focuses on running event participants who are currently using social media for running related contents. In consideration of the competitive and experiential running event context, as for independent constructs predicting event WOM behavior, the current study focuses on a sense of achievement driven by personal goal achievement motive as well as event satisfaction reflecting cognitive evaluation about participation decision. The theoretical foundation used to develop research hypotheses are discussed in the next section.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sense of Achievement, Event Satisfaction, and Event WOM Intention

Given the performance-oriented nature of running event, achievement needs are a significant motivational foundation that is embedded in the mind of distance runners (Delrue et al., 2016; Funk, Jordan, Ridinger, & Kaplanidou, 2011; Kruger & Saayman, 2012; Kruger & Saayman, 2013; Malchrowicz-Mosko, Villarreal, Chilebosz, & Glapa, 2018; Myburgh, Kruger, & Saayman, 2014). Indeed, distance running including marathon requires lengthy individual training sessions to prepare for the event (Ogles & Masters, 2003). Given that numerous hours and miles for training are required if a runner anticipates running the entire distance and achieve his or her personal goal of running time (Ogles & Masters, 2003; Ridinger, Funk, Jordan, & Kaplanidou, 2012), he or she will be more goal-oriented especially for the performance.

To support this notion, sport behavior literature found that goal achievement is one of the most important motivational factors for distance runners who participate in the events (Delrue et al., 2016; Gill, Williams, Dowd, Beaudoin, & Martin, 1996; Kruger & Saayman, 2013; Malchrowicz-Mosko et al. 2018; Myburgh et al., 2014; Ogles & Masters, 2003). Literature further suggested that

runners who were participating in a selective event are significantly goal-oriented with an emphasis on personal performance standard and performance improvement (Funk, Jordan, Ridinger, & Kaplanidou, 2011; Gill et al., 1996; Kjelsas & Augestad, 2003; Ogles & Masters, 2003). For example, Gill et al. (1996) found that runners are more competitive and goal oriented, compared to other sport participants. In line with this view, Ogles and Masters (2003) observed five segments based on distance runners' motivation. Identified segments include personal goal achievers (12%), personal accomplisners (28%), competitive achievers (17%), running enthusiasts (16%), and lifestyle managers (25%). They concluded that a significant number of distance runners belong to a goal-oriented segment (e.g., personal goal achievers, personal accomplisners, and competitive achievers). Malchrowicz-Mosko, Villarreal, Chilebosz, and Glapa (2018) also found that the result-orientation (i.e., desire to challenge myself, desire to achieve the goal, desire to compete) is the most important motive for half-marathon runners. Kruger and Saayman (2013) found that serious runners and recreational runners among ultra-marathon participants were mainly motivated by intrinsic achievement. Given the evidences, it is true that goal achievement plays a crucial role in stimulating runners' intrinsic motive, which promotes their participation in the marathon events. Importantly, Du, Jordan, and Funk (2015) found that personal performance was a stronger positive determinant of running event satisfaction. Satisfaction has been shown to predict positive word of mouth (De Matos & Rossi, 2008; Koenig-Lewis, Asaad, & Palmer, 2018; Yoshida, Heere, & Gordon, 2015). Furthermore, with consideration of performance-oriented distance runners, their goal achievement appears to be associated with their perceived value (e.g., improving running speed and time, overcoming myself, beating competitors, and running the entire distance), which has been viewed as an antecedent of word-of-mouth activity (De Matos & Rossi, 2008). In this vein, it is logical that positive event WOM conversations would be initiated as a way to express a sense of achieving personal goal when distance runners felt proud of their performance and deemed those experiences an achievement. Hence, first hypothesis states:

H1: A sense of achievement will predict runners' likelihood to engage in positive word-of-mouth about the event.

Satisfaction has been considered an important emotional component to induce consumers' behavioral intentions and their retention (Koenig-Lewis et al., 2018; Oluwafemi & Dastane, 2016; Tran, 2020; Wu, 2014; Xiao, Ren, Zhang, & Kethoafetse, 2020). Extant marketing literature provides empirical evidences indicating that customers who are

highly satisfied with product or service are likely to recommend the source to other customers (Han et al., 2017; Park, Seo, & Han, 2018; Xiao et al., 2020). This relationship is not necessary to be different in sport event, which is composed by a variety of programs, products and services. Sport tourism and marketing literature also supports that sport event satisfaction is a prime determinant of word-of-mouth and behavioral intentions (Du et al., 2015; Koenig-Lewis et al., 2018; Seo, Jang, Kim, & Han, 2018; Yoshida et al., 2015). Thus, it is believed that a satisfactory experience about the sport event would predict intentions to spread positive word about the event.

H2: Event satisfaction will predict runners' likelihood to engage in positive word-of-mouth about the event.

2.2. Social Media: Moderator

SNS represents an accessible and open WOM network (Chun & Lee, 2016; Luo & Zhong, 2015). From a use and gratification perspective, media are used in a goal-directed way for the purpose of gratification and need satisfaction (Stafford, Stafford, & Schkade, 2004; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Drawing upon this view, marketing communication literature suggests that the use of social media represents WOM gratifications, supporting the notion that social media serves as a communication platform that helps people meet their WOM needs and lead to encouraging WOM communications (Arenas-Gaitán, Rondan-Cataluña, & Ramírez-Correa, 2018; Castronovo & Huang, 2012; Lin, Hsu, Chen, & Fang, 2017; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). For example, in a mixed method study of examining the gratifications obtained from Facebook, Quan-Haase and Young (2010) found that social related needs (e.g., sociability and social information needs) are central motives of WOM and these motives are fulfilled by Facebook use. Their interview findings revealed that participants continue to engage in interactive communications (e.g., word of mouth) in order to maintain such social gratifications as social connectivity and social information. They concluded that SNS continues to serve as a space for users not only to meet their social-related WOM motives but to promote interactive communications.

To support this finding, other studies found that SNS promotes people to build resources by allowing them to develop the network of relationships among users (Chiu et al., 2006; Ellison, Vitak, Gray, & Lampe, 2014; Hung & Li, 2007; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). These studies suggest that social capital online serves a number of functions in generating various benefits of social support, integration, social cohesion, self-acceptance, and an enhanced self-esteem (Acar, 2008; Ellison et al., 2014; Hung & Li, 2007; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten,

2006). Notably, these gratifications obtained from social media use were found to stimulate people to pool, create, and disseminate knowledge about personal experiences of products or services (Chiu et al., 2006; Lev-On, 2014; Lin et al., 2017; Sun, Youn, Wu, & Kuntaraporn, 2006; Zhu & Zhang, 2010).

In addition to social-related use and gratification, Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, and Gremler (2004) found the informational- and altruism-related use and gratifications for virtual networking community members. They identified advice seeking, platform assistance, venting negative feelings, and concerns for other consumers as WOM motives of virtual networking community members. They concluded that virtual networking communities (e.g., social networking sites) serve as a medium to satisfy the informational- and altruism-related WOM needs and thereby to promote WOM engagement.

The discussed evidences appear to support the notion that social media use fulfills a variety of socio-psychological WOM motives, generates the related gratifications, and leads to persistent WOM engagement. Furthermore, a sense of achievement is shown to induce WOM motives that are likely to be satisfied by social media use. Again, given the performance-oriented context of distance running events, literature supports the notion that runners are likely to be motivated in spreading positive words about the event when they felt they achieved their personal goal. Taken together, leisure sport social media appears to serve as a WOM platform to express their personal experiences when runners felt a sense of achievement at their performance. Therefore, it can be expected that in the absence of leisure sport social media usage, a sense of achievement is less likely to influence WOM engagement. In case of mass participation running events, consequently, the frequency of using running-related leisure sport social media is expected to enhance the effect of a sense of achievement on positive WOM communications about the event. Thus, the moderating hypotheses state:

H3: The amount of time using leisure sport social media for running contents will enhance the relationship between a sense of achievement and event WOM intention.

Mass participation sport events represent experiential consumption and a positive experience can lead to a participant attaching more functional, emotional, and symbolic meaning to an event (Filo, Funk, & O'Brien, 2009; Papadimitriou, Apostolopoulou, & Kaplanidou, 2016). Drawing on balance theory, extremely satisfied and extremely dissatisfied customers are more likely to initiate WOM transfers (Anderson, 1998). The reason behind the consumer's need to express positive emotions is that the consumer's positive consumption experiences contribute to

a psychological tension inside him or her because of a strong desire to want to share the joy of the experience with someone (Dichter, 1966). In this vein, satisfied customers are likely to engage in positive WOM behavior such as recommendation to other customers (Han et al., 2017; Royo-Vela & Casamassima, 2011; Xiao et al., 2020). Notably, social media use has been found to have the potential to facilitate WOM communications (Arenas-Gaitán et al., 2018; Hudson, Roth, Madden, & Hudson, 2015; Severi, Ling, & Naseri, 2014). Given the nature of sharing experience embedded in social media, social media appears to serve as a platform to lead to express their satisfactory experiences. Hence, it is logical to anticipate that in the absence of leisure sport social media usage, the effects of event satisfaction on positive WOM communications about the event would shrink over time. In other words, the frequency of using running-related leisure sport social media is expected to enhance the effect of event satisfaction on positive WOM communications about the event. Thus, the following moderating role was put forth:

H4: The amount of time using leisure sport social media for running contents will enhance the relationship between event satisfaction and event WOM intention.

Based on the established hypotheses, the research model is presented in Figure 1.

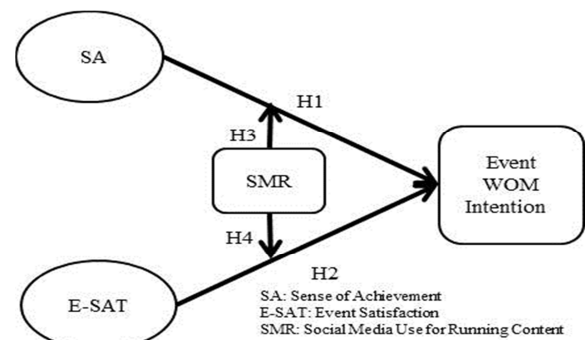


Figure 1: Research Model

3. Methodology

3.1. Sampling and Data Collection

The experiential nature of road races offers an appropriate context to study the moderating potential of leisure sport social media use. With consideration of the current research context, a recurring-running event hosted in a major metropolitan area in the United States was selected. Data were collected via online survey with a

voluntary response sampling among participants registered for the running event. The survey included the purpose of the study, guidelines for completing the survey, and confidentiality. Completed surveys were received from 3,476 participants, representing 14.6% response rate. Of the survey participants, 2,463 runners who self-reported as current social media users for running-specific content were analyzed, excluding 15.30% (n=532) reported as only social media users for general purpose, and 13.84% (n=481) reported as non-social media users from the analysis. Of the analyzed data, 27.6 % participated in full marathon, 73.0 % participated in the half marathon, and 2.0 % participated in the 5 K. Their demographic profile presented 47.2 % male and 52.8 % female, 77.5 % were between the ages of 25 and 49. 69.5 % were working full-time paid employment (35 or more hours per week) and 43.1 % had an annual household income greater than \$100,000 (USD). Participants were working in diverse fields of industry. 14.9 % were working in professional and scientific service, 14.3% were in health care or social assistance, and 11.7 % were in the field of finance or insurance.

3.2. Measures

The survey questionnaire consisted of the research construct items and control variable items. The research constructs included sense of achievement, event satisfaction, the frequency of social media use for running content, and event WOM intention. Control variables included running involvement and the frequency of general use of SNS. To ensure content validity, the scales of research constructs were multiple reviewed from three experts with sport or leisure-related doctoral degree. The means and standard deviation are reported in Table 1.

3.2.1. A Sense of Achievement

Sense of achievement was measured by a two-item scale adapted from Havenar and Lochbaum (2007). The items were revised to fit into the context of running event. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with two statements: (1) At this event I achieved my performance goal and (2) My performance at this event was much better than I expected. A seven-point Likert scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree was used. Internal consistency was established (Cronbach's alpha = .84).

3.2.2. Event Satisfaction

Event satisfaction was assessed employing a three-item scale adopted from Oliver(1980). Participants were asked to evaluate their decision for participating in the event with three statements: (1) I am satisfied with my decision to participate in this event, (2) I am happy that I decided to participate in this event, and (3) I did the right thing by

deciding to participate in this event. A seven-point Likert scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree was used. Internal consistency was computed (Cronbach's alpha = .80).

3.2.3. Use of SNSs for Running Contents

In order to measure frequency of running content use, two items were employed. First item was to identify users of running-related social media. For this, participants were asked to report which social media they use for running-specific information. This item presented nine different SNSs—four were general SNS (e.g., Facebook) and five were running-specific (e.g., Athlinks). The second item assessed frequency of use with discrete interval type (e.g., 1-3 hours). In order to maintain consistency with the other continuous variables of the study, data were converted to present the midpoint of each category.

3.2.4. Event WOM Intention

In order to evaluate event WOM intention, positive valence WOM was assessed using a single item (Goyette, Ricard, Bergeron, & Marticotte, 2010). Participants were instructed to gauge a single question: Based on your participation, how likely are you to recommend this event to others? A seven-point Likert scale of 1 = very unlikely to 7 = very likely was used.

3.2.5. Control Variables

Marketing literature suggests that involvement predicts WOM behavior (Chun & Lee, 2016; Le, Dobeles, & Robinson, 2018; Upamannyu, Bhakar, & Chauhan, 2015). In addition, SNS use has been shown to be influential in stimulating WOM conversation (Arenas-Gaitán et al., 2018; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). In order to examine the moderating effect of social media use for running content, therefore, running involvement and the frequency of use of SNS for general purpose were controlled.

First, running involvement was measured using a three-item scale with a single item for each involvement facet of pleasure, centrality, and sign (Beaton, Funk, Ridinger, & Jordan, 2011). Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with three statements: (1) "I really enjoy running" (pleasure), (2) "Running says a lot about who I am" (sign), and (3) "I find a lot of my time is organized around running/walking" (centrality). Seven-point Likert-type items where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree were employed. Internal consistency was established (Cronbach's alpha = .68).

Second, in order to measure frequency of use for general purpose, two separate items were created. The first assessed which social media were used by participants for general purpose (i.e., "Which of the following SNS do you use?"). This item presented respondents with four different sites

and indicated to 'other'. The second item assessed frequency of use for general purpose (i.e., "In general, about how many hours do you spend each week on the SNS selected above?").

3.3. Analysis

Descriptive statistics and correlations between primary variables of interest were conducted (see table 1). The moderating effect is typically expressed as an interaction between a predictor and a moderator variable (Holmbeck, 1997; Kim, Kaye, & Wright, 2001). To examine interactions within the context of moderated regression, a hierarchical regression analysis was employed with the following steps (Kim et al., 2001). First, the predictor variables were centered to reduce the problems with multicollinearity that causes "bouncing betas" in which the direction of the beta terms can shift from previously positive to negative relationship or vice versa (Cohen, 1978). For example, the predictors (i.e., a sense of achievement, event satisfaction, and the frequency of SNS use for running content) were centered by subtracting the

mean score from each data-point. Second, the interaction terms were computed by multiplying the centered independent variables (i.e., a sense of achievement and event satisfaction) by the centered moderator (the frequency of social media use for running content). Third, multiple regression models were produced that represent main effects and interactions. Fourth, graphs for significant interactions were generated on the dependent variable (i.e., Event WOM intention) to assist the interpretation of the moderating effects.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics and correlations

As presented in table 1, a sense of achievement ($r = .241$, $p < .01$), event satisfaction ($r = .553$, $p < .01$), and running involvement ($r = .112$, $p < .01$) were highly correlated with event WOM intention.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

VA	M	SD	E-SAT	SMR	RI	SMG	WOM
SA	4.38	1.60					
E-SAT	6.49	.74	.306**				
SMR	3.52	5.71	-.018	.004			
RI	5.87	.89	.108**	.276**	.143**		
SMG	8.83	9.93	-.017	.025	.438**	.039	
WOM	6.20	1.23	.241**	.553**	-.026	.112**	-.018

*SA: Sense of achievement, E-SAT: Event satisfaction, SMR: Social media use for running content, RI: Running involvement, SMG: Social media use for general content, WOM: Event WOM intention, * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

4.2. Moderating effect of running social media use on the relationship between a sense of achievement and event WOM intention

The current study sets out to find the moderating effect of running social media use. As shown in table 2, running involvement (the control variable, $\beta = .087$, $p < .01$) predicted event WOM intention. H1 proposed the positive effect of a sense of achievement on WOM intention about the event. The results of regression analysis confirm the direct effect of a sense of achievement on event WOM intention ($\beta = .227$, $p < .01$), supporting H1.

In H3, the current study proposed that the amount of time spending on social media for running content would enhance the relationship between a sense of achievement and event WOM intention. To test this, the interaction term was included in the model predicting event WOM intention. If the change in R-square for the interaction term is

statistically significant, it is said to have a moderating effect, and the moderator hypothesis is supported (Holmbeck, 1997).

Result revealed that the amount of time spending on social media for running content moderated the effects of a sense of achievement on event WOM intention ($\Delta R^2 = .005$, $p < .01$). Thus, H3 was supported. Given that the most informative procedure in interpreting interaction involves creating graph (Aiken, West, & Reno, 1991), therefore, the impact of a sense of achievement on event WOM intention at other levels of the frequency of social media use for running content was plotted (see Figure 2). As shown in Figure 2, a sense of achievement influenced positively to event WOM intention at the high level of the frequency of running-related social media use. That is, it is believed that when runners spending a significant amount of time using on running-related social media are satisfied with their performance and feel achievement, they are more likely to

spread positive words about the event than runners spending the least amount of time using these sites.

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression Analysis: A sense of Achievement and Running Social Media Use

Step and variable	Event WOM Intention			
	β	Adj. R ²	ΔR^2	F
Step 1		.007	.008**	8.130**
Running Involvement	.087**			
General SNS Use	-.021			
Step 2		.058	.052**	33.185**
Running Involvement	.066**			
General SNS Use	.001			
Sense of Achievement	.227**			
Running Social Media Use	-.034			
Step 3		.063	.005**	28.783**
Running Involvement	.067**			
General SNS Use	.001			
Sense of Achievement	.225**			
Running Social Media Use	-.028			
Sense of Achievement x Running Social Media Use	.069**			

*p < .05. **p < .01.

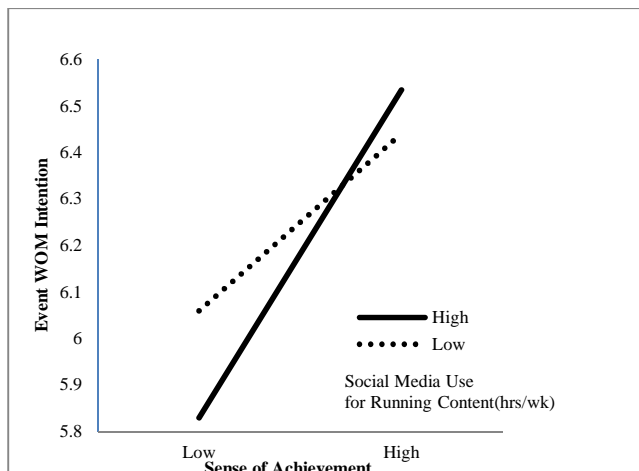


Figure 2: Moderating effect of running social media use

4.3. Moderating effect of running social media use on the relationship between event satisfaction and event WOM intention

Concerning the relationship between event satisfaction and event WOM intention, the current study further conducted a hierarchical regression to examine another moderating capacity of running-related social media use. As expected, the results of regression analysis confirm the direct effect of event satisfaction on event WOM intention ($\beta = .571, p < .01$), supporting H 2 (see table 3). With a reference to the moderating role of social media use for running content, in H4, the current study proposed that running-related social media use would enhance the relationship between event satisfaction and event WOM intention. However, the interaction between event satisfaction and the frequency of running-related SNS use was not observed ($\Delta R^2 = .001, NS$), thus, rejecting H4.

Table 3: Hierarchical Regression Analysis: Event Satisfaction and Running Social Media Use

Step and variable	Event WOM Intention			
	β	Adj. R ²	ΔR^2	F
Step 1		.008	.009**	9.535**
Running Involvement	.097**			
General SNS Use	-.007			
Step 2		.309	.301**	226.968*
Running Involvement	.061**			
General SNS Use	-.032			
Event Satisfaction	.571**			
Running Social Media Use	.030			
Step 3		.309	.001	181.488*
Running Involvement	.062**			
General SNS Use	-.032			
Event Satisfaction	.570**			
Running Social Media Use	.030			
Event Satisfaction x Running Social Media Use	.002			

*p < .05. **p < .01.

5. Discussion

The study supported and extended current knowledge through the investigation of the moderating function of running-related social media use. Results discovered that the influence of a sense of achievement on positive WOM intention about event is moderated by the frequency of running-related social media use. However, its moderating effect on the relationship between event satisfaction and event WOM intention was not observed.

5.1. Promoting WOM communications

The first aspect of this study involved an investigation into the moderating effect of running-related social media use on the relationship between a sense of achievement and event WOM intention. As expected, a sense of achievement appeared to positively influence positive WOM intention about the event (H1). The more achieved runners feel their personal goal for performance, the more intentions to spread positive recommendations for the event they reported. This finding supports a general notion of marketing literature that customers' perceived value (e.g., achievement) encourages the motivational state of WOM, thus leading to increased experience sharing behavior (Jung & Seock, 2017; Van Tonder, Petzer, Van Vuuren & De Beer, 2018). Additionally, regression results indicated that the direction of the achievement-event WOM relationship could be enhanced by the level of running-related social media use (H3). This finding appears to support the notion that SNS is an accessible and open WOM network (Chun & Lee, 2016) and its use leads to encouraging WOM communications (Arenas-Gaitán et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2017). Given the experience-sharing nature of social media, one possible explanation in the present context could be that running-related social media plays a role in satisfying self-expression related needs and effectively encouraging positive WOM communications among runners who are satisfied with their performance at the event. In addition, drawing on social presence theory, if runners who perceived achievement use running-related social media, they more likely intent to engage in WOM behavior. This is because SNS is richer media that has the appropriate social presence and provides a virtual environment satisfying social interaction needs (Dolan, Conduit, Fahy & Goodman, 2015; Mahan et al., 2015). That is, while achievement has utility in explaining the reason runners express positive opinions, running-related social media use could serve a medium to identify the presence of other runners and to perform communication in a style that is similar to face to face communication (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011). In this vein, it is judged that with the condition of using running-related social media, a sense of achievement could have the

synergetic effect to develop positive communication and recommendations among runners concerning event-related goods and services.

The second aspect of this study examined the moderating effect of running-related social media use on the relationship between event satisfaction and WOM behavior. As expected, runners with greater satisfaction scores displayed higher positive WOM intention about the event (H2). This finding is consistent with suggestions in marketing literature that satisfaction is one of key determinants of positive WOM behavior (Cho, Potluri, & Youn, 2020; Koenig-Lewis et al., 2018; Kwak, Kim, & Kim, 2019; Yoshida et al., 2015). However, concerning the moderating role of running related social media use on the relationship between event satisfaction and positive WOM intention, a different view was observed. Our findings indicate that positive word of mouth for the event apparently does not vary much by event satisfaction at the level of running-related social media use (rejecting H4). As presented in the results, runners were highly satisfied with the event ($M = 6.49$) and their satisfactory level strongly predicted the positive WOM intention ($\beta = .570$, $p < .01$). From a use and gratification view, it is true that running related social media could serve as a platform that runners interact to satisfy their intrinsic needs. However, the results imply that running related social media use (hours per week) is not likely to contribute in promoting the positive WOM intention for the event at the condition of high level of event satisfaction. That is, it would appear that participants with a high event satisfaction is most likely to spread the positive WOM regardless of the amount of time spent on running related social media. Furthermore, the current study supported that running related social media use does not necessarily have a direct effect on positive WOM intention ($\beta = .030$, ns). In this vein, the moderating effect of event satisfaction appeared to be existent between running related social media use and positive WOM intention. At the mass participation sport event context, an insignificant effect of leisure sport social media use on positive WOM behavior appeared to be made significant by the moderating function of such perceived benefits including event satisfaction and a sense of achievement. Relevant research is required.

5.2. Managerial implications

This study indicated that running-related social media could have crucial implications for participation sport event managers to promote positive word-of-mouth communications. Importantly, given the current findings, it is deemed that distance runners are more likely to spread positive words about the event when they feel a sense of achievement or feel satisfied with the event. However, running social media use (hours/week) does not necessarily

have a direct effect on positive WOM intention. These results imply that personal achievement and satisfactory level play an important role in generating a positive word of mouth, influencing the retention of future participants. Hence, participation sport event organizers need to identify extrinsic motivators and develop them, which could satisfy needs relevant to goal achievement and event. Particularly, for distance runners, personal achievement has been shown to be prominent factor for positive WOM communication. Supporting this notion, participation sport literature suggested that goal achievement is one of the most important motivational factors for distance runners (Delrue et al., 2016; Kruger & Saayman, 2013; Malchrowicz-Mosko et al. 2018). Du et al (2015) found that personal performance was a stronger positive determinant of running event satisfaction. In addition, the current study indicated that event satisfaction is a crucial determinant of positive WOM intention. In this sense, the main issue is suspected to be how event organizers facilitate a sense of achievement. This matter seemed to be related with the development of extrinsic motivators such as certificates, medals, and any form of attractions. These visible rewards could serve as a motivator to encourage positive e-WOM behaviors such as posting positive words with photos or video footage. However, every participant cannot achieve their personal goal. For sport event providers, therefore, another concern should be about the organization of the event that could satisfy those who failed to achieve personal goals. Consumer enjoyment of sport events derives, at least in part, from identification with a sport's subculture (Green, 2001) and sport participants commonly develop their own subculture, share and use it to enhance their social identity (Getz & McConnell, 2011). In this vein, one implication could be that running events need to provide programs and services satisfying runners' intrinsic needs such as sharing subculture and increasing self-esteem, and enhancing social identity. Further improved, programs and services could be designed with talking points in mind, to stimulate word-of-mouth and social-media-based conversations (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Seo, Lewin, Moon & Moon, 2018).

Concerning the function of running social media use, the current results imply that the amount of hours using running social media itself appeared not to play a role in spreading positive words for the event. The rate using running social media seemed to serve as a medium for runners to engage in positive word of mouth when the level of perceived achievement and event satisfaction is increased. Anyhow, to promote positive conversations for the event, the frequency of using running social media is important at the condition of high level of achievement and event satisfaction. To increase rate of using running related social media, recurring sport event organizers and marketers need to provide informational sources. This is because social media

is richer media (Dolan, Conduit, Fahy & Goodman, 2015) and information seeking has been shown a key motive for using SNS (Kim, Sin, & Tsai, 2014; Seo & Green, 2008). Before the event, sport event organizers can provide a variety of information concerning the event itself and attractions of the event destination. It would be effective if the information of event programs are incorporated with the destination's overall marketing mix of tourism products and services.

The current study examined the moderating role played by leisure sport social media in a running context. Inferences may be drawn from the findings with regard to how a sense of achievement and event satisfaction affects positive WOM behaviors and further how leisure sport social media use moderates the association of achievement and satisfaction with WOM intention. In addition, there are managerial implications of these findings, particularly which pertain to how event organizers may be able to use perceived benefits (i.e., a sense of achievement and satisfaction) and social media to increase positive WOM intention. This study may provide a basis for additional research, especially for enhancing the role of leisure sport social media for economic sustainability of mass participation sport events. Future work that continues to explore the role of leisure sport social media and perceived benefits in promoting positive WOM communications across a wide range of sport contexts, including both spectators and participants, could prove fruitful.

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