

Teaching Notes for Environmental Protection in Nature-Based Sport Events: The Case of Olympus Marathon

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Case Synopsis

Mount Olympus is the highest mountain in Greece. Its highest peak reaches 9,570 ft (2,917 m). It is a preserved national park and is listed as a “World Natural Heritage Monument” by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO; Kaltsas et al., 2018; Papageorgiou & Kassioumis, 2005). Mount Olympus constitutes a symbolic place for Greeks, as in ancient Greece people ascended every year to honor and sacrifice for Zeus (UNESCO, 2021). Its natural beauty includes aesthetic views, including massifs and majestic mountains, and it has been a destination that induces awe and admiration by visitors (UNESCO, 2021). UNESCO has declared Mount Olympus a “Biosphere Preserve” (Kaltsas et al., 2018). Furthermore, the unique Olympus National Park has been recognized as an outstanding, timeless, region value (UNESCO, 2021).

The case focuses on Olympus Marathon, an annual and international mountain running event in Greece at Mount Olympus. Specifically, the case study examines the environmental orientation and the carbon offsetting behavioral intentions among participants of the Olympus Marathon. In this case, Dionysis, the event manager of Olympus Marathon, is interested in implementing a pro-environmental plan that targets the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions generated by their consumers’ (runners) travel behaviors. Therefore, Dionysis studies the marathon runners’ voluntary carbon offsetting (VCO) behavioral intentions to achieve the pro-environmental plan. A discussion follows on the environmental orientation of participants and VCO planning to assist students in attaining the case study’s learning outcomes.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this case study, students should be able to successfully:

- Analyze mountain runners’ environmental orientation to justify the implementation of pro-environmental practices in nature-based sport events
- Investigate mountain runners VCO behavioral intentions
- Develop effective VCO marketing plans

Target Audience

This case study provides the opportunity to undergraduate or graduate students in sport management to expand their horizons and develop their skills on topics such as:

- Analytical, Critical, and Creativity Thinking
- Sport Event Management
- Strategic Sport Event/Facility Planning
- Sport Ecology
- Sustainability

Recommended Readings

- Cunningham, G., McCullough, B.P., & Hohensee, S. (2020). Physical activity and climate change attitudes. *Climatic Change*, 159(1), 61–74. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10584-019-02635-y>
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Teaching Plan and Analysis

Review/Discussion Questions

Instructors can use the following review/discussion questions that connect to the learning outcomes of this case study.

- Why do sport event participants participate in running events in natural environments? (connects with Learning outcome 1)

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Instructor's Notes

For this question, the students have to think about the motivation that makes runners participate in these events. The information in the case can assist them regarding this discussion. The learning outcome here is to establish an understanding of how motivation for running is related to the nature-based environment of the running events. Furthermore, discussion should focus on the bigger picture regarding the connections of active sport event participants with places with natural environmental characteristics, which can initiate a conversation on the link between active living and place attachment.

- (b) Based on the case study data, what variables may be critical to enhancing participants' connection with the natural environment and donating to offset their carbon footprint? (connects with Learning outcomes 2 and 3)

Instructor's Notes

The students will have to look at the data from the case study and discuss how the variables connecting with the environment and offsetting carbon donation intentions. The learning outcome for this question is to allow students to evaluate the relationship between place attachment and intentions to donate, considering key variables discussed in the study.

- (c) Do you think that runners may be a group with a high ecological identity? Justify your answer with your data and your background research (connects with Learning outcome 1).

Instructor's Notes

For this question, the students need to look at the data from the case study and observe the ecological identity of the runners in this event. The learning outcome from this activity is to evaluate the levels of ecological identity in the runners of the case study and discuss how this can apply to a marketing plan to offset carbon emissions.

- (d) How can a sport event organization improve event participants' ecological identity and ultimately increase VCO emissions behavioral intentions? (connects with Learning outcomes 2 and 3)

Instructor's Notes

For this question, the students have to discuss how a sport event experience enhances or creates points of awareness among participants about ecological identity and ultimately how this identity could change their behaviors to donate to offset their emissions. The learning outcome for this question is that the students will evaluate strategies that could contribute to change in environmentally friendly behaviors.

Next Steps

The students will have to thoroughly review the data in this case and be prepared to engage in the class activity described below.

Learning Activity: Create an Effective VCO Emissions Marketing Plan

For this activity, the students will have to create a VCO emission marketing plan for sport event participants across multiple promotional platforms such as media, pre-during-post event, signage, and programming.

Students will first need to analyze the needs of the target market, which are sport event participants in natural environments. For the market analysis, the students need to look carefully at the demographics of such target market and their potential consumption

behaviors. The case study data can help, but more studies about active sport event participants in the literature inform the students. Next, the students have to consider the constructs introduced in this study: place attachment, ecological identity, and nature bonding. The students then have to consider how these constructs can influence the sport event participants to donate more toward VCO emissions. Finally, within that approach, the students have to think about how they can increase place attachment and nature bonding?

Students should think about approaching the event participant target market in terms of promotions. Some background data are needed for this exercise. For example, <https://www.traveldailynews.com/post/new-study-assesses-active-sports-tourism-facilities-across50-countries>.

Potential promotional avenues that may create awareness about VCO emissions and ultimately influence behaviors could include social media campaigns, television promotions, or radio or public relations events. The students will have to present specific solutions such as what social media, what type of television promotions, which medium and when what geographic area for the radio promotions, and what kind of messaging should be used, and finally, what public relations events should be organized that can influence sport event participants intentions to offset the carbon emissions.

The VCO marketing plan should conclude with a tangible set of actions for the event organizers and any organization that may want to cosponsor this effort.

Teaching Timetable (120-Minute Class)

| Topic | Activity |
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| Background/introduction (15 min) | Lecture by the instructor on CO ₂ emission, VCO, ecological identity, place attachment, and nature bonding. |
| Theoretical framework (15 min) | Lecture by the instructor on climate change issues, its connection to carbon offsetting practices, and the role of potential sport event participants' psychological variables and beliefs. |
| Methods and analysis (15 min) | The instructor will provide the results tables and figures (see Table 1 in the case study) of the Olympus Marathon study and explain how the relationships between the variables could be tested. |
| Groups of students and review questions (15 min) | The instructor will assign students into groups, and they will work on answering the review questions. Students will consult the available study data to answer the following questions that align with the Learning outcomes 1, 2, and 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do sport event participants participate in running events in natural environments? • Based on the case study data, what variables are critical to enhancing participants' connection with the natural environment? • Do you think that runners may be a group with a high ecological identity? Justify your answer • In your opinion, how does ecological identity relate to motivation for running, place attachment, and nature bonding? • How can a sport event organization improve the ecological identity among event participants and ultimately increase VCO behavioral intentions? |
| Group activity (assignment; 60 min) | VCO emissions marketing plan. |

References

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