Running Head: FUNDRAISING TEAMS AND SPORT EVENTS

TITLE: 'You belonged to something': Exploring how fundraising teams add to the social leverage of events

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Abstract

Research question: Participatory sport event managers and marketers encourage individuals to register and complete events as members of teams that raise funds for a specific charitable cause. The prevalence of fundraising teams presents an opportunity to investigate how these subgroups can deliver social impacts that are complementary to those sought by event organisers. Accordingly, the purpose of the current research is to examine how successful teams contribute to the social interactions and event experience of members.

Research methods: We purposively sampled two highly successful fundraising teams that participated in a running and swimming event. Qualitative data were collected via post-event focus groups and 14 interviews with members of Mands' Mob (Run Melbourne) and the Yarra Babes (MS 24-Hour Mega-Swim) who raised funds for two charities: Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation and Multiple Sclerosis Australia.

Results and Findings: Five themes were uncovered: (1) team leader communication, (2) team catch-ups, (3) theming, (4) humanising the cause, and (5) bonding at the event. These themes demonstrate that fundraising teams bolster the experience throughout, assist with training, and facilitate social interaction throughout the event among team members.

Implications: The themes demonstrate how successful fundraising teams create social impacts that might be leveraged by organisers. There is scope to broaden efforts to complement the work of team leaders in order to inspire participants through personal narratives and distinguish teams through a visual identity and image.

Keywords: Sport events, fundraising teams, social leverage of events, charity

'You belonged to something': Exploring how fundraising teams add to the social leverage of events

Participatory sport events regularly align with charitable causes to differentiate the event and increase participation (King, 2004; Nettleton & Hardey, 2006). Fundraising is a critical component of sport events; however, financial contributions to charitable causes are declining. For example, revenue from the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life, the most successful sport-based community fundraising initiative in the world, has dropped 23% since 2008 (Lindsay, 2015). Similarly, revenue from the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, the second largest sport-based fundraising initiative worldwide, dropped 10% from 2013 to 2014 (Panepento, 2015). These figures illustrate that sport events with a charitable component face escalating challenges in recruiting participants and, as a consequence, fundraising. This is further compounded by increased choice and competition from more novel offerings such as Tough Mudder, Colour Run, and Movember (Lindsay, 2015).

A strength of charitable sport events is the interactive and social experiences participants share whilst completing challenges (e.g., Snelgrove, Wood, & Havitz, 2013). Raising funds for a worthwhile cause can also provide an opportunity for a person to feel a part of something larger than him or herself (e.g., Filo, Spence, & Sparvero, 2013). Perhaps because of the social nature of charitable sport events, registrants increasingly raise funds and participate as members of teams (Olberding & Jisha, 2005). Examples range from large charitable fundraising programs, such as the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's Team in Training, to those smaller familial or friendship groups in which participants coordinate fundraising activities for specific events. Drawing attention to such entities, Woolf, Heere, and Walker (2013) argue that fundraising teams provide participants with additional sites for social interaction, community, and meaning that are additive to the general sense of communitas fostered by an event (Chalip, 1992, 2006). Building on Woolf et al. (2013) we

specifically examine how successful teams contribute to the social interactions and event experience of members.

Team-based fundraising, also referred to as peer-to-peer fundraising or social fundraising, involves individual fundraisers leveraging their personal networks to support a cause through financial contributions. Team fundraising generally takes place at the grassroots level, and occurs through campaigns (e.g., appeals made over a period of time), personal events (e.g., graduations, milestone birthdays), or activities (e.g., sport events in which participants raise funds to participate). For the purposes of this research, team fundraising is defined as: *a group of individuals brought together by a team leader, or existing social relationships, to participate in a particular sport event and raise funds for a specific charity selected by the team leader or event organisers*.

Team fundraising is most popular in the United States, where the top 30 fundraising events generated U.S. $1.57 billion in 2015. This total represents an increase of nearly 10% from 2006, when data were first collected (Peer-to-Peer Thirty, 2016). While the ten-year growth in fundraising for these events is offset by some decline across select events (as noted above), there has been an increase in the variety of charities and causes supported through team fundraising (Philanthropy News Digest, 2016). Similar to the United States, team fundraising is also becoming more popular in Australia. According to Giving Australia (2016), activities and events accounted for $1.3 billion worth of donations to various charitable causes, and this represents over 10% of all charitable contributions nationwide. The popularity of team fundraising, along with the expansion of charity sport events and increased competition in the participatory event sector, make fundraising teams a worthwhile research context.

In the current research, we explore the practices of two highly successful fundraising teams (Mands' Mob and Yarra Babes). Examining how successful teams contribute to the

social interactions and event experience of members can offer two benefits. First, it can enable event managers to offer tailored products and services designed to enhance team participation and success. Second, it can offer guidance, where needed, for the organisers of fundraising teams (i.e., team leaders) to bolster fundraising, team performance, and participant recruitment and retention.

We use Chalip's (2006) social leverage of events framework to conceptualise the broader notion that events can be designed and planned to maximise social value for participants and host communities. Yet, we extend the literature on social leverage in two ways. First, drawing on the sport value framework, we consider event participants as co-creators of social value with event organisers (Woratschek, Horbel, & Popp, 2014). Thus, in conjunction with the strategic and planned efforts of event organisers to leverage social value, we consider participants as active contributors in the creation of social impacts from events. Second, by focussing on participants who belong to fundraising teams, we aim to incorporate recent developments in marketing that explore how consumer-driven subgroups contribute time, effort and labour to the goals of brands, organisations, and events (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006a, Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006b; Lock & Funk, 2016; Tyler, 2013; Woolf et al., 2013). As exemplars of this phenomenon, successful fundraising teams provide meaningful sites and spaces for members to interact and direct their efforts to outcomes shared with event organisers. To this end, if understood, the social impacts created by fundraising teams might be leverageable assets for sport event managers to assist in achieving objectives such as: increased fundraising, enhanced participant experiences, and inflated participation numbers.

Theoretical Framework

Sport Events and Community

Chalip (2006) refers to the communal effect generated at sport events as communitas. Existing research shows that the coming together of people for a common cause creates

powerful social and communal effects (Chalip, 1992; Misener & Mason, 2006). In fact, sport events provide a particularly potent form of communitas as they bring together people from a variety of class, age and gender backgrounds. Once together at an event, the sense of community is reflected through feelings of togetherness, equality, belonging, and devotion to a larger goal shared by event participants, attendees and other stakeholders (Arnould & Price, 1993; Turner, 1969).

Researchers in the sport event context have highlighted sense of community as an integral aspect of the event experience. Filo, Funk, and O'Brien (2008) outlined communitas as an outcome of participation resulting from the interaction between the recreation and charity aspects of an event. In a follow-up study, Filo, Funk, and O'Brien (2009) suggested that factors such as camaraderie, sense of belonging, and feeling a part of something larger than oneself contributed to a meaningful charity sport event experience. Filo et al. (2013) conducted an analysis of the sense of community derived among charity sport event participants, and determined that five of the six properties of Geimenscheft (i.e., community): dense and demanding social ties; social attachments to and involvement in institutions; ritual occasions; perceptions of similarity with others; and common beliefs in an idea system, moral order, institution or group; were each articulated by event participants.

Ultimately, existing research provides compelling evidence about the sense of community experienced by participants in sport events. To date, however, researchers have paid little attention to the manner in which managers and marketers of *charitable sport events* might design and plan offerings to leverage communitas; or other social impacts. Researchers have focussed, instead, on the manner in which participants consume and experience events (Filo et al. 2008, 2009; Snelgrove et al., 2013; Woolf et al. 2013). Noting a gap in the literature on charitable sport events and subgroups, Woolf et al. (2013) recommend that future research specifically consider how to incorporate Chalip's (2006) theory of social

event leverage as a means to enhance the sense of community participants experience at charitable events. To that end, Chalip's (2006) framework is reviewed next to elaborate its theoretical underpinnings and to identify fundraising teams as a stakeholder involved in generating social impacts from events.

Social Leverage of Events

Social leverage provides a framework to understand how organisers can design event sites and activities to foster communitas and maximise value for host communities. Instead of retrospectively evaluating event impacts, Chalip (2006) argues that positive social impacts are achieved through clear strategic planning (see also Bramwell, 1997; Chalip, 2006; Chalip & Leyns, 2002). While post-hoc impact analyses are useful justificatory devices for policy makers and communities to gauge the multidimensional benefits of hosting events, they do "not tell us much about why those outcomes occurred" (Chalip, 2006, p. 112). Rather than approaching sport events as vessels for social impact, therefore, his framework provides a blueprint for understanding the *strategic planning processes that lead to social outcomes being realised during and after an event.* Thus, for the process of leverage to function successfully, organisers should design policies, programmes and procedures to maximise social impacts.

Chalip (2006) identifies two social objectives that organisers can leverage: fostering social interaction and prompting a feeling of celebration. Satisfying these objectives makes sport events 'feel good' for participants and enhances their social utility. Fostering social interaction can engender feelings of camaraderie and belonging wherein event participants experience enjoyment through interaction with existing friends and new contacts. Highlighting the influence of such interactions, Misener and Mason (2006) argue that participating in sport events can enhance social capital. Social interaction can be facilitated through preparing and training, as well as socialising with other participants throughout the

event experience. The feelings of celebration obtained through participation can manifest as elation and pride, as well as collective and individual spirit derived from accomplishments throughout the event (Filo & Coghlan, 2016). Meanwhile, celebration can be exhibited through the physical achievements team members experience while training and completing the event, post-finish celebratory events and from the fundraising accomplishments of the team.

Chalip (2006) delineates five strategies for developing a sense of community through sport events; all of which apply to the charitable sport event context. First, enabling sociability involves providing event participants with opportunities to share time, space and activities in and around the event grounds. Second, event-related social activities include formal, planned initiatives outside of the sport event experience that bring event participants together to meet and interact. Third, informal social opportunities refer to the use of spaces in and around an event site in which participants can interact. Fourth, ancillary events are complementary offerings that foster social interaction in a context that is distinct from the actual sport event (e.g., an art display at a sport event). Finally, theming involves the use of symbols, colours, logos and decorations to highlight and distinguish important images and meanings in and around the event site (e.g., Chalip, 1992).

Chalip's (2006) work forms the basis of a large body of research exploring the management of social event leverage. This covers, for example, how events can be leveraged to reduce conflict in divided societies (e.g., Schulenkorf & Edwards, 2012); capitalise on the visits of international teams (Kellett, Hede, & Chalip, 2008); create knowledge to enhance sport participation (Girginov, Toohey, & Willem, 2015); and maximise the number of points through which event outcomes are leveraged (O'Brien, 2007). This work draws attention to the necessity for event organisers to work closely and collaboratively with host communities and tourism agencies in order to optimise social outcomes from hosting an event (Chalip,

2006; Gibson, Willming, & Holdnak, 2003). More recently, Taks, Chalip, and Green (2015) argue that efforts to leverage events are aided by improved coordination among stakeholders. Offering a cautionary note, however, scholars and practitioners have indicated that there is often an unfair expectation on event managers to drive leverage and subsequent impacts (Chalip, Green, Taks, & Misener, 2016). The increasing emphasis on leveraging social impacts through events has created a need for organisers to think creatively about using all resources at their disposal. In this sense, despite its vast contribution, literature on social leverage has largely overlooked how participants and the groups to which they belong might create value propositions for sport event organisers (Woratschek et al., 2014).

Recent developments in marketing (e.g., Vargo & Lusch, 2004) and sport management (Uhrich, 2014; Woratschek et al., 2014) draw attention to consumers' role as co-creators of value. This work demonstrates that consumers can create value interpersonally (Uhrich, 2014) or through interactions with sport offerings (Woratschek et al., 2014). More specifically, in the sport value framework Woratschek et al. (2014, p. 18) argue that consumers and organisations co-create value by "integrating resources from their social groups" (e.g., fundraising teams) and this process always occurs in context (e.g., a sport event). From this standpoint, rather than placing the process of planning to achieve social impacts (i.e., leveraging) solely with organisers, the sport value perspective implies that consumers and organisers are both agents in an interrelated process of value creation. Drawing on these conceptual ideas, we explore how participants and fundraising teams in charitable sport events engage in practices that, if understood, organisers might leverage.

Filo et al. (2013) called for scholars to explore additional stakeholder perspectives in relation to charitable sport events. Woolf et al. (2013) identified one such group in their study of Team Fight, a subgroup[1] participating in the Ulman Cancer Fund for Young Adults (UCF) Half Full Triathlon. The mixed-method study involved an in-depth qualitative component,

which demonstrated that members of Team Fight participated in more frequent social interactions than individuals who only took part in the Half Full Triathlon. Members of the subgroup organised, and participated in, event-related training and social activities above and beyond UCF offerings. Woolf et al. (2013) echoed Green and Chalip (1998), and Schouten and McAlexander (1995) arguing that members formed a distinctive subculture within the event that galvanised participants behind an ideology of cancer survival (see also Filo et al., 2008, 2009). Furthermore, members of Team Fight developed a stronger relationship to the cause than other UCF participants, who reported that participating in the triathlon was their primary motivation. Woolf et al. (2013) demonstrate that a grassroots fundraising team can enhance the social opportunities available to members when compared with other event participants. More specifically, they illustrate how a subgroup formed and sustained by event participants co-created value with the UCF and the Half Full Triathlon organisers.

Woolf et al.'s (2013) contribution aligns closely with research in marketing, which shows how consumer-driven subgroups assimilate consumers into smaller, more interactive groups (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006a, 2006b; Katz & Heere, 2013; Lock & Funk, 2016; Tyler, 2013). For instance, Bagozzi and Dholokia (2006a) found that identification with a small group of friends who shared an affiliation with the Harley Davidson brand community had a positive influence on consumption of the motorcycle icon. In another study the same authors found that Linux User Groups (LUG) brought together members of the Open Source Software movement into small interactive subgroups that completed mundane activities to benefit Linux and their user group (Bagozzi & Dholokia, 2006b). In sport management Katz and Heere (2013) describe how belonging to tailgating groups sustains team support for some consumers despite a relatively weak relationship with the team.

Taken together, the recommendations of Woolf et al. (2013), the literature on consumer subgroups, and the sport value framework (Woratschek et al., 2014) imply that

participation in charitable fundraising teams has the capacity to increase overall behaviour towards an event. In addition, it seems that charitable fundraising teams can have a positive impact for participants through enhanced social opportunities and, in turn, enable event organisers to meet objectives for social impact (e.g., larger participant numbers, increased fundraising totals, sense of communitas). Developing understanding of how fundraising teams produce social impacts, therefore, seems a useful avenue to create knowledge that might help to mitigate current trends of declining support for charitable causes (Lindsay, 2015; Panepento, 2015) and enable event organisers to broaden attempts to leverage social impact (Chalip et al., 2016). This aligns with those who have elucidated the power of collaboration with local agencies and tourism organisations in achieving social outcomes from events (Chalip, 2006; Gibson et al., 2003). Our intention is to broaden the concept of social leverage to include collaboration with the members and leaders of fundraising teams as co-creators of social value (e.g., Uhrich, 2014; Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Woratschek et al., 2014). To guide our study, we advance one research question:

Research Question: How do fundraising teams contribute to the event experience for participants in a charitable sport event?

To address this research question, we purposively selected two highly successful fundraising teams in Melbourne: Mands' Mob and the Yarra Babes. Through an in-depth study of these two groups, we sought to examine how successful teams contribute to the social interactions and event experience of members. We briefly outline the histories of each team to provide some context to the study for readers.

Research Context: Mands Mob and Yarra Babes

Mands' Mob was founded for the 2010 Run Melbourne event and is inspired by a woman with ovarian cancer. Co-founded by her daughters, Mands' Mob was established to raise money and awareness for ovarian cancer, through fundraising for the Ovarian Cancer

Research Foundation (OCRF). Each year, Mands' Mob comprises over 100 runners, and raises around $40,000 for OCRF.

Run Melbourne is a community fitness event for everyone, with distances of 5km, 10km and a half-marathon. Run Melbourne also provides individual participants and fundraising teams with the opportunity to raise money for a charity of their choosing through the www.everydayhero.com.au website. The success, size, and history of Mands' Mob makes the team a viable entity to investigate within the current research.

The Yarra Babes is a founding team in the Fitzroy Multiple Sclerosis (MS) 24-Hour Mega Swim, a team-based swimming relay event that has raised funds for MS Australia since 2001. The MS 24-Hour Mega Swim began in 2001 at the Fitzroy Pool in Victoria, and the event was established to raise funds for people living with MS. Specifically, the funds raised from the MS 24-Hour Mega Swim contribute to the MS Go for Gold Scholarships along with the provision of services to directly benefit those living with MS.

The MS 24-Hour Mega Swim is a nationwide swimming relay event where teams of up to 15 people must have a swimmer in the water for an entire 24-hour period. Teams are measured on both the number of laps swum and money raised. Points are awarded to each team: one point for every $10 raised, and one point for every 500m swum; as a means to encourage fundraising. Similar to Mands' Mob, Yarra Babes consistently finishes at the top in team fundraising totals for the event.

Method

Participants

We used a qualitative research approach to collect data using focus groups and interviews with Mands' Mob team members, and interviews with Yarra Babes team members. For the focus groups, research participants were drawn from the Mands' Mob roster of registered runners. Focus groups were deemed the appropriate means for data

collection as this method allows for the facilitation and observation of group dynamics (Stake, 1995). Specifically, given that the current research was contextualised within *team* fundraising, the researchers believed that focus groups would provide team members the opportunity to build off of one another's responses to describe and reflect upon the event experience. Three focus groups were held six weeks after the event ($n=3$; $n=5$; $n=5$).

Focus group participants were aged in their mid-20s to mid-40s, with eight male runners and five female runners participating in the focus groups. This sample was representative of the Mands' Mob team, in demographics and selected event distance (e.g., 5km). Within the Mands' Mob population, there were slightly more male than female participants, and participants were aged in their mid-20s to mid-40s. The majority of participants were enrolled in the 5km distance, with the remaining participants evenly split between the 10km and half-marathon events. The relatively small number of participants across each focus group reflected challenges in research participant recruitment. Hence, additional data were collected via semi-structured interviews.

For the interviews, research participants were drawn from the Yarra Babes (n=9) and Mands' Mob teams (n=5). Interviews, rather than focus groups, were conducted for this phase of the data collection, as the research team was experiencing difficulties with participant recruitment that were exacerbated by trying to schedule a date and time that suited multiple participants at once. The Yarra Babes interview participants were aged in their late-20s to late 50s, and were exclusively female. Each interviewee had participated in the MS 24-Hour Mega-Swim with the team for a number of years. This composition reflects the Yarra Babes team overall (e.g., 100% female, diverse in age, predominantly long-time event and team participants). The Mands' Mob interviewees consisted of three females and two males, ranging in age from 29 to 42, and each individual had previously participated with the team.

Procedures

An email invitation was distributed to the Mands' Mob team members via team leaders to coordinate the focus groups, and individuals indicated their willingness to participate via email reply. Similarly, an email invitation submitted via the respective team organisers was utilised to recruit interview participants. Convenience sampling was employed in favour of purposive sampling for logistical reasons, as this recruitment strategy allowed the research team access to the entire population of Mands' Mob and Yarra Babes team members due to an existing relationship with both team leaders. While purposive sampling represents the 'ideal way' of recruiting participants, convenience sampling can be used for pragmatic purposes in academic research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 153).

Focus groups were held in a location of the group's choosing, including a shared workplace and individuals' homes. Each focus group was approximately 60 to 90 minutes in length, with food and beverage provided at each session. The interviews were conducted by all research team members over the telephone and Skype. The interviews lasted between 25 and 45 minutes each. As a thank you for participating in the focus groups and interviews, an AUD$10 donation was given to each participant towards the fundraising total for their respective team.

Materials

The interview guides developed for the focus groups and interviews were informed by Chalip's (2006) strategies for fostering communitas at events. Specifically, interviewees were asked to describe their recruitment and involvement with Mands' Mob and Yarra Babes, including their personal connection, if any, with the designated charity (OCRF and MS Australia, respectively). In addition, drawing on Woolf et al. (2013) focus group participants and interviewees were asked to describe their engagement with the team throughout the event experience (e.g., pre-event training and fundraising initiatives, during the event, post-event

correspondence). Furthermore, participants were asked whether participation with the team involved any personal sacrifices. Finally, participants were asked to describe the team experience and the general atmosphere surrounding the team.

Data Analysis

At the conclusion of each focus group and interview, the digital audio recordings were transcribed and then checked against the original recordings for accuracy. The transcriptions were then analysed thematically in six phases: (1) getting familiar with the data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In getting familiar with the data (step 1), one member of the research team repeatedly read the transcriptions, while applying Chalip's (2006) social leverage of events, and in particular, the five strategies for creating community, as a guiding framework to generate initial codes (step 2) (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To align with Chalip's (2006) framework, discussion concerning socialising among team members, supplemental events managed by the teams, and the symbols and dress associated with each team were coded as factors that addressed our research question.

Through this process of generating codes, five themes were identified (step 3). The themes include: (1) team leader communication, (2) team catch-ups, (3) theming, (4) humanising the cause, and (5) bonding at the event. The five themes identified were then reviewed by the remainder of the research team (step 4). Specifically, the transcripts, including each theme and example representative quotations, were provided to the other members of the research team to confirm the themes and passages were accurate reflections. There was agreement within the research team concerning the themes and the corresponding quotations, suggesting intercoder reliability (Kurasaki, 2000).

From there, the research team finalised a name and definition for each theme (step 5), while reviewing the transcripts for additional quotes to reflect each theme. Reviewing each theme for overlap and homogeneity then followed. The results from this analysis are reported below (step 6) and the themes are described narratively with illustrative quotations to address each research question.

Two procedures were also followed to ensure validity of the data collected. First, member checks (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985) were conducted during the data collection process. These member checks were conducted informally in two ways. The broader themes discussed in each focus group and interview were shared at the end of each session. That is, summaries of each discussion were circulated with the focus group participants and interviewees as a means to allow individuals to assess the adequacy of the research team's understanding. Second, collaboration (e.g., Creswell & Miller, 2000) between the research team and the fundraising teams was in place to address validity concerns. Once themes and representative quotes were identified in the form of summary reports from the focus groups and interviews, these reports were then shared with the relevant team leaders to ensure that the themes identified were an accurate reflection of the discussion.

Results

As noted above, five themes were identified through the data analysis. Each theme is presented narratively below with pseudonyms used in place of the interviewees' names. This narrative presentation includes a description of the theme, followed by representative quotes from interviewees.

Team Leader Communication

Throughout the focus groups and interviews, respondents highlighted the constant communication from team leaders as a mechanism that facilitated social interaction among team members. Cassandra, the team leader for the Yarra Babes indicated that she used email

as a means to let team members share information: 'I always say to new members, "talk to the other team members" because I copy everybody into an email and see what they're doing and you know and yeah they all give each other tips.' Kirsty (Yarra Babes) expressed that these emails helped her interact with the team:

> Some leaders were in touch prior to the event, just reminding us of the dates and setting up all our swim times and sending links out to help us with our fundraising, so that was good, so I sort of got to speak to a few people prior to the event that I didn't know, that were helping run the Yarra Babes team, so that was good and it increased my enthusiasm.

Kendra (Yarra Babes) agreed with the notion that the emails set the tone for the team sharing ideas and enthusiasm:

> She (Cassandra) also made you want to get involved, so she was great with the communication by email. She was sending us updates on what the options were, 'here's the schedules, who wants to go with who in terms of the swimming', sent us all updates when we were out fundraising, and giving us tips on how we can raise more money or whatever else.
>
> Darren (Mands' Mob, focus group) acknowledged the volume of communication, and

the value provided by this, with the following: 'There was a lot of emails that went around…like (team leader) really pushed it very hard…she was phenomenal.' Elle (Mands' Mob, focus group) described the role of emails from leaders: '…having those constant reminders and emails coming out reminding you, not only are you just doing the run but that you're also supporting a pretty worthy cause, is really good motivation.' She explains how communications from team leaders broadened her perspective of the event from a physical challenge to a motivation to fundraise for a worthwhile cause.

Email interactions between leaders and team members also provided a foundation for camaraderie between participants. Pamela (Mands' Mob, focus group) explained the role of email communications in fostering a sense of team spirit: 'I mean, there were a lot of emails going around to a wide group of people communicating events. You felt like you were a part of something.' The broad communications to team members initiated Pamela's sense of identity and belonging with Mands Mob. It also provided a basis for members to commence social interactions.

Team Catch-Ups

Beyond the email correspondence and ongoing communication discussed by members of both teams, respondents also identified more formal and planned event-related social activities that provide opportunities for interaction. Respondents explained how different event-related social experiences contributed to their social experience of event participation. Mands' Mob organises a team dinner each year in advance of Run Melbourne. This dinner is designed as a fundraising mechanism that brings team members together as they prepare for the event. Respondents described the dinner as a way to meet new people and bond over the challenges of training. Abraham (Mands' Mob, focus group) explained: 'Going to a second event and actually meeting some people that are actually there, that were actually going to be running and knowing that they've done as much [little] training as me made me feel a lot better.' Sharing social interactions with other team members provided Abraham with a point of reference to evaluate his own training for Run Melbourne.

The dinner also had ramifications for the way in which some respondents fundraised. Terrence and Ivan alluded to an important social process that aided their fundraising, explaining how attending the dinner allowed them to avoid directly asking others for financial contributions:

I'm much more comfortable with doing something like that [attending the dinner] and in a funny way I see myself participating as a donation if you like and my way of supporting the cause...that would be, for me, just a more palatable way of contributing to the cause (Terrence, Mands' Mob, focus group)

I think for me I'm probably not a massive fan of asking people for money so I'd rather go to an event where I just pay money to go... and that will cover for me rather than going out and sort of spruiking, not my thing really (Ivan, Mands' Mob, focus group).

The Mands' Mob dinner was not the only formal social activity that was in place. A trivia night was organised wherein team members could invite friends to participate. Darren (Mands' Mob, focus group) indicated that this initiative provided a similar alternate fundraising mechanism: 'My friends love trivia so it was a good excuse to raise money and have a good night... it was easier to say "look, let's go play trivia, it'll cost you 20 bucks and you're donating to a good cause"'. Stephanie (Mands' Mob, focus group) revealed that the trivia night provided her with an education on the cause and what the team was all about:

From going to the trivia night and hearing <Name Withheld> talk about it [her battle with ovarian cancer], it's made me more aware of the disease as well and the symptoms or lack thereof. And so from that perspective I think it's definitely raised my awareness of the illness.

In addition, each team organised training programs that participants could opt to complete together. These sessions provided another site in which team members came together in addition to activities organised by event managers. Cassandra (Yarra Babes) mentioned organised training within her team: 'We get quite a few of the women that are really close friends together and they'll do a training session.' Here, Cassandra alludes to existing friendships leading MegaSwim participants to train with one another.

Members of the Yarra Babes indicated that participating as part of the team was a highly social activity, and suggested that socialising with fellow teammates was an integral part of the experience. Jessie (Yarra Babes) revealed that the team members correspond throughout the year: 'We usually [try] to catch up a couple of times a year, but it's always very good to see them [at the event] and talk about what's been going on in our lives and everything else.' Rather than interactions confined to preparation for, and participation in the MegaSwim, Jessie referred to social activities aside from the event. Cassandra extended on this theme, describing how she invited the Yarra Babes team to celebrate her birthday, and viewed this as an opportunity to bring the team closer:

> I try and strengthen the bond of the team by introducing [everyone]. I've introduced people from one aspect of my life to people from another aspect of my life. And they've actually become friends and so that further strengthens the bond there. I had a milestone birthday, and I invited everybody to say 'Well you are all part of my life' so not just at the swim but outside of the swim.

In this quote, Cassandra explains how members of the Yarra Babes fundraising team now overlapped and interacted with her friends from other parts of her life.

Theming

Throughout the focus groups and interviews, individuals referenced how their respective team distinguished itself through dress and branding. Mands' Mob provided an official bright orange T-shirt for all team members, while Yarra Babes employed a distinct 'babes' theme on the event day. Francisco (Mands' Mob, interviews) described the effect of Mands' Mob official T-shirt: 'It felt good being amongst it all and wearing the T-shirt and kind of being branded up.' The Mands' Mob T-shirt came up repeatedly, and the shirts were portrayed as something that created a shared identity between team members, which provided a basis for social interaction and bonding. Stephanie (Mands' Mob, focus group) stated: 'We

all had the same coloured shirts on and it was sort of that connection to each other.' Members of Mands' Mob described how they did not know all of the people in the team; however, the themed shirt provided a basis for them to interact with strangers through a shared identity. Elle (Mands' Mob, focus group) communicated that she reached out to every single runner wearing a Mands' Mob T-shirt throughout the course: 'The amount of people I screamed at that I didn't know who they were... "You're Mands' Mob. You're awesome!"' Meanwhile, a number of participants said that the T-shirts allowed for 'a lot of encouragement' and 'exchanging high fives.' Ronald (Mands' Mob, focus group) summarised the connection team members shared on the course: 'The fact that people are patting me on the back as they went past me. You know, you felt a part of something.'

The official Mands' Mob T-shirt activated an important social and psychological process that allowed participants to visualise and appreciate the sheer size of their team. Stephanie (Mands' Mob, focus group) explained: 'to see a sea of T-shirts and just go "wow this is...okay this is pretty big"...I can't believe how well organised it is and that for me would be the moment. Okay, alright, I'm a part of this.' As Stephanie explains, the visual identification of Mands' Mob gave her a realisation that she was 'part of this' alluding to a strong sense of identity shared not with all event participants, but members of her fundraising team. Elle (Mands' Mob, focus group) extended this idea with the following:

> I'm a pretty competitive person, so seeing so many orange shirts was really cool, because it was like we were taking over, we were dominating...So that was the cool thing, we could brag about Mands' Mob. Because there were so many, you stand at the finish line and there'd be people coming through every couple of minutes, so, you can brag about having one of the biggest teams.

Ivan (Mands' Mob, focus group) expressed the same sentiment, highlighting the importance of the T-shirt colour: 'We all had our own bright orange uniform so you couldn't

miss us. I'm not sure how many people ended up running but you could see everyone as part of the same mob, Mands' Mob, running.' The 'babes' theming used for Yarra Babes had a similar influence in creating a shared identity. Yarra Babes participants are encouraged to dress in a humourous and flashy style. Leslie described this as follows, acknowledging that the dress and theming added value to the experience:

> Cassandra actually came up with the theme…we actually did dress like
>
> babes, so we...instead of wearing my swimming bathers I went out and wore a nice
>
> pair of bathers and I came into the pool and I had high heels and lipstick on. I don't
>
> really wear high heels and lipstick much. So we had a bit of fun as well. We were all
>
> trying to dress up.

Participants in both fundraising teams expressed how visual theming provided a basis for members to share a shared identity specific to Mands' Mob or the Yarra Babes.

Humanising the Cause

Participants in both teams described the role and importance of a single cause-relevant individual as an inspiration for team participants. For Mands' Mob this figurehead was the mother of the team leader, who was battling ovarian cancer (Margaret). While Cassandra, the team leader, was the figurehead for the Yarra Babes. Respondents from each team continually referred to these individuals as people who motivated their participation and served as continuous reminders of the event cause.

Margaret was portrayed as an individual who represented the cause behind the Mands' Mob team, which in turn inspired participants. Valerie (Mands' Mob, interviews) put it simply: 'Margaret is such an absolute stand out person.' Ava (Mands' Mob, interview) described meeting Margaret as a critical moment in the event experience: 'Meeting Margaret, understanding what she was going through and wanting to, you know, be part of supporting her, raising money, raising awareness.' Valerie and Ava explained how interpersonal

interactions with Margaret brought the charitable cause for which they were fundraising to life. Essentially, narratives revealed a transition from raising money for a label to being motivated to fundraise for a real, tangible cause. Abraham and Ronald (Mands' Mob, focus group) indicated meeting and interacting with Margaret altered their perspective on fundraising:

> Humanising it is the word. … You can actually see someone who's actually going through a type of illness or a disease ... you can actually see that that money does go towards the benefit of something and someone greater (Abraham)

> It's an important issue for women's health, it's like well there's all the other women in your life and when you become aware of what it's all about, it's like well it could apply to them as well. So I think Margaret was sort of the catalyst for learning about this that previous I probably wouldn't have (Ronald).

Ronald further indicated that Margaret's presence throughout the event encapsulated the entire experience, and motivated him to continue participating with the team:

> I'd say it's the woman herself, Margaret. She's the experience...her attitude is just amazing and inspiring and makes you want to do it...her inspiring attitude is, that's again for me part of why you kind of can't not come back.

> Within the Yarra Babes team, Cassandra, the team leader, was similarly depicted as an inspiration. Cassandra has MS, and the attitude she uses to confront this disease spreads throughout the team. Kimberly described her with the following: 'Yeah, Cassandra's amazing. She's just one of those people that you just want to... whatever she wants you'll want to do to help her sort of thing.' Jocelyn used similar terms: 'She's [Cassandra's] just a living, breathing example of what can be done.' Leslie portrayed Cassandra as someone who provides motivation and perspective:

Cassandra's gone through so much and she's always so positive. That gives you that motivation, but it's the kind of motivation you get when you see someone who's been through some bad things and then you think, '*what am I whinging about... I've had a bad day at work. Who cares, really, in the grand scheme of things*?'

In addition, Leslie's inspiration resulted in a changed attitude towards fundraising, similar to the sentiment shared by Mands' Mob team members regarding meeting Margaret: 'You get more motivated to try and raise some money because she's so committed to the cause and to the team.'

Bonding at the Event

The social atmosphere facilitated through the team communication and team gatherings was reinforced by members being encouraged to interact and hang out during the event. Valerie and Franklin (Mands' Mob, interviews) described how the team got together just before the event start time, and organised congregating at the completion of the event to allow everyone to support one another and share stories:

It's that initial meet and greet and everyone just saying hi and everything. And then it's the coming together at the end. So everyone sort of splits up throughout the 5K, and then at the end everyone walks up to the hill. And that's the bit that you're there for (Valerie).

Immediately after finishing the run we did stick around for probably an hour until, um, I think everyone had finished and we kind of would hang around in a group on the hill… it was nice, like it was good catching up with everyone and asking them how they'd all finished up (Franklin).

Valerie and Franklin each described the importance of sharing the completion of Run Melbourne with other team members. Both passages refer to a shared sense of achievement experienced within a subgroup of event participants.

Furthermore, Rhonda (Yarra Babes) shared that the email correspondence in advance of the event translated to a very communal event experience:

It's a definite highlight to know that you get there and you make sure you catch up, and you're always asking, when's such and such coming down for a swim? It means sometimes you'll hang around longer at the pool to, yeah, actually wait for someone to come and see them and support them when they jump in the water.

In addition, Jessie (Yarra Babes) added: 'There's a time to talk when you're sitting at the end of the pool at 3:00 in the morning.' Pamela (Mands' Mob, focus group) summarised the energy on the event grounds, by saying:

It was really a team spirit. We were all there. It was a lot of fun on the day. Everyone was revved up and you felt as one and it was great to get to the end as well and see everyone in orange ... There was a real sense of community ... You belonged to something.

Discussion

Our findings illustrate that fundraising teams create opportunities for social interactions and event experiences in addition to the efforts of event organisers. We coded the data from members of fundraising teams into five themes: (1) team leader communication, (2) team catch-ups, (3) theming, (4) humanising the cause, and (5) bonding at the event. Each of the interrelated themes show how consumer-driven initiatives can enhance the event experience for team members in addition to the work of event managers and host communities who draw the glut of previous attention (Balduck, Maes, & Buelens, 2001; O'Brien & Chalip, 2008). Providing this evidence responds to Woolf et al.'s (2013) suggestion that successful fundraising teams can foster social impacts. The themes revealed in the fundraising team context develop on the substantial body of work investigating the social leverage of subgroups within sport events (Chalip, 2006; Green & Chalip, 1998,

Misener & Mason, 2006; Woolf et al., 2013). Our findings also buttress the influence of

leadership in the coordination of consumer subgroups (Katz & Heere, 2013). In the following

section, we discuss the social processes that created value for participants. Then, we consider

our findings in relation to Chalip's event leverage framework.

Social processes in fundraising teams

The five themes we uncovered demonstrate that fundraising teams are important

agents in the value creation process of charitable sport events and emphasise the importance

of socialising in the participatory sport event context (Filo et al., 2008). The stories

participants shared concerning their interaction with the subgroup and its members inside and

outside of event parameters reinforces the importance of developing social bonds as

individuals prepare for, and complete, a participatory sport event (Snelgrove et al., 2013).

The effort put forth by team organisers to bring the respective teams together reflects

cognisance of the value of developing camaraderie among participants (Filo et al., 2009), as

well as the role of group collaboration in shaping event experiences (Won, Park, & Turner,

2010). The social processes that took place in each fundraising team are interrelated and

reveal the complementary nature of different parts of 'event participation'. Belonging to a

fundraising team exposed participants to three social processes that created value: sharing

difficult experiences (training and fundraising); humanising the cause; and creating visual

distinctiveness through theming.

Existing research demonstrates that belonging to a fundraising team increases event-

based social interactions (Woolf et al., 2013). We extend this finding in three ways,

illustrating how social interactions – facilitated by leader communications and team catch-ups

– strengthen bonds between team members as well as participants' understanding of the

cause. First, formal and informal events offer team members with an opportunity to meet

other people on their fundraising team. This provides opportunities to share experiences of

training [or not training] that help with preparation. Second, attending team fundraising events reduces the pressure on members to raise funds alone. This can also reduce the pressure on group members to ask friends and family members for donations as proceeds from these events are used to support fundraising goals. Third, gatherings also enhance feelings of identity, which motivates team members to raise funds for the cause due to a consciousness of kind (see Woolf et al., 2013).

Team communications and catch-ups provided a basis for members to develop a shared consciousness; however, the presence of individuals that embodied the cause played a crucial role in event participation becoming meaningful. Filo et al. (2008) found that cyclists in a charity sport event tended to have a personal connection to, or experience with, cancer, which made their relationship to the cause meaningful. Woolf et al. (2013) found that members of Team Fight had significantly higher levels of involvement with the cause compared to other event participants. We found that team communications and catch-ups before the event provided participants with a basic understanding of the cause. Developing on Woolf et al. and Filo et al. we found that interactions with individuals that embodied the cause (i.e., a woman with ovarian cancer and a woman with MS) brought to life the importance of raising funds. For participants without a personal connection to a cause (cf. Filo et al., 2008), these experiences transitioned an abstract charitable concept into a tangible cause that galvanised effort towards event completion and fundraising.

Chalip (2006) endorses the role of theming by event organisers to add visual signs and symbols to event sites. Moreover, Woolf et al. (2013) discuss the yellow T-shirt worn by Team Fight members as a marker of the team. Building on evidence that subgroups develop distinctive symbols at events (e.g., Green & Chalip, 1998; Lock & Funk, 2016), we demonstrate the value of participant-driven theming at event sites. Theming of subgroups creates a sense of distinctiveness and identity (for team members) – sometimes in the absence

of existing social relationships – with other team members. This contributes to the

consciousness of kind that Woolf et al. (2013) discussed in relation to the use of associative

pronouns (i.e., we or us). Merely wearing the same T-shirt provided a basis for team

members to shout encouragement to other team members that enhanced feelings of sharing

the experience with others. Belonging to a visually distinctive team adds a source of

celebration and happiness beyond the visual characteristics of the event designed by

managers (Chalip, 2006).

Co-created social impact

Woolf et al. (2013) called for research that explored how fundraising teams co-create

value with event organisers. We respond to this call, showing how the efforts of successful

fundraising teams contribute to broader event objectives (e.g., fundraising, participant

experience, communitas). Broadly, the themes that emerged in this study align with Chalip's

(2006) five strategies for fostering community through sport events. However, extending this

work, we illuminate the efforts of participants in co-creating value *with organisers* (Uhrich,

2014; Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Woratschek et al., 2014). In the social event leverage

framework, Chalip (2006) posits the importance of event organisers enabling sociability,

organising event-related social activities, facilitating informal social opportunities, and

developing ancillary events. The fundraising teams we studied created complementary value

propositions that aligned with broader initiatives in place at the event (e.g., social activities,

fundraising objectives, communication with participants) that generated social impacts.

Specifically, team leaders and participants in Mands' Mob and the Yarra Babes contributed to

these objectives through team communications and catch-ups, team theming, and bonding at

the end of the event. Training sessions, dinners, trivia nights and birthday gatherings brought

participants together in informal and formal situations providing opportunities for socialising,

meeting new people, and fundraising. The positive experiences shared by Mands' Mob and

Yarra Babes team members during the focus groups and interviews illustrate how subgroups

created value propositions for Run Melbourne and the MS 24-Hour Mega Swim

management.

Managerial Implications

We have illustrated how successful fundraising teams complete tasks that create value

propositions for event organisers. More specifically, the positive actions of these subgroups

offer new opportunities for event organisers to put in place strategies and processes to

enhance the value propositions created by fundraising teams. The findings of the current

research introduce implications for both event managers and fundraising team leaders.

Research on marketing to consumer subgroups underscores the importance of focusing on the

relationships that exist between and among consumers within the subgroup, rather than

simply the relationship between the consumer and the organisation (Cova & Cova, 2002;

Lock & Funk, 2016). Accordingly, event organisers should strive towards supporting

fundraising teams and team leaders in order to encourage and facilitate this voluntary,

positive work. This support and strategy development can respond to Taks et al's (2015) call

for coordination across stakeholders to maximise the value created through leverage.

Consequently, event managers can design event experiences that provide fertile territory for

team leaders to develop value propositions within a framework that is leveraged by

organisers in order to maximise success. Team leaders can then implement the following

strategies to activate these themes.

First, team leaders can strive to humanise the cause through the development of a

personal storyline that can be used to inspire and motivate team members. Both teams

examined within the current investigation utilised a figurehead to serve as a reminder of the

greater purpose behind the event and fundraising, and respondents openly described the

emotional boost and motivation this provided. This aligns with Collison and MacKenzie's

(1999) contention that personal narratives are critical for team building. Consequently, team leaders should develop a backstory for the team and cause, based upon either personal experience or from within their network to galvanise support and identity amongst team members.

The importance of theming for each team in the form of official (and bright) T-shirts for Mands' Mob and novel team dress for Yarra Babes underscored the importance of totems and symbols as markers of fundraising teams. Schouten and McAlexander (1995) uncovered the importance of symbols within communities as expressions of identity and ethos. The theming discussed within the focus groups and interviews highlighted the pride (e.g., the bright colour as an identifier, the large number of Mands' Mob T-shirts seen on the course) and fun (e.g., unique dress) inherent to participation within these teams. Team leaders can adopt theming that distinguishes the team and embodies the personal narrative that brings members together. This can be accomplished through organisers providing opportunities for teams to purchase uniforms and merchandise at the point of registration. Furthermore, managers can provide promotional packs for neophyte leaders that provide hints and tips for leaders to develop slogans and social media communication to enhance members' feelings of distinctiveness in fundraising teams. Activating these external channels addresses Chalip's (2006) contention that event stakeholders need to become more adept at theming outside of event spaces.

Furthermore, the team catch-ups we observed as key facets in fundraising and value creation (e.g., trivia nights, team dinners, birthday gatherings) present an opportunity for event managers and team leaders to engage in relationship building with local business (i.e., cafes, bars, restaurants). Developing these relationships could be optimal for both the team – providing an outlet for recruiting, mixing, and fundraising – and the facility itself, through a commercial benefit of increased food and beverage sales, as well as cultivating goodwill in

the local community. This would also align with O'Brien's (2007) suggestion for local event stakeholders to engage local business in the celebration of events and the local community.

Limitations

As an exploratory study, this research has a number of limitations. First, convenience sampling was utilised across both the focus groups and interviews. Focus group participants and interviewees were recruited via self-selection by responding to an email invitation. This sampling technique can introduce concerns regarding the thoroughness of the qualitative data. As noted within the Method, a convenience sampling approach was employed due to existing relationships with team leaders, as well as challenges with recruitment across both teams. Convenience sampling can, however, be used within academic research to address pragmatic issues (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Within the current research, eliciting willingness among team members and identifying a date and time for the focus groups and interviews represented logistical challenges necessitating convenience sampling.

The challenges with recruitment were further evidenced by the relatively small sample size within the focus groups. Specifically, each focus group was less than the suggested range of six to eight individuals. Nonetheless, focus groups were still employed as the research team was investigating how individuals think and feel about an entity (i.e., fundraising team, event experience) (Krueger & Casey, 2002), and relatively small focus groups have been previously used in research conducted in the sport event context (Filo & Coghlan, 2016). Furthermore, the research team believed the group dynamics facilitated through focus groups aligned with the group dynamics inherent to team participation. The relatively small sample size across each focus group was addressed through the subsequent employment of interviews.

Future Directions

Based upon our findings as well as the study limitations, a number of future studies can be designed. First, the challenges with regard to convenience sampling could be addressed through data collection from both active team members as well as individuals who have discontinued participating with the team. Self-selection through e-mail invitation could have resulted in only some of the stronger advocates of the team (and event experience) being represented within the data. Collecting data from individuals who are no longer a part of the team can provide a more holistic picture of the experience.

As the current research is cross-sectional, and investigates only two teams at a specific point in time, longitudinal research can be conducted to evaluate sustained engagement with the team and activities. This longitudinal data can examine team members across multiple years to determine whether specific team initiatives and event experiences lose their appeal, or conversely, gain more meaning. It is conceivable that team catch-ups and theming activities could be initially perceived as worthwhile and fun, but then later deemed inconvenient and bland after years of involvement. Conversely, these initiatives could also become more important to team members with time as they represent an opportunity to reconvene with teammates while the cause becomes more personal. Longitudinal data can assist with resolving this speculation.

In addition to collecting data from both active and past participants, as well as longitudinal work, future research can also collect data from members of multiple teams within a single event. This data can allow for comparison of the event experience across teams and assess whether and how the interactions and experiences inherent to the event differ across teams. In addition, this data can examine with whom different team members identify most (i.e., their specific team, fundraisers in general, event participants).

Conclusion

This research provides an initial qualitative investigation of two successful fundraising teams within participatory sport events. Specifically, the current research examined how successful fundraising teams contribute to the social interactions and event experiences among group members by examining two successful fundraising teams (Mands' Mob and Yarra Babes) across two events (Run Melbourne and MS 24-Hour Megaswim). It is hoped that this research leads to future investigation of how fundraising teams and participants complement and bolster the charitable sport event experience in concert with event organisers. The social leverage of fundraising teams within the event context might help to ameliorate some current challenges, such as fundraising fatigue, and consequently incite increases in fundraising for charitable causes through these events. From an academic perspective, researchers can continue to examine the social interactions that take place within the event experience, as well as the different entities within the experience that can co-create social leverage.

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[1] We refer to Team Fight as a subgroup (Woolf et al., 2013 referred to it as a subdimension) following recent research on multiple group identification (cf. Lock & Funk, 2016). Specifically, Team Fight existed within the overarching UCF Half Full Triathlon event and included a subgroup of all event participants. As it included ~250 participants, it did not require interpersonal attachments between members.

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