

Volunteer Commitment in Marathon Sport Tourism: Linking Psychological Resources to Service Consistency and Visitor Experience

Yunyi Li¹, Ye Xu^{2*}, Xiaolu Zhang³

*^{1,2,3} Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management
Macau University of Science and Technology, Macau*

Abstract

In the contemporary landscape of sport tourism and destination branding, large-scale road races have become signature event products that integrate event operations, visitor experience design, and hospitality service delivery. As Macao and the surrounding Greater Bay Area continue to position marathon events as year-round tourism catalysts in 2026, volunteer workforces remain a decisive yet underexplored determinant of service consistency across critical touchpoints—race-day registration and wayfinding, course support, athlete–spectator interactions, and the extended service chain that includes event partners such as official hotels and lodging providers. Events depend on volunteers. However, the psychological mechanisms linking volunteers’ internal resources to retention-oriented commitment and service reliability remain underexplored in event, tourism, and hospitality settings.

This study develops and tests an integrated relationship model that links volunteers’ self-efficacy, volunteer engagement, subjective well-being, pride, and organizational commitment. By focusing on psychological dynamics, the model contributes to event management and sport tourism literature by explaining how competence beliefs and affective outcomes jointly shape volunteers’ willingness to sustain participation and uphold service standards, which are essential for protecting event reputation and enhancing destination image.

A two-stage design was adopted. Prior to formal data collection, a preliminary online survey was administered among marathon volunteers via WeChat groups. After removing incomplete responses, the pilot data were used to refine a bilingual (Chinese–English) questionnaire through translation, cross-checking, and expert review, and to verify measurement reliability and validity using SPSS 26. In the main study, large-scale data collection was conducted through on-site and online distribution during the 2025 Galaxy Entertainment Macao International Marathon and the Hengqin Marathon in the Macao–Hengqin area (23 March 2025).



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Descriptive results indicate that sport-event volunteers are generally well educated, with the largest age group concentrated between 25 and 44 years old, and a substantial share reporting a middle-income range. Using SmartPLS to estimate the structural equation model, we find that self-efficacy positively predicts volunteer engagement, subjective well-being, and pride. Furthermore, both subjective well-being and pride significantly strengthen organizational commitment, suggesting that volunteers' affective experiences are not peripheral but function as central mechanisms translating perceived competence into sustained attachment to event organizers.

Theoretically, this research advances a more comprehensive understanding of volunteer commitment by integrating key psychological antecedents and clarifying their mechanisms in sport-event settings embedded within tourism and hospitality systems. Practically, the findings suggest that event organizers and destination stakeholders—including official hotels and lodging partners—can reduce volunteer turnover risk and safeguard service quality by strengthening volunteers' self-efficacy through targeted training and role alignment, fostering pride via recognition and experience design, and supporting subjective well-being through volunteer-centered scheduling, timely feedback, and basic emotional support. These measures are expected to improve operational reliability, visitor satisfaction, and the consistency of service encounters across event venues and accommodation-related touchpoints, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of marathon-led sport tourism destinations.

Keywords: event management; organizational commitment; pride; self-efficacy; sport tourism