Different Level and Range of Recreation

Specialization among Recreational Sport Consumers:

Implications for Market Segmentation

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ABSTRACT

According to the specialization theory, highly specialized recreational sport participants are likely to be more concerned about advanced skill development, quality equipment, quality instructors, and so on. Effective programming, pricing, distribution, and promotion strategies could then be formulated by utilizing the theory of the specialization. The primary purpose of this paper was to test whether individuals with different recreational sport programs exhibit different range and degree of specialization. The population for the study included all participants, eighteen years or older, enrolled in recreational sport programs offered by a commercial sport center in Seoul. This study used a convenience sampling technique. Data were collected from 455 recreational sport participants in five different programs (golf, swimming, aerobics, squash, and bowling). The dimensions used to define specialization were investment, behavioral loyalty, and skill. It is suggested that recreation specialization be assessed by appropriate measures by considering specific information to be achieved. Levene’s test for homogeneity and a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were administered to determine differences in degree and range of specialization varied significantly across the different recreational sport activities. Further research is needed to examine a possible relationship between specialization and other marketing variables.
I. Introduction

According to Bryan's (1977) theory of recreation specialization, recreational sport participants tend to progress along a sequence of developmental stages from novice to expert. Through an understanding of level of specialization, it is possible for managers to identify types of sport users and affective feelings they have toward a particular activity or program. Researchers have applied Bryan's ideas to a number of outdoor sport participants, including anglers (Ditton, Loomis, & Choi, 1992), boaters (Bricker & Kerstetter, 2000), canoeists (Kauffman, 1985), hikers (Virden & Schreyer, 1988), and hunters (Miller & Graefe, 2000).

Considerable research within the leisure and sport fields indicates that recreationists' behaviors and attitudes are associated with their levels of specialization. Thus, the concept of recreation specialization has been utilized as an effective tool for pulling together the variables such as attitudinal loyalty and involvement. A few researchers have suggested that personal involvement has an impact on individuals' behavioral loyalty to a particular recreational sport activity (Iwasaki & Havitz, 1998; Park, 1996, 2001). Others have proposed that the emotional bond participants have with a recreational sport program may be tied to their level of attitudinal loyalty (Backman & Veldkamp, 1995; Park & Kim, 2000).

The theory of recreation specialization has potential for providing leisure and sport service managers with a way of meaningfully disaggregating recreationists in specific activities into more homogeneous subgroups (Bryan, 1977; Ditton et al., 1992; McIntyre & Pigram, 1992; Miller & Graefe, 2000; Scott & Godbey, 1994). Specifically, more specialized recreationists differ from less specialized counterparts in their environmental preferences (Virden & Schreyer, 1988), perceptions of quality of managerial intervention (McIntyre & Pigram, 1992), social world involvement (Choi, Loomis, & Ditton, 1994), and motives in adventure recreation (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1994). That is, distinct and meaningful target markets and appropriate marketing strategies can be developed using the concept of recreation specialization.

1. Related Literature

1) Degree and Range of Specialization

Bryan (1977) conducted a study with a sample of trout fishermen to determine if recreationists undergo predictably from low to high specialization over time: occasional fishermen, followed by generalists, technique specialists, and technique-setting specialists in ascending order of specialization. Bryan asserted that the recreationists at different continuum of specialization are differentiated by such phenomena as equipment preference, setting preference, frequency of participation, technique preference, and management preference. Kauffman (1985) examined the relationships between canoeists' level of specialization and resource related attitudes, suggesting that canoeists at different levels of specialization are characterized by different setting preference, environmental concern, skill levels, and expected rewards.

Classifying specialization groups with level of participation, Ditton et al. (1992) concluded that