

A STUDY ON THE LIFESTYLE OF NEW ENDURANCE SPORTS PARTICIPANTS –FOCUS ON TRIATHLON PARTICIPANTS-

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Abstract

Background

According to data from the Sasakawa Sports Foundation (2008), participation in sports has been increasing annually in Japan. In particular, Harada (2010) points out that triathlon, trail running, and hill climbing, which he called new endurance sports, have become more popular. He also notes that the participants of these sports are motivated by an interest in goal setting, development, traveling, community involvement, and sightseeing, and that there is high potential for future development as a sport via marketing activities. It is important to understand the consumer psychology and behavior to develop marketing strategy. Researchers segment the consumers by using demographic variables or psychographic variables to examine the consumer characteristics. However, Wells (1975) pointed out that psychographic profiles are more available than demographic profiles to understand the consumer in detail. Therefore, using psychographic variables is an efficient way to understand the participants of new endurance sports.

Objectives

This study aims to understand the characteristics of the participants of new endurance sports by using lifestyle scales as a psychographic variable to develop marketing strategy that is to increase participants.
(1) a review of lifestyle scales and the examination of their adequacy
(2) a segmentation of the participants of new endurance sports and the discussion of its effectiveness.

Methods

Data were collected from participants at 14 Japanese

triathlon competitions in 2010. Questionnaires including 40 questions on the lifestyle using a seven-point rating scale (1 = completely disagree, 7 = completely agree) were administered to all participants and data were collected from 1,435 individuals. First, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to confirm the validity of the factor structure of lifestyle on the basis of previous studies. Second, a cluster analysis was conducted by using the factor score. Ward's hierarchical clustering method with squared Euclidean distance was used to obtain the initial cluster solution. Next, a k-means cluster analysis was conducted to determine the number of clusters.

Results

The confirmatory factor analysis showed that lifestyle scales comprise eight factors (goodness of fit: GFI = 0.93, AGFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.05): mode, achievement, herd mentality, insubstantiality, brand consciousness, sport, health maintenance, and pro-environmental behavior. Cronbach's α reliability scores were 0.67–0.89. These results confirmed the adequacy of the lifestyle scale of the participants of new endurance sports, consisting of eight factors with 25 items.

After the confirming the lifestyle scale, we conducted a cluster analysis and classified participants in three clusters. A comparison of the clusters showed significant differences in their characteristics. The first cluster, which was named the group of individuals strongly influenced by their peers, accounted for 33.98% of the total. The average age was 35.37 years, and the average number of accompanying persons was 6.36, which was the highest among the three clusters. The scores of herd mentality and insubstantiality were high. These results indicate that the individuals belonging to the first cluster were prone to be influenced by the people around them. The second cluster, which was named the self-managed group, accounted for 29.91% of the total. The average age was 40.28, and the average number of years of competition was 7.03, which is the highest among the three clusters. The scores of the health maintenance and pro-environmental behavior categories were the highest, whereas the scores of mode and brand consciousness were the lowest. Thus, the individuals in the second cluster were not affected by fashion trends or brands, but were highly conscious of their own well-being. The third cluster, which was named the fashion-oriented group, accounted for 36.11% of the total. The scores of mode, herd mentality, achievement, and brand consciousness were the highest. This means that the individuals in the third cluster were aware of fashion trends and the perceptions of those around them.

Discussion

The analyses of the collected data show that the lifestyle scales of the participants of new endurance sports consist of eight factors. In this study, we added new questions on pro-environmental behavior to the lifestyle scale. The factor analysis confirmed that environmental factors that are known to exist as independent factors were a part of the lifestyles of the participants.

Further, the findings showed that the participants were classified into three clusters. It clearly revealed significant differences in lifestyle scores and characteristics among these clusters. Many researchers have emphasized the effectiveness of lifestyle segmentation (Plummer, 1974; Wells, 1975; Kucukemiroglu, 1999; Kaynak & Kara, 2001).

In this study, we confirmed that segmentation by lifestyle is one of the effective ways for examining the participants of new endurance sports.

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