Motivation and Profile of Participants in the New Endurance Sports: The Triathlon

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Introduction

The triathlon is characterized by a comparatively high age amongst newcomers to this relatively new multi-sport endurance event. In fact, over 70% of the participants are over 20 when they take part for the first time, with the average starting age of competition being 29.0 (Harada, 2010). The triathlon has a broad base and no boundaries, which allows athletes to transfer over freely from other sporting activities. Many of the participants competed in cycling or marathons in the past prior to taking up the triathlon. As a sport, it welcomes people of a wide range of ages and does not require long hours of skill training. For these reasons, there is high potential for future development as a sport via marketing activities. However, there is little information on participants, therefore data necessary for marketing must be collected in order to develop it into the future.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are to obtain marketing information on triathlon participants and, in order to utilize that information in future marketing activities, (1) develop a scale for measuring the motivation of triathlon participants to participate in the triathlon, and (2) segment triathlon participants into clusters using this scale and analyze the characteristics of each cluster.

Methods

In this study, a preliminary survey (n = 97) with 35 questions on the motivation to participate in the triathlon was designed with the sports motivation measurement scale of Pelletier et al. (1995) and Sugiyama (2005) in mind and conducted on September 12, 2009. Later, 3 questions on tourism (Kim et al., 2006) and 3 questions on outdoor recreation (Kim and Lee, 2000) were added for a total of 41 questions. Each question was measured on a 7-step scale from "1: Not applicable at all" to "7: Very applicable". The main survey was conducted before the Choshi International Triathlon (n = 197) held on October 3-4, 2009 and the Triathlon National Championships, Tokyo Port (n = 95) held on October 17, 2009. An exploratory factor analysis was done of the measurement scale set in this study and participants were broken down into patterns by cluster analysis.

Results

From exploratory factor analysis by maximum likelihood estimation and promax rotation, eight motivational factors were extracted: "understanding and growth," "exogenous control and

assimilation," "accomplishment," "tourism," "motivation," "stimulation and experience," "aesthetics" and "victory". In adopting these factors, a cumulative contribution ratio of 55.3% was obtained using eigenvalue of 1.00 or more and a factor loading of .40 or more as a baseline. These factors can be divided into intrinsic motivation ("understanding and growth," "accomplishment," "stimulation and experience," and "victory") and extrinsic motivation ("exogenous control and assimilation," "tourism," and "aesthetics").

From the 8 extracted factors, factors were scored for each sample and a hierarchical cluster analysis was done by squared Euclidean distance and Ward method. As a result, it was inferred to divide samples into 3, 4, 5 and 7 clusters. Next, studies were done into the above number of clusters using cluster analysis of large files by K-means clustering, from which 4 clusters were adopted from the perspectives of "cluster size" and "distance between clusters". Then, profiling was done using data on other demographic factors, from which the following 4 clusters were confirmed: (1) maniacal triathletes who are motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically,(2) those of comparatively short history in the event who have hidden potential for becoming maniacal triathletes, (3)those with an unclear motivation for doing the triathlon who could potentially quit the event if they find another means for fulfilling desires or needs, and (4) those of comparatively long history in the event for whom the triathlon has become routine and whose motivation is starting to wane.

As such, it was learned that 4 segments of triathlon participants exist, but effective marketing must be done for each segment. For example, for the third cluster which was the least motivated and has yet not discover the significance of the triathlon, it is necessary to provide new meaning to participating in activities and enhance their motivation. Nonetheless, though clusters were identified by statistical means, the problem remains that it is difficult for marketers to directly approach each individual participant in that particular cluster.

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