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Participation incentives in children's sport camps and their relationship with satisfaction and behavioral intentions

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Theoretical background

The children summer camp industry has become very competitive in the last 30 years. Camp managers are trying to adopt a customer driven approach of their services in order to build campers' satisfaction and loyalty. According to Funk, Ridinger and Moorman (2004), personal incentives are the reasons that explain individuals' engagement in specific behaviours such as satisfaction and intentions. Even though motivation scales have been developed in the context of different levels of sport competition, very few researchers investigated incentives for sport camp participation (Alexandris & Kouthouris, 2005). Research on personal incentives is important for marketers because it gives answers to the question of 'why' with respect to customers' behavior. The objectives of this study were to: a) investigate the personal incentives that drive children to participate in summer sport camps and b) to identify which of the incentives are the most important in predicting campers' satisfaction, repurchase intentions and word-of-mouth communication.

Methodology

The sample of the study consisted of 210 ($N=210$) boys, 5-18 years of age, who participated in a summer sport camp, in Greece.

Instrumentation

A list of 16 items was developed based on the literature aiming to cover the main motivational dimensions and have a short and friendly questionnaire, easy to be completed by the children. Oliver's (1997) scale was modified to measure satisfaction from participation, in a sport camp setting. Finally, the Greek adaptation (Alexandris, Dimitriadis & Kasiara, 2001) of Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996) scale, was used to measure repurchase intentions and word-of-mouth communication.

Results

A principal component analysis of the 16 incentives scale was performed, to develop the factorial structure of the scale. The four factors that emerged accounted for 70,52% of the variance and were defined: a) "Recreation-Socialization" (five items): children expected to have a pleasurable

experience in the camp and to make new friends (M=5.86), b) “Sport” (five items): children were driven by the opportunity to learn sports, improve their technique and show their talent (M=4.66), c) “Independence” (three items): children expected to ‘escape’ from their house and families (M=5) and d) “Parents’ Decisions” (three items): their incentives were developed according to the decision of their parents (M=3.38). A reliability analysis depicted that all dimensions had acceptable alpha scores [‘Recreation–Socialization’ (0.86), ‘Sport’ (0.76), ‘Independence’ (0.83), ‘Parents’ Decisions’ (0.78)]. A regression analysis was performed to predict campers’ satisfaction, repurchase intentions and positive word of mouth from their incentive dimensions. From the analysis it was found a significant effect ($F = 54.14, p < 0.001$), for satisfaction from ‘sport’ ($t = 10.10, p < 0.001$) and ‘parents’ decision’ ($t = 6.71, p < 0.001$). For the repurchase intention, the results revealed a significant effect ($F = 185.41, p < 0.001$) for ‘Recreation–Socialization’ ($t = 22.44, p < 0.001$) and ‘Sport’ ($t = 2.85, p < 0.001$) incentives. Finally for the word of mouth intention there was a significant main effect, ($F = 277.93, p < 0.001$) for ‘Recreation–Socialization’ ($t = 31.06, p < 0.001$) ‘Sport’ ($t = 2.82, p < 0.001$) and ‘Independence’ ($t = 3.78, p < 0.001$) incentives.

Conclusion / Application to practice

The analysis for the campers’ incentives revealed a fairly stable factorial structure consisting of four incentive dimensions consisting of recreation-socialization, independence, sport and parents’ decision. These incentives predicted children’s satisfaction, repurchase intentions and word of mouth communication. It seems that children sport campers like to have fun, meet new friends, play sport, feel independently and follow their parents’ decision. The identification of the reasons that children become campers can help in making suggestions about the programmes and services that should be offered. Conclusions are useful in both scientific and applied level, since they advance the knowledge base in the field of satisfaction, participation incentives and consumer behavior.

References

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