

TESTING THE INVOLVEMENT CONSTRUCT IN OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES IN A GREEK SAMPLE

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Abstract

Literature review

The involvement construct has received a thorough theoretical and empirical attention over the past 30 years in the fields of leisure and recreation sport in an effort to understand the decision-making process for leisure activity (Kyle, Graefe, Manning & Bacon, 2004; Alexandris, Kouthouris, Funk & Chatzigianni, 2008). Activity involvement has been defined as an internal state of motivation arousal or interest towards this activity or an associated product. It is evoked by a particular stimuli or situation that mediates consumer behavior (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997) and positively contributes to the likelihood that the users will continue their consumption in the future (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997; Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004). Involvement is argued to be a multidimensional construct and as such is also treated in this research. There has been a disagreement among researchers on the nature and number of facets measuring involvement. A thorough literature review lead to the Kyle et al.'s (2004) involvement scale which has been successfully tested in a variety of leisure contexts for its effectiveness but also for its validity and reliability. In Greece, the scale has been mostly used in order to examine the relationship between the recreational skiers' involvement with other important marketing psychological and behavioral constructs.

Aim

The aim of this research was to study the stability of the factor structure of the Kyle et al.'s (2004) involvement scale among participants of outdoor recreation activities, occurring in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace in Greece.

Methodology

1205 questionnaires were handed out during outdoor recreation activities conducted in the above mentioned areas during the months of July till September of 2010. 732 were returned completed and 637 of them were considered to be suitable for use in the survey (52.9% response rate). Prior to the data collection both permission and the activities' program by the managements' of the Outdoor Recreation providers was granted. The majority of the sample was men (53.2%), educated (62.5%), aged from 20-49 years old (71%) and married (48.4%). Involvement was measured by Kyle et al.'s (2004) tri-dimensional scale, including: a) "attraction", measured with five items, b) "centrality", measured with three items and, c) "self-expression", measured with three items. Responses were measured using a seven-point Likert-type scale.

Results

Confirmatory Factor analysis was performed to examine the factor structure and discriminant validity of the translated Kyle et al.'s (2004) scale. The factor variances were fixed to unity, the factor covariances were free to be estimated, and item error covariances were fixed to zero. The goodness-of-fit indices revealed a poor fit of the model to the data ($\chi^2=1133.985$, $df=52$, $NNFI=.823$, $CFI=.860$, $SRMR=.112$, $RMSEA=.183$, $90\% CI=.174 - .192$) revealing that the scale, in its current configuration, was potentially an inadequate measure of involvement among this sample of recreationists. Exploratory factor analysis was then utilized in order to examine the underlying dimensions. Varimax rotation was used which concluded to a two-factor solution that accounted for 63.7% of the total variance. The attraction items and one centrality item defined Factor 1 which was labeled "Attraction". The self-expression items along with the two centrality items formed Factor 2 which was labeled "Self-expression". Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the above factors were 0.88 for the first, 0.82 for the second and 0.90 for the whole scale.

Conclusions

Conclusively, the responses from the translated scale did not really support the dimensionality of the original scale of Kyle et al. (2004) but resulted in two factors that actually reproduced the ones characterizing the initial scale. This conclusion is not uncommon in involvement scales. Involvement studies (Dimanche et al., 1991; Havitz et al., 1993, and more) conducted in other physical activity contexts also resulted in that the emergent factors are often comprised of items from one or two a priori hypothesized factors. The results of this research do not really explain the reasons of the factors variation, i.e. whether it is attributed to the respondents characteristics, the translation or the item construction. The failure of "Centrality" to appear as a distinct factor may be the result of the items' inappropriateness to explain the Greek participants' characteristics. Not unlikely, further refinement of the items or better translation would give other results. Surely, more testing of the scale both in the same and in other cultural and activity contexts is needed.

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