
THE INFLUENCE OF SERIOUS TRAITS ON CONSTRAINTS NEGOTIATION: A CASE OF AMATEUR TRISTHLETES IN TAIWAN

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Synopsis:

Abstract:

Aim of paper and literature review

Triathlon is a resource-intensive sport demanding a high profile of physical fitness and equipment for competitive swimming, cycling, and running (Lamont, Kennelly, & Wilson, 2012). Therefore, the committed amateur triathletes may encounter higher levels of constraints and thus modify the way they negotiate the constraints to sustain their participation. In this regard, a better understanding of the recreational sports negotiation processes engaged in by these triathletes will help us understand how individuals negotiate constraints for ongoing participation in physical activity. The connection between serious leisure and constraint negotiation was first highlighted by McQuarrie and Jackson (1996), who argued that serious leisure participants adopt one set of strategies rather than another. Their arguments were later evidenced in recent qualitative studies (Kennelly, Moyle, & Lamont, 2013; Lamont, Kennelly, & Moyle, 2014), showing that triathletes exhibited the characteristics of serious amateur participants identified by Stebbins (1993), and adopted eight negotiation strategies to adapt or alleviate the influence of constraints on their leisure and non-leisure priorities in a competing manner. To date, how serious leisure traits influence people's constraints negotiation processes has yet to be confirmed in a theoretically constructed model. The purpose of this study is therefore to empirically examine a structural model of serious leisure traits, constraints, negotiation, and participation with a sample of amateur triathletes in Taiwan.

Methodology

A purposive sampling method was used to collect the data from a major triathlon event hosted in Taitung, Taiwan. The questionnaire was designed based on all constructs of the proposed structural model to examine the

hypotheses of interest. The construct of serious leisure traits was measured using the revised Chinese version of Cheng and Tsaur's (2012) 21-item Serious Leisure Scale. Constraint was assessed adopting the revised Chinese version of Ma and Ma's (2014) 25-item Recreational Sports Constraints Scale. Negotiation was measured using the 26-item Chinese version revised from Ma and Ma's (2014) 32-item Recreational Sports Negotiation Scale. Some items were either revised or deleted so as to be compatible with the context of triathlons. All items were evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale. Respondents were requested to report the frequency with which they had participated in triathlon training over the past 12 months on a six point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 6 (almost every day). Structural equation modeling was used to evaluate the model fit by using LISREL 8.80. A total of 375 valid questionnaires were collected from the 420 participants.

Results/Discussion/Implications

The structural model was constructed based on previous research findings (Kennelly et al., 2013; Ma & Ma, 2014). Cronbach's alpha coefficients and confirmatory factor analyses for all constructs were examined to ensure their reliability and validity. The overall fit indices for the tested structural model indicated that the model approached an acceptable fit. The findings showed that amateur triathletes in this study exhibited the characteristics of serious leisure identified by Stebbins (2007). Contrary to the hypothesized direction, the higher the serious leisure traits, the lower constraints the amateur triathletes would perceive. This finding challenges the previous argument (Kennelly et al., 2013; McQuarrie & Jackson, 1996) that serious leisure participants would experience higher levels of dynamic constraints. As expected, those with higher levels of serious leisure traits would be more likely to negotiate the constraints so as to participate in triathlon training. Yet, the triggering effect of constraints on negotiation (Hubbard & Mannell, 2001) was not found in the model. These findings are consistent with Ma and Ma (2014) who found that levels of constraints would exert an important influence on how people deal with them. This may be due to the low levels of constraints ($M = 2.97$, $SD = .98$) perceived by the amateur triathletes. In other words, the study results indicate that serious leisure traits are a strong predictor and may modify people's constraints negotiation process. Building on the present model, future research may work on revealing how different serious leisure traits (Stebbins, 1993) influence the constraints negotiation process with different populations and in other settings. Note: This research was supported by the Ministry of Science and Technology, Taiwan.

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