

## An Examination of Sport Commitment of Windsurfers

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The number of participants in outdoor sporting pursuits has dramatically grown over the past decade (Eitzen, & Sage, 2003). Windsurfing, one of the first extreme water sports, emerged in the early 1970s. With its unique and dynamic characteristics, windsurfing became popular worldwide and was selected as an Olympic event in 1984 for men and in 1992 for women (History of Windsurfing, n.d.). Recently, however, the windsurfing industry has been confronted with a number of challenges including the competition from such new water sports as wake boarding and kite boarding, the loss of female windsurfers, and a decrease in windsurfing populations (see Bogucki, 2006; Ezzy, 2006). This study was conducted to better understand the underlying reasons that are associated with continued participation in windsurfing. More specifically, this study examined the sport commitment of windsurfers and the relationship between sport commitment and the following variables: demographic characteristics, participation frequency, and purchase behavior.

Sport commitment is defined as a psychological state representing the desire and resolve to continue sport participation (Scanlan, Carpenter, Schmidt, Simons, & Keeler, 1993). Scanlan et al. (1993) developed the Sport Commitment Model (SCM) to explore the underlying psychological characteristics of participants in various sports for the youth-sport domain. Subsequently, the SCM has been used as a measurement tool for adult participants in different leisure and recreation sports such as tennis (Casper, 2004), triathlon (Taylor, 1998), rugby (Scanlan, Russell, Beals, & Scanlan, 2003), and exercise and fitness (Alexandris, Zahariadis, Tsorbatzoudis, & Grouios, 2002). There is, however, no study which examines windsurfers through the SCM.

The survey instrument for the current study included items from the SCM questionnaire (Scanlan, et al, 1993) and the modified SCM questionnaire (Casper, 2004). The questions were worded to pertain to windsurfers and were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale. The predictor constructs of windsurfing commitment included enjoyment, involvement opportunities, personal investment, social constraints, and social support. Based on Casper's study, participation frequency and purchase behavior were investigated as outcome variables.

Data collection took place on-site during two windsurfing events: 1) the Frisco Woods WindFest from April 20-22, 2006, and 2) the WET Spring Regatta from April 28-30, 2006. A total of 139 usable questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 82%. The participants in this study ranged in age from 18 to 71 years and the mean age was 43.7 (SD = 11.1). Of the 139 respondents, 110 (79.1%) were male and 29 (20.9%) were female.

Factor analysis revealed a two-factor structure. This differed from previous research that found five unique predictor constructs of sport commitment (Casper, 2004; Scanlan et al., 1993). The first factor was labeled intrinsic motivators and included all of the items comprising windsurfing enjoyment, involvement opportunities, and personal investment. The second factor, labeled extrinsic motivators, included the items from social constraints and social support. The intrinsic motivators explained 34.9% of the variance for sport commitment while the extrinsic motivators accounted for 15.8% of the variance. Regression analysis revealed that participation frequency could be predicted by sport commitment ( $X = .347, p = .000$ ); however, there was not a significant relationship between purchase behavior and sport commitment.

In comparing demographic variables, no significant differences were found based on gender or age. There were significant differences in sport commitment in regard to both skill level ( $F(3, 132) = 7.551, p = .000$ ) and income level ( $F(5, 118) = 2.687, p = .024$ ). Unsurprisingly, advanced windsurfers had a higher level of commitment than those who classified themselves as intermediate or beginner. Also, those in higher income brackets were more committed than respondents with lower annual incomes. Significant differences based on skill level ( $F(3, 109) = 3.419, p = .020$ ) and income level ( $F(5, 100) = 2.541, p = .033$ ) were also evident for purchase behavior. Higher skilled respondents purchased more windsurfing equipment and apparel as did those with higher incomes. The only significant difference in participation frequency was for skill level ( $F(3, 132) = 6.976, p = .000$ ). As expected, the advanced skilled windsurfers spent significantly more time participating in their sport than lesser skilled windsurfers.

The results of this study may be of interest to water-sport businesses and associations. Intrinsic motivators seem to be important contributors to the sport commitment of windsurfers. In addition, skill level was a factor common to sport commitment, purchase behavior, and participation frequency. Individuals and groups interested in cultivating more committed windsurfers

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need to focus on providing opportunities for beginners and intermediate-level windsurfers to increase their skill level. Windsurfing events, competitions, and retail outlets should organize and offer instructional clinics and enjoyable opportunities for people to become more involved and personally invested in the sport.

### References

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