Understanding Motivation and Students’ Exercise Consumption Behaviors Based on Their Stage of Change in Exercise

Jessica Gates, University of Florida
Kyriaki Kaplanidou (Advisor), University of Florida
Yong Jae Ko (Advisor), University of Florida
Chris Janelle (Advisor), University of Florida

Introduction

According to the Surgeon General’s Report on physical activity, nearly half of America’s youth, ages 12-21 years, are not vigorously active on a regular basis (1999). The report also stated that as age or grade in school begins to increase, participation in all types of physical activity begins to decrease (1999). College students are faced with the challenge of maintaining their personal health along with many other responsibilities after moving away from home for the first time (Jackson, Tucker & Herman, 2007). It is imperative for college students to recognize the importance of healthy lifestyle behaviors in order to ensure longevity and continued maintenance of such behaviors into adulthood. This study will focus on what motivates students to engage in physical fitness in an effort to determine their exercise consumer behavior based on the stage of change they belong (Astroth et al., 2002).

Literature Review

The transtheoretical model of behavior change presents an approach to health promotion, identifying behavioral change as a progression through stages of change (Astroth et al., 2002). The model focuses on the progression through six stages of behavior change: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance and termination (Prochaska & Norcross, 2001).

The self-determination theory was used to determine the motivation attached to the stages of change. Self-determination theory distinguishes between two forms of motivation related to behavior, intrinsic motivation, doing an activity for the inherent satisfaction and extrinsic motivation, doing an activity for the external outcomes separate from the activity itself (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2005). The theory is presented along a continuum from nonself-determined (amotivation) to self-determined (intrinsic motivation). Extrinsic motivation can vary greatly in relation to the level of autonomy of an individual. For this reason the organismic integration theory (OIT) was presented by Ryan and Deci (2000) within the concept of SDT, detailing the different forms of extrinsic motivation. This sub-theory focuses on the idea that extrinsic motives (called regulations) fall along a continuum marked by different degrees of self-determination, ranging from highly controlling to volitionally endorsed (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Wilson et al., 2002). Four regulations have been identified. These regulations are referred to as external, introjected, identified and integrated (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The differences in motivation reflect the degree to which an individual internalizes or integrates the value or regulation of the requested behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Kaltcheva and Weitz (2006) determined that by identifying and examining situational variables, in this case motivational orientation, strategies can be developed in relation to consumer behavior. This is due to the fact that motivational orientation influences consumption behavior (Kaltcheva & Weitz, 2006). After determining the current stage of change of an individual (i.e., how long they have been exercising) and the motivational orientation (e.g., external vs. integrated) an assumption can be made regarding their consumer behavior. Researchers have found that nonself-determined types of extrinsic motivation, external and introjected, are not related to persistence in behavior (Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992). In contrast, the more self-determined forms of extrinsic motivation, integrated and identified, have been found to be positively related to behavioral persistence. Lastly, Vallerand and Bissonnette (1992) found that amotivation was negatively related to behavioral persistence. This study will attempt to address whether there are any differences between stages of change and motivation factors, how motivation factors impact exercise consumer behavior of students and if there are any differences between stages of change and exercise consumer behavior.
There were three research hypotheses for this study: H1 examined the differences between stage of change and motivation, H2 examined the connection between motivation and exercise consumer behavior and H3 examined the differences between all stages of change and exercise consumer behavior.

Method

An online questionnaire was administered to (N = 4,000) undergraduate and graduate university students assessing their current exercise stage of change, motivation towards exercise and likelihood of engaging in specific exercise consumer behavioral intentions. There were (N = 414) completed responses, resulting in a 10% response rate. A MANOVA test was used to determine the differences between stages of change and motivation, a series of multiple regression analyses were used to test the relationship between motivation and exercise consumer behavior and an additional MANOVA test was used to determine the differences between stages of change and exercise consumer behavior.

Results and Discussion

The results showed that there were significant differences present in motivation across stages of change, increasing in self-determination as stage of change increased. Amotivation proved to be more predominant within the earlier stages of change while intrinsic motivation received higher mean scores within the later stages of change in accordance with previous literature (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2005; Mullan & Markland, 1997). In addition, more self-determined forms of motivation were found to positively influence exercise consumer behavior within the context of this study. Identified regulation was found to significantly predict the likelihood to engage in all consumer behavior variables, while the likelihood to engage in the exercise consumer behaviors steadily increased across stages of change in sequential order. Based on the results of this study, it is suggested that consumers who are more engaged and have internalized their current exercise behavior (maintenance and termination stages of change), are more likely to participate, purchase and attend program and service offerings. Managers should focus not only on attracting new customers but trying to progress the existing customers through the stages of change in an effort to shift their motivation along the self-determination continuum towards identified regulation and beyond, retaining loyal customers for the future.

References


