The Relationship among Participation Motivation and Commitment and Intention to Stay in Mixed Martial Arts (MMA)

Junyoung Cho, University of Connecticut
Seongsik Cho (Advisor), Hanyang University

Marketing - Consumer Behavior (Physical Activity)
20-minute oral presentation (including questions)
Abstract 2018-209

Friday, June 8, 2018
1:20 PM
Room: Sable C

Research Background
In recent years, a new sport, Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), has emerged, generating interest from television viewers, spectators, and participants in Asian countries as well as in the United States. As its popularity is surging across countries, many professional MMA organizations are promoting events to attract more spectators and media outlets. Despite increased interest in MMA and in spite of extensive studies on viewer and spectator aspects of MMA (Damon et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2008; Pawel et al., 2015), relatively little scholarly work examining the myriad of factors associated with participants in MMA has been published. Given that participation has long been positively associated with spectatorship in sports (Zilman et al., 1979; Thrane, 2001; Dawson et al., 2009), this study attempts to develop a new marketing strategic dimension to increase the popularity of MMA.

Purpose of study
This study aims to investigate the psychological characteristics of MMA participants' retention by analyzing the correlations among motivations, commitment and intention to stay. Findings can be used as empirical evidence for developing marketing strategies to expand the MMA participant base. People in managerial positions in MMA organizations will better understand the influential factors on participants' retention.

Research Method
A 51-item questionnaire measuring demographics, participation motivation, commitment, and intention to stay. Data were collected from participants of three MMA gyms and customers of an offline MMA supplies shop located in Seoul, South Korea. Among 300 distributed and returned (100% response rate) questionnaires, 273 were usable for the study. A confirmatory factor analysis and a Cronbach internal consistency analysis were conducted to evaluate construct validity and inter-item reliability. Descriptive statistics were calculated to assess overall demographics. T-test, One-way ANOVA and Post-hoc (scheffe) were used to examine differences between factors. Lastly, a correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis were conducted to examine associations among the factors. Significance level was .05.

Results
Cronbach’s alpha of the factors were acceptable, ranging from 0.80 for intention to stay to 0.90 for participation motivation. In terms of demographic segments, respondents who were male, age 10 to 20, college-level education, middle-low income level, and high in time spent and frequency of participation showed significantly higher scores on participation motivation, commitment, and intention to stay than other groups. Also, the result of a correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis showed that participation motivation was positively related to commitment and intention to stay. Specifically, among the factors consisting of participation motivation, external display, social intercourse, and enjoyment were positively related to commitment and enjoyment and health/fitness were positively related to intention to stay. Also, commitment was positively related to intention to stay.

Discussion
This study provides significant empirical evidence that might be useful to create marketing strategies for promoting participation in MMA, which eventually could facilitate expanding the market size of MMA in sport industry. The findings provide a better understanding of psychological traits of participants in MMA and give an opportunity to utilize the significant results in practice and in future studies. However, there are some limitations. Firstly, respondents were disproportionately young males so that it is plausible that the findings are biased. Secondly, since data was collected within a certain local area in South Korea, cultural factors should be taken into account for...
application of findings to other geographic settings.