Factors Affecting Downhill Skiing Participation of Canadian Consumers

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According to Statistics Canada (2013), downhill skiing participation rates have declined from 14% in 1992 to 6% in 2010. Finding ways to counteract this decline by revitalizing interest in downhill skiing is necessary to avoid further negative effects on the economic sustainability of the ski industry in Canada. The purpose of this study is to identify facilitating and constraining factors for skiing participation of Canadian consumers to find ways to stimulate their uptake of the sport. Facilitating and constraining factors are different for non-skiers and skiers. Given that non-skiers have never experienced skiing, they can only express their perception, attitudes, and cognitive understanding of skiing. Previous research on downhill skiing participation has predominantly focused on consumers who were already involved in skiing, while non-skiers and former skiers were typically neglected. Therefore past research failed to reveal subtle, but important differences in factors affecting ski participation between these different user groups (Hudson & Gilbert, 2000; Hudson, 2000). Factors influencing people’s ski behaviour include: perception of high cost, perception of skiing being dangerous, time requirement, peer involvement, quality of ski slopes, and amenities (e.g., Alexandris, Funk, & Pritchard, 2011; Füller & Matzler, 2008; Gilbert & Hudson, 2000). Elaborating on internal, external, and situational factors, Shank and Lyberger’s (2015) sports consumption behavior model includes a myriad of other factors that could affect skiing participation. A comprehensive, reliable and valid measuring instrument is essential to identify more comprehensive factors affecting skiing participation of Canadian consumers, thereby distinguishing various segments of (non-)skier groups.

An online questionnaire is developed using extended Shank and Lyberger’s (2015) sports consumption model. It consists of five sections: (1) skiing participation, (2) constraints (29 items capturing various internal, external and situational constraints), (3) facilitators (25 items capturing various internal, external and situational facilitators), (4) intention to ski, (5) demographics. Content validity was established by a comprehensive literature review and expert judgment. After pilot testing and consensus on the content and wording, data will be collected in the winter of 2019 from a convenience sample of 150 university students (targeting 30 participants for each: non-skiers, former-, low-, moderate-, and high-frequency skiers). Reliability is tested using a test(T1)-retest(T2) method among the same participants with a 14-day interval, calculating correlations. Exploratory factor analysis will be used to explore the factors and test Shank and Lyberger’s (2015) model. Discriminant and convergent validity will be tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Significant differences between the five ski-consumer groups will be calculated using Chi-square tests and one-way ANOVAS.

Results will be available at the time of presentation. This study proposes a reliable and valid measuring instrument to identify current factors that affect ski participation among various segments of skier groups. It allows updating outdated data on ski participation in the Canadian context (Williams & Fidgeon, 2000). It will assist in developing distinct marketing initiatives to keep current participants in the sport or increase their participation, and attract new participants into the sport.