The Effects of Verbal and Nonverbal Communication of Golf instructors on Customers’ Emotional Responses: From a Gender Perspective

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Communication with customers in the sports service delivery process has great effects on customers' responses. Research has found that a sport service provider’s communication style plays a key role in determining customers’ responses. Although several studies have examined the effectiveness of service providers’ communication on customers’ responses, a lack of scholarly interest has been made to understand how gender difference between sport instructors and customers determines the effects of different communication style on customers’ responses. To fill the empirical gap, this study examines the different role of golf instructors’ verbal (central route and peripheral route) and nonverbal (kinesics, proxemics, and physical appearance) communication style on customers' emotional responses by considering the combination of gender (identical gender vs. opposite gender) between instructors and customers.

A total of 215 golfers who are currently taking golf lesson in South Korea has completed the questionnaire. Among participants, 139 golfers are taking lesson from golf instructor who has the identical gender (Identical Gender Group: IGG) whereas 75 golfers are taking lesson from golf instructor who has opposite gender (Opposite Gender Group: OGG). The results indicated that the effects of verbal (central route and peripheral route) and nonverbal (kinesics, proxemics, and physical appearance) communications on customers’ positive emotion were stronger for OGG than IGG. Meanwhile, the effects of verbal and nonverbal communications on negative emotion were stronger for IGG than OGG. Second, the central ($\beta = .401, t=5.078, p<.001$) and peripheral($\beta = .454, t=5.742, p<.001$) route of verbal communication had positive impacts on customers’ positive emotion and central route($\beta = -.314, t=-2.420, p<.05$) of verbal communication had a negative impact on their negative emotions in the IGG. In the OGG, the central($\beta = .517, t=6.129, p<.001$) and peripheral($\beta = .411, t=4.872, p<.001$) route of verbal communication had positive impacts on positive emotion and central route($\beta = -.594, t=-4.156, p<.001$) of verbal communication had a negative impact on negative emotions. Finally, the results further indicated that all factors of nonverbal communication (kinesics: $\beta = .260, t=3.331, p<.001$, proxemics: $\beta = .248, t=3.021, p<.01$, physical appearance: $\beta = .386, t=4.459, p<.001$) had positive effects on customers’ positive emotion in the IGG. However, proxemics of nonverbal communication did not influence customers’ emotions in the OGG.

Our finding provides effective guidelines to golfer instructors’ in terms of how to create positive relationship with their customers using different styles of communication by considering the combination of gender between instructors and customers.