

Abstract

The Florida State University College Of Education

"Identification Of The Factors Influencing Participation In The Sport Of Bowling"

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A Dissertation submitted to the Department of Physical Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Involvement in civic and recreational activity has been a common element in society. Millions of people throughout the world are highly involved in sport as athletes, coaches, and spectators (Deci & Olson, 1989). The past two decades have shown enormous growth in the number and frequency of people engaging in recreation and sport (Kraus, 1990; Mathes & Battista, 1985). The National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) (1998) reported there were 76.3 million exercise walkers, 47.9 million people exercising with equipment, 46.6 million campers, 44.8 million bowlers, 37 million billiards/pool players, and 28.4 million hikers in the United States.

The advent of multiple leisure activities has spurred greater amounts of attention and resources allocated by organizations to maintain current consumer recreational dollars. Retention and attrition rates are emerging as burgeoning concerns of the sport and recreational practitioner (Girard, 1998). The International Health, Racquet, and Sportclub Association (IHRSA) (1998) addressed attrition by investigating and producing retention-related materials for its member clubs. The growth in recreational opportunities and attrition are major concerns, prompting the sport administrator to seek ways to (a) improve the quality of participant experiences, (b) increase current participant frequency, (c) minimize disengagement, and (d) recruit new participants.

The sport of bowling thrives on participation by individuals who bowl competitively and leisurely. According to the Billiard and Bowling Institute of America (BBIA) (1997), 53.3 million people in the United States age six and older bowled a minimum of one game in 1997, ranking it first as the most popular participant sport. Globally, the bowling community consists of 110 million participants, 250,000 establishments, 110 national federations, and a \$10 billion annual industry (ABC/WIBC Bowling Page, 1997; ABC/WIBC/YABA Bowling Newslite, 1997b; FIQ, 1997; World Bowling, 1997). Ironically, even though overall participation continues to rise, the North American national bowling organizations report constant membership attrition since a decline began in 1981 (Barol, 1995; Fernandez, 1995; Heller, 1995). Furthermore, the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA) (1998) reported bowling is struggling to convert "casual" bowlers to more frequent serious bowlers, illustrating that frequency of participation continues to decline. Klint and Weiss (1986) suggest that one approach to understand the variations of participation is by examining the factors of involvement.

Scientific examination of the motives or reasons for involvement is required to fully comprehend the scope and depth of participation (Gill, Gross, & Huddleston, 1983). Granzin and Olsen (1989), Mathes, McGivern, & Schneider (1992), and Ragheb and Tate (1993) have suggested program organizers assess consumer needs and desire to have a working knowledge of participant motivation. Sport administrators and leisure recreators are routinely required to render valid managerial decisions based on the quality (satisfaction) of participant experiences. Research has shown unsatisfactory experiences generally lead to anxiety, fading commitment, and disengagement. Conversely, satisfaction has been shown to positively effect engagement, leading to greater frequency of current consumer involvement (Block & Bruce, 1984; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Lawrence, 1977; Losier, Bourque, & Vallerand, 1993; Martin, 1988; Snyder & Spreitzer, 1983). Consequently, awareness of the factors influencing participation in specific leisure activity and sport is vital to improve participant experiences (Briggs, 1997b; Crandall, 1980; Mathes et al., 1992; Passar, 1982; Ragheb & Tate, 1993; Sage, 1980; Spreitzer & Snyder, 1983; Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992).

Lawrence (1977) discovered there is little information available characterizing the bowling consumer, and, if bowling proprietors want to satisfy participant motives, they must have current knowledge of them. Therefore, assessing the motivation to participate in bowling should justifiably enable sport administrators of the bowling community clairvoyance to

accurately program for satisfaction. Arranging for motive fulfillment should attract new consumers and increase current consumer behavioral involvement (Block & Bruce, 1984; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Lawrence, 1977; Losier et al., 1993; Martin, 1988; Snyder & Spreitzer, 1983). Following this rationale, the current paper intends to identify the factors influencing participation in the sport of bowling by answering the following questions: (a) What are the underlying reasons people engage in bowling, (b) Do the participant motives differ between male recreational and competitive bowlers and female recreational and competitive bowlers, and (c) What are the profiles of a male bowler, female bowler, recreational bowler, and competitive bowler?

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors influencing participation in the sport of bowling. Three research questions were analyzed, discriminating between two independent variables (gender and bowler type) blocked together forming four levels on five dependent measures. The two independent variables were arranged into four groups to discriminate between male recreational and competitive bowlers and female recreational and competitive bowlers on the five dependent measures from the Reasons for Bowling Questionnaire (RBQ) (Health, Social, Pleasure, Creative Discovery, and Goal Orientation).

The RBQ was used to obtain participant motivation information based on the criteria of bowler type. A systematic sample of 398 recreational bowlers and 456 competitive bowlers were surveyed from Southeastern United States bowling establishments. The RBQ, employing a 5-point Likert scale and maintaining an alpha coefficient of .92, was used to elicit participant reasons for bowling engagement. Descriptive statistics were calculated to determine rank order, means, and standard deviations of the motivators to bowl. The data was collapsed into the five RBQ subscales for calculation, and demographic variables were also described.

A 3-Way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to analyze the effects of the five RBQ subscales with gender (male and female) and bowler type (recreational and competitive). The multivariate overall test yielded a statistically significant main effect for gender, $F(1, 850) = 66.82, p < .05$, and bowler type, $F(1, 850) = 66.38, p < .05$. It also yielded a statistically significant interactive effect for gender by bowler type, $F(1, 850) = 30.97, p < .05$. This was followed by univariate analyses to identify the specific scales in which the subgroups differed. Duncan's post hoc analyses were carried out when necessary.

Results of the univariate ANOVA test yielded statistically significant effects for gender, bowler type, and the interaction of gender by bowler type. Further review revealed gender was statistically significant on subscales Social, Pleasure, and Goal Orientation; bowler type was statistically significant on all five subscales; and the interaction of gender by bowler type was also statistically significant on all five subscales.

The results of this study revealed bowlers were motivated for various reasons. Male bowlers were highly motivated to bowl for reasons of pleasure, social, and goal orientations. Female bowlers were highly motivated for reasons of pleasure and social. Recreational bowlers were highly motivated for reasons of pleasure, social, and health. Competitive bowlers were highly motivated to bowl for reasons of pleasure, social, and goal orientations. Continued academic study of the bowler is required to further this work and clearly define the bowler profiles.