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Loyalty in Sport Participation Services: An Examination of the Mediating Role of Psychological Commitment

Guillaume Bodet
Loughborough University

This study aimed to increase the understanding of loyalty's formative processes in fitness organizations. Building upon recent conceptualizations, the purpose of this study was to test the mediating role of psychological commitment in the relationships between consumers' satisfaction, perceived value, involvement, identification, informational, and volitional processes and their attitudinal and behavioral loyalty toward a fitness organization. We conducted a questionnaire-based study in a French health and fitness club context with a sample of 252 club members, of which we were able to collect data in regard to repurchasing behavior for 110. This allowed us to confirm the relevance of the research model in regard to behavioral intentions, although including the behavioral-loyalty dimensions of the length of the relationship, frequency of participation, and repurchasing behavior failed to validate it. These findings have managerial implications for sustaining club membership levels.

Increased free time in people's lives, and concerns about obesity and healthy aging has created a favorable environment for sport participation and should then create a favorable market for sport participation organizations (Mintel, 2007). However, a change in the meanings that sport participation holds for people has created a mismatch between sport organizations' traditional services and contemporary sport participants' expectations (Bodet, 2009, Heino, 2000; Loret, 1995; Seippel, 2006). Understanding what drives consumer loyalty is therefore a crucial issue for sport managers. Accordingly, researchers have identified several of loyalty's antecedents including satisfaction (e.g., Bodet, 2008; Murray & Howat, 2002; Pedragosa & Correia, 2009), involvement and psychological commitment both directly and indirectly (e.g., Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004; Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2004; Park, 1996), and perceived value (e.g., Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000). Moreover, several researchers have argued that the conceptualizations involving a mediating role of psychological commitment are more valid than those involving direct relationships (Iwasaki & Havitz, 1998, 2004).

Therefore, this study aims to test the central mediating role of resistance to change, considered as psychological commitment's main manifestation, between consumers' satisfaction, perceived value, involvement, identification, informational and volitional processes and their attitudinal and behavioral loyalty toward a fitness organization. This study also seeks to partially respond to numerous calls for an increased focus on longitudinal studies that explain sport and leisure behaviors over time (e.g., Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004; Kyle & Chick, 2004) by assessing the factors that predict actual consumer repurchase. Specifically, Ajzen (2001) observed that the strength of attitudes as well as their stability influences the predictive validity of subsequent behaviors. Therefore, when the decision-making moment is temporally distant from the measure of intentions, also known as temporal discrepancy, behaviors are more likely to differ from attitudes (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Further, measuring actual behaviors rather than intentions to repurchase is important because some researchers have argued that intentions do not always lead to behaviors (Ajzen, 2001; Sheeran, 2002).

Bodet is with the School of Sport, Exercise, and Health Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough, UK.

Theoretical Background

Satisfaction and Perceived Value

In the search for understanding how consumer loyalty forms in service industries, both the mainstream and sport-specific literature have paid particular attention to the concept of consumer satisfaction. Essentially, it is hypothesized that satisfied consumers are more likely to be loyal ones, and that dissatisfied consumers are less likely to be loyal. However, due to the importance of the heterogeneity of both of the industries studied and the methodological approaches and contexts used, consensus has been difficult to attain. Indeed, some studies (e.g., Hallowell, 1996; Jones & Suh, 2000) have found that consumer satisfaction influences consumer loyalty significantly and positively in services in general, and others have done so for sport participation services in particular (Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000; De Barros & Gonçalves, 2009; Ferrand, Robinson, & Valette-Florence, 2010; Howat, Murray, & Crilley, 1999; Murray & Howat, 2002; Pedragosa & Correia, 2009).

However, as Henning-Thurau and Klee (1997) noted, most studies conducted on an individual level have used consumers' repurchasing intentions as a way to evaluate the status of the link between satisfaction and loyalty. However, the relationship between satisfaction and intentions may not be the same as that between satisfaction and behavior as some authors noted that intentions do not always predict behaviors (Ajzen, 2001; Mittal & Kamakura, 2001; Sheeran, 2002). Henning-Thurau and Klee argued that such studies' principal limitations are the inherent correlation between measures in the same questionnaire, which overestimates the strength of any relationships, the low predictive validity of individual intentions on actual behaviors, and, most importantly, not viewing loyalty as a bidimensional construct. Indeed, since Day (1969), a relative consensus has emerged for defining consumer loyalty as being composed of behavioral and attitudinal dimensions.

Therefore, the status of the relationship clearly depends on the nature of the measures, and especially the behavioral measure. Measuring the behavioral dimension has provided varied results. For instance, Pedragosa and Correia (2009) and Ferrand et al. (2010) found a significant, but slight (for Ferrand et al., 2010), link between satisfaction and the frequency of attendance, and Bolton (1998) found that consumers with a higher level of satisfaction tend to have longer relationships with service providers as measured by total months of service. Henning-Thurau and Klee (1997) and Bodet (2008) however, found the relationship between satisfaction and repurchasing behavior to be insignificant. The differences observed between frequency of attendance, length of membership, and repurchase behavior results can potentially be explained by the fact that because length of membership, frequency of participation, and satisfaction are often measured simultaneously, within the same questionnaire, it is difficult to clearly identify the logical sequence of processes and the predictive power of satisfaction on these two loyalty measures. It therefore could be argued that satisfaction is the consequence of length of membership and frequency levels of participation (Ferrand et al., 2010).

Some differences are also present in regard to the nature of the concept and the way consumer satisfaction is measured. Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann (1994), Bitner and Hubbert (1994), and Garbarino and Johnson (1999) have all found that transaction-specific satisfaction, which involves one specific interaction or encounter with a service provider, has to be distinguished from overall or cumulative satisfaction, which involves all previous interactions with a particular organization. Transaction-specific satisfaction has been found to be less predictive of consumer loyalty (Jones & Suh, 2000). Even in distinguishing overall and transaction-specific satisfaction however, Bodet (2008) did not support the direct relationship between consumer satisfaction and repurchase behavior. These results can potentially be explained by the gap between attitudes and intentions, and behaviors (Ajzen, 2001; Sheeran, 2002), especially when attitudes and behaviors are quite distant in time (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The concept of satisfaction is therefore one key to understanding consumer loyalty's formation process, but is not sufficient, as not all satisfied consumers are loyal. Additional variables clearly need consideration for a full understanding of the formation of consumer loyalty to sport participation services. Cronin et al. (2000) considered that the concept of perceived value, which Zeithaml (1988, p. 14) defined as the "consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions on what is received and what is given," should be a complement to satisfaction in loyalty's formation process, as a consumer satisfied by a low-value product or service is unlikely to develop a loyalty to it.

Cronin et al. (2000) found that, in both spectator and participation sport-services contexts, consumer value and satisfaction significantly influenced consumers' behavioral intentions. Murray and Howat (2002), McDougall and Levesque (2000), and Patterson and Spreng (1997) have all identified both satisfaction and perceived value as simultaneous antecedents of loyalty, either directly or indirectly.

Involvement, Commitment, and Loyalty

In addition to marketing researchers, researchers from the leisure and recreation field found that the concept of psychological commitment plays a key mediating role between the concept of leisure involvement and behavioral loyalty to recreation agencies (Iwasaki & Havitz, 1998, 2004; Kyle et al., 2004). Havitz and Dimanche (1997, adapted from Rothschild, 1984, p. 246) defined leisure involvement as "an unobservable state of motivation, arousal, or interest toward a recreational activity or associated product. It is evoked by a particular stimulus or situation and has drive properties."

Funk, Ridinger, and Moorman (2004), Gahwiler and Havitz (1998), Kerstetter and Kovich (1997), Kyle et al. (2004), and Kyle and Mowen (2005), among others, have studied leisure involvement in varying leisure contexts, and have reached a consensus for a multidimensional definition of it based on Laurent and Kapferer's (1985; 1986) framework. This conceptualization relies on an enduring component that combines the dimensions or facets of importance, pleasure or hedonism, and sign, and a situational component related to the decision-making process that combines the dimensions of risk importance and risk probability. The importance of the product or service reflects its personal meaning for the consumer. The pleasure facet reflects the hedonic value of the product or service and its emotional and affective appeal. The sign facet, also known as self-expression, reflects the symbolic dimension the consumer attributes to the product or service. Finally, the perceived risk dimensions reflect the "perceived importance of negative consequences in case of poor choice" and the "perceived probability of making such a mistake" (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985, p. 43).

For both theoretical and methodological reasons, however, we decided not to include the risk dimension

of involvement in this study's analysis. Including the contextual or situational dimension of involvement is theoretically problematic, particularly in regard to the objective of understanding consumer loyalty's formative processes. Furthermore, from a more practical point of view, Havitz and Dimanche (1997) found that measures of the risk dimension often demonstrate poor performance for both conceptual and technical reasons. Moreover, Iwasaki and Havitz (2004) omitted this dimension from their analysis due to encountering the same difficulties.

The consequences of leisure involvement include search behavior patterns, frequency of participation, travel and purchasing, and psychological commitment to specific providers (Gahwiler & Havitz, 1998; Havitz & Dimanche, 1999; Park, 1996). In turn, psychological commitment significantly influences consumer or participant loyalty (Fullerton, 2003; Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Pritchard, Havitz, & Howard, 1999), for which "the tendency to resist changing preference" is the main principle underlying commitment (Crosby & Taylor, 1983, p. 414).

Informational, Identification, and Volitional Processes

Based on Crosby and Taylor's (1983) framework, Pritchard et al. (1999) estimated that resistance to change was best explained by several variables they gathered and named commitment's antecedent processes. The informational process is the first of these factors, and is based on the concepts of informational complexity, cognitive consistency, and confidence. It "deals with cognitive structure and how people manage information about their preference" (Pritchard et al., 1999, p. 335). According to Pritchard et al. (1999), people who have complex and consistent cognitive structures about a particular object firmly believe that they are correct about this object which makes them highly resistant to change. The identification process is the second factor. Pritchard et al. (1999) referred to it as position involvement. It relies on the degree to which consumers' self-images and values are linked to their sport organization preferences. The volitional process is the third factor. It expresses the "extent to which a decision to perform an action is based on a person's free choice" (Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004, p. 50) and, as Salancik (1977) noted, when the perceived volition in the making of a decision is high, people are likely to feel more responsible, which could consequently make them more resistant to change.

The Research Model: Toward a Mediating Role for Commitment

Using Pritchard, Havitz, and Howard's (1999) definition of psychological commitment to an organization as a combination of resistance to change and such formative processes as informational complexity, cognitive consistency, confidence, position involvement, and volitional choice, Iwasaki and Havitz (2004) estimated that "current conceptualizations involving mediation effects are more reflective of reality than previous models built primarily on direct effects" (p. 65). They identified consumer loyalty's formation process as being progressive, with leisure activity involvement apparently a precondition for becoming a committed member or consumer, thereby influencing loyalty toward the organization. James (2001), Kim, Scott, and Crompton (1997), Kyle et al. (2004), and Park (1996), among others, also adopted this approach for the context of leisure activities.

We also support this conceptualization of assigning a central role to commitment, and particularly to resistance to change. Although we support the involvement to psychological commitment to loyalty general sequence postulated by Iwasaki and Havitz (1998, 2004), we consider the formative factors of commitment that Pritchard et al. (1999) and Iwasaki and Havitz (2004) identified to be part of psychological commitment only as antecedents. Primarily, we theoretically reject the idea that a concept can be defined by both resistance to change, its main principle, and its main antecedents, such as Pritchard et al.'s formative factors. Furthermore, it is relevant to hypothesize that being involved in a sport or leisure activity may directly influence a person's resistance to change for another recreation agency, particularly when the service that person receives is satisfying, without necessarily going through the identification, informational, and volitional processes that affect resistance to change. Iwasaki and Havitz's (2004) finding that enduring involvement explained only 8% of the variance of the commitment's formative factors helps to justify this perspective.

We therefore maintain that identification, informational, and volitional factors should be considered to be direct antecedents, such as involvement, of resistance to change which is considered to be the principal evidence of psychological commitment. The findings of both Garbarino and Johnson (1999) and Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpandé (1992), among others, support such conceptualizations based on a single concept. Our approach considers identification, informational, and volitional factors to be relevant antecedents that should be taken into consideration when explaining consumer loyalty's formation processes.

Considering both the importance of the concept of psychological commitment as a mediating variable and the limited power of the concepts of satisfaction and value to predict loyalty directly, it seems justified to consider that the relationships between satisfaction, value, and loyalty may have greater explanatory power when mediated by psychological commitment. This means that satisfied consumers are more likely to develop a desire to maintain their relationships and be resistant to change, thereby increasing their loyalty to their recreation agencies and sport-service providers.

Based on the framework of Morgan and Hunt (1994), Garbarino and Johnson (1999) found that resistance to change plays a mediating role between satisfaction and

future intentions for consumers with a high relational orientation in a recreational context of theater-going, which can correspond to sport participation consumers, as they are usually members of the organizations involved. Alexandris, Zahariadis, Tsorbatzoudis, and Grouios (2004) supported the idea that consumer satisfaction could be an antecedent of psychological commitment in the sport context, and Kelley and Davis (1994), Kelley, Hoffman, and Davis (1993), and Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekaran (1988) have all found a significant relationship between satisfaction and commitment. This hypothesis also corresponds to Pritchard et al.'s (1999) specific appeal for an exploration of the link between satisfaction and resistance to change.

Similarly, we can hypothesize that resistance to change plays a mediating role between perceived value and loyalty, based initially on Morgan and Hunt's (1994) framework, which maintains that relationship benefits are antecedents of commitment. We therefore consider that this could be extended to the concept of perceived value, defined as a cost-benefit ratio, and justify the testing of such a link. Even though the literature has rarely studied or even explicitly expressed a direct relationship between consumer value and commitment, Johnson, Herrmann, and Huber (2006) and Ravald and Grönroos (1996), among others interested in relationship marketing, have considered consumer value to be a key antecedent and explanatory variable of relationship commitment.

Our research model, as shown is Figure 1, therefore hypothesizes that the principal evidence of psychological commitment, resistance to change, plays a mediating role between consumers' satisfaction, perceived value, involvement, identification, informational, and volitional processes, and their behavioral and attitudinal loyalty toward a sport organization.

Method

Participants

Although our objective was to elaborate a general model for understanding loyalty's formative process in all types of sport participation services, we decided to focus on a specific sport context on the grounds that studying many different sports would produce too much variance, which could affect the first testing of the model negatively. Furthermore, athletes in performance pathways cannot be strictly considered to be engaged in a consumption relationship, as many of them are partially professional or receive material or financial incentives for their participation or membership.

Therefore, since numerous studies have focused on the fitness industry (De Barros & Gonçalves, 2009; Ferrand et al., 2010; Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004; Park, 1996; Pedragosa & Correia, 2009), we selected this context for our investigation. Both commercial and not-for-profit organizations being present reinforced this choice, as this would extend the external validity of our results. Our sample, then, was composed of all sport and recreation agencies and not-for-profit organizations providing health

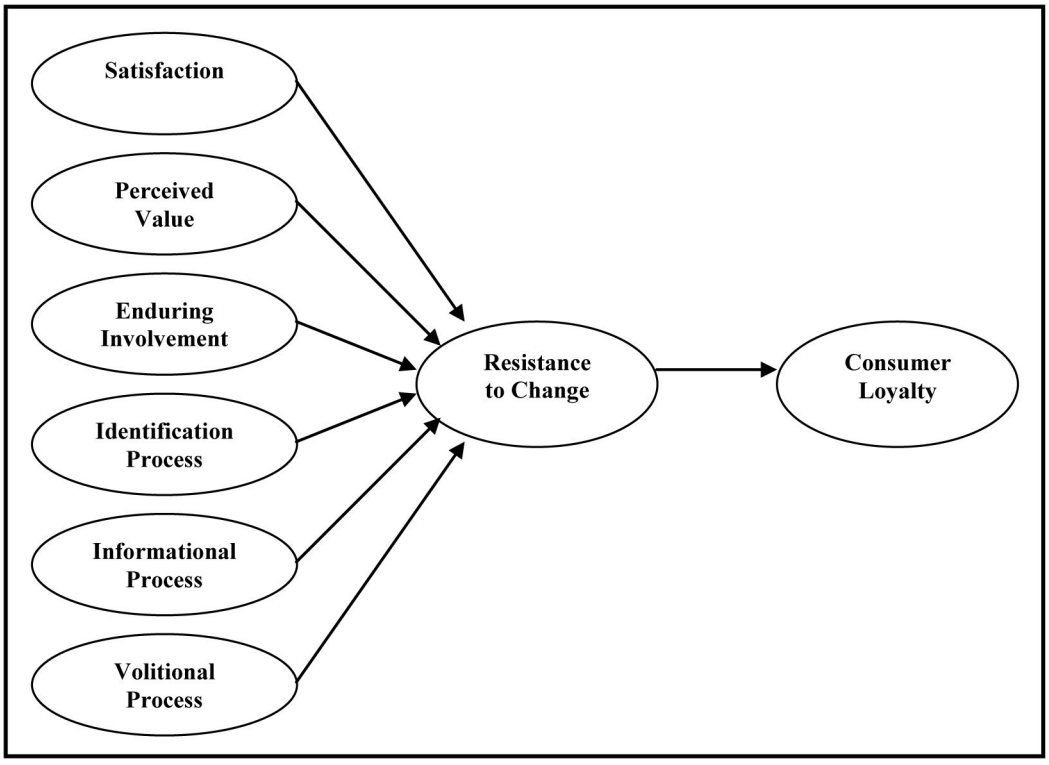


Figure 1 — The research model of consumer loyalty in sport participation organizations.

and fitness activities in the urban area of a French city of approximately 300,000 inhabitants.

Although identifying the number of commercial organizations in the targeted area was a simple matter, as they were all registered in commercial listings, it was difficult to identify the not-for-profit organizations providing health and fitness activities properly due to their heterogeneity and the absence of a clear definition of their activities. After contacting the 11 commercial clubs registered in the area and eight not-for-profit organizations that identified themselves as providing the type of sport activity (i.e., fitness activities) in which we were interested, we selected a final sample of five commercial and three not-for-profit clubs. The commercial clubs were heterogeneous in terms of their size (i.e., number of members and employees) and the services they offered (e.g., with or without peripheral services) and corresponded to the four categories Bessy (1993) identified for French national commercial fitness offerings. One club belonged to the biggest European chain, one was up-market (high-end), two were independent middle-market organizations, and one was a small local club. As no information was available, we could not make this type of comparison for the not-for-profit clubs, which possibly limits the generalizability of this study's findings.

Finally, because we wanted to measure consumer repurchasing behavior, we asked the clubs in our sample whether we could use named or identified questionnaires to learn if consumers had renewed their memberships after they had expired or if they had left the club. Two of the five commercial clubs and the three not-for-profit clubs accepted the identification of the members on the questionnaire. The cooperating organizations secured permission and made sure the anonymity of their members was protected, as several managers asked to handle the administration process.

Material and Procedure

As we were employing a bidimensional definition of consumer loyalty, we measured behavioral loyalty by the amount of the repurchasing behavior—whether the respondents renewed their memberships after their expiration, the frequency of participation per week, and the length of the respondents' relationships with their current clubs expressed in years. To measure the attitudinal dimension of consumer loyalty, we selected an adapted version of Cronin et al. (2000) and Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman's (1996) three-item behavioral intentions scale because Cronin et al. had previously used it in a sport participation context. We measured resistance to change and identification, informational, and volitional processes with the Psychological Commitment Instrument that Pritchard et al. (1999) developed and Iwasaki and Havitz (2004) had used. This measures resistance to change with four items and identification, informational, and volitional processes with three items.

We measured enduring involvement using Laurent and Kapferer's (1985, 1986) framework, which is based on a five-dimensional perspective of the concept, the dimensions being perceived product importance (three items), symbolic or sign value (three items), hedonic value (three items), and two dimensions of perceived risk (seven items). However, because of the previously explained theoretical and methodological constraints we only used the three facets of enduring involvement of importance, hedonism, and sign.

We measured overall satisfaction using five of the six items of Oliver's (1980) scale. We omitted the item, "If I had it to do all over again I would feel differently about X," because in our view that fails to refer to either satisfaction or dissatisfaction explicitly. Each item referred to the overall relationship between the respondents and their clubs.

Our measure of perceived value combined an adaptation of Aurier, Evrard, and N'Goala's (2004) three-item scale and Cronin et al.'s (2000) two items, which they derived from Zeithaml (1988). We added Aurier et al.'s (2004) scale to Cronin et al.'s because we considered having only two items to be problematic, as three items is the accepted standard minimum for multi-item scales (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006).

The respondents indicated their level of agreement to each item's statement on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from "*strongly disagree*" (value 1) to "*strongly agree*" (value 7). Except for the enduring involvement measure and the three items for perceived value, we first translated all measurement scales from English to French and then had a native speaker back-translate them from French to English to avoid any mistranslations. Finally, the questionnaire included questions on sociodemographic and behavioral characteristics and dedicated a space for the respondents' identification.

Club staff members, whom we had previously briefed, administered the questionnaires to satisfy a requirement set by the managers of several of the commercial clubs. We returned to the clubs that had accepted our identification of the consumers approximately three months after the respondents' membership expirations to determine if they had renewed them or not.

Results

We collected 252 fully completed questionnaires, 110 of them identifying the respondents so we could measure repurchasing behavior. The sample was 73.2% female, 53.9% had no children, 54.5% were less than 41 years old, 67.6% had received higher education, and 48.2% had what Great Britain's National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification system classifies as intermediate occupations (clerical, sales, service)[1]. This corresponds to Bessy (1993), Ferrand et al. (2010), and Tribou's (1994) findings in regard to French health and fitness consumer profiles for commercial organizations.

Scale Validation

Before testing the model, we first tested the validity of the measurement scales, as only the satisfaction and

involvement scales had been previously validated in French but not in sport-related contexts. Moreover, even if the involvement scale has been previously validated in French, Laurent and Kapferer (1986), among others, found that different industries can produce different findings in terms of underlying structure and that the importance and hedonism dimensions sometimes merge into a single dimension. Therefore, considering this element and following Gerbing and Hamilton's (1996) recommendations, this validation involved the two steps of an exploratory factor analysis followed by a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the SEPATH structural equation modeling module of Statistica Software.

The first step led us to delete the volitional choice variable, as the dimension had insufficient internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha < .60) and its factor loadings did not all contribute to the same dimension. We are unsure why this dimension was inconsistent, but recognized several possibilities. One of the three items was a reversed one (i.e., expressed in a negative way), and this can affect a measurement's dimensionality negatively (Herche & Engelland, 1996). In addition, the first item, "My decision to join this club was freely chosen from several alternatives," relies on a decision-making process among different possibilities, which can be problematic for numerous individuals. Indeed, based on the experience we gained from the data collection process, we consider the average level of awareness of the different health and fitness clubs in this French urban area to be notably low. Therefore, the respondents' choices of joining their clubs were unlikely to have been primarily made in comparison with other health and fitness clubs, but with such other sport activities and structures as badminton, swimming, and running. This was particularly likely to be the case for the not-for-profit clubs' members.

Moreover, several alternatives mean that the organizations may be in competition with each other, although the heterogeneity of the health and fitness organizations within this locality makes it unlikely that the respondents considered other clubs as potential alternatives. For instance, we identified only one up-market club in the area, making it unlikely that consumers seeking an up-market service would have considered other clubs before deciding to join the up-market one.

The two enduring-involvement constructs of importance and hedonism merged into a single dimension, as the items measuring them seemed to contribute to the same factor. Laurent and Kapferer (1986) themselves observed that these factors merged within the same dimension in three surveys that they conducted using large samples, and Kerstetter and Kovich (1997), McIntyre (1989), and McIntyre and Pigram (1992), among others, observed this in a variety of leisure contexts. It therefore seems relatively normal to have highly correlated scores because people are often interested in what provides pleasure, especially in regard to leisure activities.

We deleted two items from the satisfaction scale because they contributed to a second factor. These were reversed items, which reinforces Herche and Engelland's (1996) findings. Finally, we deleted one item from the resistance to change scale, two items from the perceived value scale, two items from the importance dimension, and one item from the hedonism dimension because their factor loadings were insufficiently satisfying (<.60).

The second step of the validation consisted of a CFA employing a bootstrapping technique that:

> validates a multivariate model by drawing a large number of subsamples ... estimating models for each subsample, and then determining the values for the parameter estimates from the set of models by calculating the mean of each estimated coefficient across all the subsample models (Hair et al., 2006, p. 25).

We also calculated the reliability of the constructs following Fornell and Larcker's (1981) recommendation of r_{η}. Table 1 shows the satisfactory factor loadings, reliability indexes, and goodness-of-fit indicators that allowed us to proceed with the test of the model.

Analysis

The relationships between satisfaction, perceived value, identification, informational, and volitional processes and the dimensions of involvement on the one hand and resistance to change on the other hand were tested using a multiple regression analysis. A multiple regression analysis was conducted before Structural Equation Modeling procedure because the model including behavioral loyalty as criterion variable cannot be evaluated as a whole due to the binary nature of the repurchase behavior variable. To do this, we created variables based on the average of all validated items with the EFA and CFA findings for the antecedent variables and resistance to change. Correlations and multicollinearity levels between the independent variables were also analyzed as they can impact the predictive ability of the regression model, the estimation of the regression coefficients, and their levels of statistical significance (Hair et al., 2006).

The model including the significant relationships from the previous multiple regression analysis plus a direct relationship between resistance to change and behavioral intentions was then tested with a Structural Equation Modeling technique. A simple regression analysis was then used to test the relationship between resistance to change and frequency of participation and length of the relationship, two dimensions of behavioral loyalty. Finally, as repurchase behavior is a binary variable (i.e., yes or no), a logistic regression was used to test the relationship between resistance to change and repurchase behavior.

Findings

With all variables entered as a block, the multiple regression analysis showed that overall satisfaction ($\beta = .454$, $p = .001$), perceived value ($\beta = .153$, $p = .005$), position involvement ($\beta = .181$, $p = .001$), informational complexity ($\beta = .155$, $p = .003$), and the dimension importance-

Table 1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Bootstrapping Procedure) Coefficients and Constructs' Internal Consistency

Constructs and indicators	Factor loadings	*t* value	ρ η
1. Behavioral intentions (BI)			
The probability that I will renew my membership is	.85	17.46	
The likelihood that I recommend this club to a friend is	.68	6.09	. 85
If I have to do it over again, I would make the same choice	.89	8.57	
2. Resistance to change (RC)			
My preference to being a member of this club would not willingly change	.61	6.12	
It would be difficult to change my beliefs about this club	.68	7.03	70
Even if close friends recommended me another fitness club, I would not change my preference for this club	.70	6.67	
3. Overall satisfaction (OS)			
I am satisfied with my decision to join this club	.83	6.45	
I think that I did the right thing by deciding to join this club	.85	7.38	.88
My choice to join this club was a wise one	.87	10.95	
4. Perceived value (PV)			
Compared with what I had to give up, the overall ability of this club to satisfy my wants is. . .	.70	6.63	
Overall, joining the club provides me more than it costs	.55	4.48	71
Overall joining the club worth all the energy that I put into it	.75	8.48	
5. Position involvement (PI)			
I am a member of this club because its image comes closest to reflecting my lifestyle	.71	9.20	
I am a member of this club because it reflects the kind of person			.85
I am	.96	35.94	
I am a member of this club because it makes me feel important	.78	10.54	
6. Informational complexity (IC)			
I don't really know that much about this club*	.50	5.19	
I consider myself to be an educated consumer regarding this club	.90	20.95	80
I am knowledgeable about this club	.84	12.98	
7. Importance-Hedonism (IH)			
	.86		
The sport activity that I practice in this club is very important for me	.92		
Practicing this sport activity is a great source of pleasure for me	.73	13.03	
8. Sign (SI)		5.13	
We can have an idea of someone by the sport activity he/she practices	80		
	76	15.68	88
The sport activity you practice tells a little bit about who you are		10.34	
The sport activity I practice reflects a little bit which kind of person I am	.89	7.67	86
		14.16	

Note. $\chi^2 = 460.026$, df = 224, p = .000. RMSEA = .50, TLI = .93, CFI = .95, $N = 252$.

* Reversed items.

hedonism of enduring involvement (β = .099, p = .034) were significantly and positively linked to resistance to change, although the sign dimension of enduring involvement (β = -.034, p = .478) was not found to be significant. Overall, all these variables explain 57.4% of variance in resistance to change. We therefore found that the more consumers are satisfied, the more they perceive the value of their consumption as positive, the more they become identified and educated about the sport club, and the more they become involved in terms of interest and pleasure in their sport activity, the more likely they are to resist change. The tolerance indicators range from .615 to .852 which shows some multicollinearity among the independent variables but at accepted levels as the values are substantially greater than .10 (Hair et al., 2006). The observation of the correlations among the independent variables, which are all positive and significant, confirms this result with no correlation coefficients greater than .532 (see Table 7). Therefore, tolerance values and correlation coefficients support the discriminant validity among overall satisfaction, perceived value, position involvement, informational complexity, and importance-hedonism.

Based on these findings, we then tested the overall model for resistance to change playing a mediating role between overall satisfaction, perceived value, position involvement, informational complexity, and the interest-pleasure dimension of enduring involvement and behavioral intentions. As the sign dimension of enduring involvement was not found to have a significant relationship with resistance to change, we also omitted it from the overall structural model.

Although all the relationships were positive and significant at a risk of 5% (see Table 3), the goodness-of-fit indicators were unsatisfactory. The χ^2 was 530.754 (df = 183, p < .001), but the root mean square error of approximation indicator was approximately .10 and the Tucker-Lewis index, at .83, and comparative fit index, at .85, were inferior to .90, which is a commonly accepted threshold. Even if .90 should not be considered to be a "magic cutoff value" (Hair et al., 2006, p. 751), our goodness-of-fit indicators were also inferior to what such previous researchers as Iwasaki and Havitz (2004) and Pritchard et al. (1999) found using either similar measures or models. Consequently, we cannot consider that our model accurately fits our data (see Table 3).

The next steps involved testing the relationships between resistance to change and the different constructs measuring behavioral loyalty. As the frequency of participation and the length of the relationship were metric variables, we used simple linear regression analysis and found no significant relationship between resistance to change and the frequency of participation or between resistance to change and the length of the relationship (see Table 4). Because we found no significant relationship between

Table 2 Tests of the Direct Relationships Between Resistance to Change and Its Antecedents

Hypotheses		β	*t* value	*p* value	R^2	*Tolerance*	*VIF*
OS →	Resistance to change	.454	8.511	.001	.574	.644	1.552
PV →		.153	2.805	.005		.615	1.625
PI →		.181	3.387	.001		.645	1.550
IC →		.155	3.017	.003		.697	1.434
IH →		.099	2.127	.034		.852	1.173
SI →		-.034	-.711	.478		.798	1.253

Note. OS = Overall Satisfaction, PV = Perceived Value, PI = Position Involvement, IC = Informational Complexity, IH = Importance-Hedonism, SI = Sign.

Table 3 Testing of the Structural Model Involving Behavioral Intentions

Structural relationships	Estimated parameters	*t* value	*p* value
OS → RC	.821	16.482	.001
PV → RC	.400	6.679	.001
PI → RC	.137	2.200	.028
IC → RC	.147	2.259	.024
IH → RC	.150	2.356	.018
RC → BI	.630	10.999	.001

Note. OS = Overall Satisfaction, PV = Perceived Value, PI = Position Involvement, IC = Informational Complexity, AP = Importance-Hedonism, RC = Resistance to Change, BI = Behavioral Intentions.

Table 4 Tests of the Direct Relationships Between Resistance to Change and Frequency of Participation and Length of Relationship

Hypotheses		β	*t* value	*p* value	R^2
RC →	FP	.109	1.706	.089	.012
RC →	LR	.030	.445	.657	.001

Note. RC = Resistance to Change, FP = Frequency of Participation, LR = Length of relationship.

Table 5 The Binary Logistic Regression of Repurchase Behavior on Resistance to Change

Hypotheses	B	S.E.	Wald	df	*p* value	Exp (B)
Step 1 RC	-.25	.16	2.33	1	.13	.77
Constant	-.09	.85	.01	1	.92	.91

these variables, we decided that it was irrelevant to test the overall structural model with frequency of participation and length of relationship as final dependent variables.

The last relationship we tested was between resistance to change and repurchasing behavior. We performed a binary logistic regression analysis because of the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable and found that resistance to change did not significantly predict consumer repurchasing behavior ($p = .13$), for a Nagelkerle R-square of .03 (see Table 5).

Discussion

To understand loyalty's formative processes in regard to sport participation organizations better, we performed numerous analyses that produced mixed results. We found significant relationships between overall satisfaction, perceived value, position involvement, informational complexity, and the importance-hedonism dimension of enduring involvement and resistance to change, the main manifestation of psychological commitment (see Figure 1).

This corroborates Garbarino and Johnson's (1999) and Alexandris et al.'s (2004) findings of a significant relationship between satisfaction and psychological commitment. It also supports the relationship marketing approach, and particularly Morgan and Hunt's (1994) framework, which considers that the value that a supplier or a stakeholder provides is likely to increase the consumers' or business partners' commitment.

These findings also support the presence of a relationship between the identification and informational processes and resistance to change, in line with Iwasaki and Havitz's (2004) and Pritchard et al.'s (1999) findings. Finally, even if Iwasaki and Havitz (2004) and Kyle and Mowen (2005), among others, have found a positive relationship between enduring involvement and commitment, our findings showed a direct link between the importance and hedonism dimensions of involvement and resistance to change. Furthermore, we also found that resistance to change significantly influences behavioral intentions, representing the attitudinal dimension of loyalty, which is in line with such studies dealing with the commitment-loyalty relationship as Fullerton (2003), Iwasaki and Havitz (2004), and Pritchard et al. (1999).

As previously mentioned, even if these findings are consistent with many existing frameworks, consumer satisfaction's role seems to be predominantly in regard to such other identified antecedents as perceived value, position involvement, informational complexity, and the importance-hedonism dimension of involvement. This is in accord with the marketing literature, although the leisure literature dealing with organized sport and recreation participation seems to underestimate its role.

As well, perceived value's contribution to resistance to change is apparently similar to the one that it makes to that factor's formative processes. The positive and significant influence of consumer satisfaction and perceived value on resistance to change tends to reinforce the role of service delivery and performance in the formation of loyalty to sport organizations in comparison with the broader relationship consumers have with their sport and leisure activities. It also demonstrates that sport organizations' members tend to behave in their sport and leisure activities as they do in other areas of consumption. This supports Baudrillard's (1968) perspective that "consumption is an active mode of relationship (not only with objects, but with community and the world), a mode of systematic activity and of global response upon which is based all our cultural system" (cited in Baudrillard, 2006, p. 13).

Being involved, in terms of importance and hedonism, does not seem to strongly contribute to resistance to change. This further tends to highlight the difference between a consumer's relationship toward a sport activity and with its provider, relationships that no longer appear to be direct. Indeed, it appears likely that because of the increasing number of sport and leisure offerings available, involvement in sport and leisure activities moderates the roles that satisfaction, perceived value, and identification and informational processes play on resistance to change

rather than contributing strongly to the formation of loyalty. This hypothesis seems, however, to be strongly dependent on the offering's structure and the availability of numerous alternatives.

All of these variables which were found to significantly influence resistance to change are all positively and significantly correlated; the highest correlation being between satisfaction and perceived value (.532) and the lowest being between position involvement and the importance-hedonism dimension of enduring involvement (.181; see Figure 1 and Table 6 and 7 for the variables' descriptive statistics). Nevertheless, the correlation levels do not cast doubts on the discriminant validity of the variables, which reinforces the necessity to take all these variables into consideration, and provide indirect support for the heterogeneity of sport consumers' behavior as high-score levels in one variable do not automatically imply the same levels for other variables.

However, even with the sign dimension of enduring involvement omitted from the analysis, the results failed to support the overall attitudinal model satisfactorily, even though we found all the relationships to be significant. Hair et al. (2006) found that quality of fit depends heavily on sample size and model complexity, recommending a ratio of 15 respondents per estimated parameter to minimize problems with deviations from normality. This means that since our model estimated 21 parameters our sample size should have been 315 instead of 252.

The nonvalidation of the relationship between the sign dimension of enduring involvement and resistance to change being associated with the weak correlation between sign and importance-hedonism seems to reinforce a conceptualization of enduring involvement as being composed of distinct facets that may not be combined to reflect a unique latent variable. In this sense, this finding corroborates the dimensional approach and the findings of Kyle, Graefe, Manning, and Bacon (2003) and Kyle and Mowen (2005), who have found different relationships between involvement and the commitment dimensions but never tested the relationship between the sign dimension of enduring involvement and resistance to change.

Although importance and the hedonism value provided by a sport activity seem to affect members' resistance to changing their sport clubs positively and significantly, the sport activity's symbolic value did not have a significant impact on their psychological commitment to their clubs. This means that many respondents tended to distinguish a sport activity's symbolic value from their relationships with their sport organizations. An eventual explanation for this finding may lie with health and fitness activities' continuing negative social stereotype in France of involving showing off and superficiality as shown by Bodet and Meurgey (2005), which is likely to hinder club members' desire to associate themselves with such activities' symbolic value or to be publicly associated with them, according to a social desirability criterion. This finding might therefore be related to the context, and Kyle, Bricker, Graefe, and Wickham's (2004) findings indicate that the relationship might be different for different sport and leisure activities.

Table 6 Descriptive Statistics

	BI	RC	OS	PV	PI	IC	IH	SI	LR	FP
M	6.043	5.436	6.339	5.861	3.926	5.343	6.286	3.635	5.325	3.105
SD	1.151	1.333	.887	1.004	1.837	1.314	.890	1.735	6.034	1.427

Note. BI = Behavioral Intentions, RC = Resistance to Change, OS = Overall Satisfaction, PV = Perceived Value, PI = Position Involvement, IC = Informational Complexity, IH = Importance-Hedonism, SI = Sign, LR = Length of relationship, FP = Frequency of participation.

Table 7 Correlation Between Measures

	BI	RC	OS	PV	PI	IC	IH	SI	LR	FP
BI	1	.534**	.624**	.458**	.244**	.318**	.399**	-.078	.045	-.026
RC		1	.666**	.513**	.462**	.468**	.405**	.052	.030	.109
OS			1	.532**	.323**	.304**	.341**	-.070	.014	-.060
PV				1	.306**	.403**	.299**	.005	.005	.070
PI					1	.444**	.181**	.387**	.127	.219**
IC						1	.301**	.212**	.057	.200**
IH							1	.012	.046	.092
SI								1	.227**	.161*
LR									1	-.016
FP										1

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level; * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

BI = Behavioral Intentions, RC = Resistance to Change, OS = Overall Satisfaction, PV = Perceived Value, PI = Position Involvement, IC = Informational Complexity, IH = Importance-Hedonism, SI = Sign, LR = Length of relationship, FP = Frequency of participation

When we considered the behavioral dimensions of loyalty, however, we could find no significant links, unlike Iwasaki and Havitz (2004) and Pritchard et al. (1999). The respondents' resistance to change had no significant effect on their frequency of participation, which contradicts the conception that a high frequency of consumption or participation is the only characteristic of a high level of commitment, loyalty, or both, as some respondents could be characterized as highly committed although only attending once weekly. This could correspond to what such observers as Loret (1995) and Seippel (2006) have called a redefinition of the meanings of sports and the way they are practiced, and with an increasing search for heterogeneity in sport and leisure activities.

We also found that resistance to change has no significant influence on the length of the relationship, which is consistent with it failing to predict consumer repurchasing behavior, as some weakly committed members renewed their memberships and some highly committed ones did not. An analysis of the length of membership may help to explain this, as numerous first-timers with three-month trial memberships renewed their memberships, thereby increasing the level of repurchasing behavior of those without long membership histories and consequent strong psychological commitments to the club. In the future, length of membership should be taken into account in addition to membership renewal and be considered as a moderating variable.

We further found that repurchasing behavior remains unpredictable. This may either be because it just cannot be predicted or, from a positivist perspective, because we failed to identify its main antecedents or measure them accurately. Furthermore, some of the factors that influence consumer repurchasing behavior, such as residential moving, injuries, and extra work or family commitments, may be beyond the organizations' or managers' control. This could explain why some committed members fail to renew their memberships. It is therefore important for both managers and researchers to identify the principal factors that influence nonrepurchasing behavior to identify how much the organization is responsible for it. The difficulty is in determining the scope of responsibility, which may vary with individual members and managers. In doing this, it is important to avoid both abdicating any organizational responsibility for nonrenewal and embracing a fallaciously overextended sense of responsibility that implies that the organization is always responsible.

This study's main limitations center on the size of its sample. Even if this has been one of the few studies addressing repurchasing behavior, the 110 respondents participating in that aspect of it constituted only 43.65% of the overall sample. It seems reasonable to hypothesize that with a bigger sample we would have found a different relationship between resistance to change and repurchasing behavior. The sample's structure might also be a shortcoming, and we conjecture whether a sample taken from a single club would not have produced more accurate findings.

Furthermore, questions could be raised about the variables' measurement. As Heere and Dickson (2008) noted, the measures of behavioral intentions and resistance to change may have overlapped. This could explain why the relationships are valid with behavioral intentions but not with behavioral loyalty. This comment could even be extended to the studies which only use attitudinal indicators. Similarly, the measurement of the volitional process was unreliable, preventing us from introducing it as a variable in the research model. It therefore needs improvement.

The merging of two of the dimensions on the enduring involvement scale, furthermore, suggests that using a scale that has been validated in a leisure context would likely be more accurate. Kyle, Absher, Norman, Hammitt, and Jodice's (2007) involvement scale could be used to this end.

Conclusion and Future Research

This study's goal was to improve the knowledge of the loyalty-formation process in sport participation organizations, as it represents a crucial managerial stake. Our investigation of this variable in the health and fitness context found that consumer satisfaction, consumers' perceived value, position involvement, information complexity, and the sport activity's importance-hedonism value positively influence consumers' resistance to change, which subsequently influences behavioral intentions positively. Nevertheless, the effects of resistance to change's antecedents vary in their impact, with consumer satisfaction making the greatest contribution and informational and identification processes the next greatest impact which should encourage managers to focus on the variables that are closely related to the services offered and social encounters. However, even if managers increase the members' levels of commitment, they have no guarantee that they will attend more often or renew their memberships.

We regret that we could not learn whether the members who failed to renew their memberships switched to other sport organizations, changed their preferred sport activities, moved to other geographical areas, or simply stopped participating in sports. As previously noted, it would be interesting to conduct further research, probably qualitative, investigating these elements to identify the extent to which sport organizations can influence nonrenewal.

From an overall perspective, a more complex model that includes direct relationships between satisfaction, loyalty, and perceived value could be tested to enrich the research model this study has proposed. Finally, as Homburg and Giering (2001) and Iwasaki and Havitz (1998) have noted, and Iwasaki and Havitz (2004) have tested them, moderating effects should be taken into consideration, and such variables as past experience, the length of the membership, personal moderators (e.g., switching costs, emotions, and skills) and social-situational moderators (e.g., social support, situational incentives, social-cultural norms, interpersonal or structural constraints) should be considered as relevant possibilities.

Notes

1. According to the NS-SEC, positions in clerical, sales, service and intermediate technical occupations that do not involve general planning and supervisory power.

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