Family Experiences with Youth Sport Participation During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Georgia Teare, University of Ottawa
Marijke Taks (Advisor), University of Ottawa

Marketing - Consumer Behavior (Youth Sport) 20-minute oral presentation (including questions)
Session: Consumer Behavior 1
Abstract 2021-109  Mode: Synchronous
Friday June 4, 2021, 11:45 AM - 12:05 PM

The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound impacts on many aspects of society, including youth sport and physical activity (SPA). However, it has also presented a unique opportunity to reflect on youth SPA experiences before, during and after the pandemic and its potential long-term effect on youths’ SPA consumer behaviour. It is well established in the youth SPA literature that past experiences are strong predictors of future participation preferences (Biddle et al., 2011). As the ways in which youth have been able to practice SPA have been altered due to the pandemic, these adapted forms of SPA have potentially exposed youth to additional forms of SPA, perhaps influencing youth SPA preferences. As youth SPA expectations are constantly shifting (Janes et al., 2019; Turner, 2013), in the context of a pandemic, it is unknown how these expectations have changed, if at all. Youth and their families were forced to adjust their SPAs, and in doing so, had an opportunity to re-evaluate why and how they choose to participate, re-shaping expectations based on youth SPA experiences during the pandemic. This in turn may affect families’ conceptualization of SPA (i.e., what and how families think and feel about youth SPA). Thus, the purpose of this presentation is to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted family’s experiences with, and conceptualizations of youth SPA. This project is guided by Social Ecology Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Stokols, 1992) which states that individual behaviour is a function of the sociocultural and built environment. It assumes that there are five levels of society: intrapersonal; interpersonal; institutional; community; and political (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

This presentation draws from the first stage of a larger exploratory mixed method collective case study; reporting the findings from qualitative semi-structured interviews with families in Ontario (Canada). As children tend to enter organized sport at the age of six (Coté et al., 2007), families with children aged six to 18 are targeted for participation. Participating families are stratified based on geographic area (rural, suburban, and urban communities), and types of pre-pandemic SPA behaviours (i.e., engaged in organized sport, non-organized sport, both, and no sport).

Families are asked about their expectations, experiences, and satisfaction with youth SPA: (1) before, (2) during the height, and (3) the recovery stages of the pandemic. Youths’ and their parents’ perceptions and conceptualizations of value with youth SPA experiences (i.e., what SPA scenarios families perceive to be of value) and how they will seek out that value after the pandemic are also investigated.

Interviews take place in December 2020 and January 2021. Data will be analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006), with both inductive and deductive approaches. The deductive approach will be based on the socioecological levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

This presentation will identify if and how youth SPA preferences have shifted through a pandemic. This informs youth sport providers’ plans that will not only help them recover from the pandemic, but provide stronger, more satisfying SPA offerings in the future.