



**Sport Commitment and Purchase Intentions of Intercollegiate Boxing Coaches
and Participants**

Lamar Reams

Old Dominion University

Correspondence with:

Lamar Reams

Lreams@odu.edu

Sport Management Program

Student Recreation Center #2015

Old Dominion University

Norfolk, VA 23529

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Abstract

The current study analyzed the sport commitment and purchase intentions of club level intercollegiate boxers and coaches. Participants at United States Intercollegiate Boxing Association (USIBA) member institutions (N = 155) completed an online survey answering questions regarding their sport commitment and future equipment purchase intentions. Multivariate analysis discovered significant sport commitment differences among boxers and coaches, Wilk's $\Lambda = .838$, $F(7, 125) = 3.46$, $p < .05$; with coaches being slightly more committed ($M = 4.56$, $SD = .56$) and personally invested than their boxing counterparts ($M = 4.56$, $SD = .52$). For the second research question, an analysis of covariance (using sport commitment as the covariate) was conducted to analyze potential differences across coaches and boxers on equipment purchase intentions. No significant differences among boxers and coaches were found, $F(1, 92) = .400$, $p = .529$. Discussion within the manuscript includes academic implications and pragmatic recommendations.

Keywords: college boxing, sport commitment, purchase intentions, sport development, multivariate analysis

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Introduction

Intercollegiate club level sports in the United States have significantly increased in popularity over the past two decades. In large part, this is because of their role as a middle competitive ground between lower level intramurals, and “an alternative to the semiprofessional, regulated commercial environment of modern, elite college athletics” (Pennington, 2008, ¶ 10). Primarily organized and run by the students who comprise the clubs, participants involved in these sports acquire responsibilities such as selecting coaches, fundraising, purchasing equipment, and organizing their own travel (Brudenell, 2015; Dorn, n.d.).

College boxing is a former National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) sanctioned sport that was banned in 1960 after the untimely death of Charlie Mohr, a University of Wisconsin boxer who died after he suffered a hard blow (Moe, 2010). In the decades since the tragedy, the sport went largely unnoticed after it was relegated to club status under the governance of the National Collegiate Boxing Association (NCBA). That was until 2012, when the sport re-emerged after being propelled by the United States Intercollegiate Boxing Association (USIBA), a non-profit whose mission is to reintroduce the sport as an ethical, relevant and safe sport for college students. Since their efforts were initiated, the sport has gained national interest with both organizations now striving to improve the sport’s reception on the amateur level (Shaw, 2012).

Today, there are an estimated 60 USIBA programs across the nation, with the sport generally being well received by students who are interested in self-defense and individuals who simply desire a method to improve their fitness. In fact, several new boxing clubs have experienced tremendous growth over the past four years (e.g., Penn State University, University of North Carolina, University of Missouri, etc.), forcing them to create two teams: a traveling, competitive team, and a general, workout team. As with most club sports, the coaches guiding the workouts and competitions offer their services on a volunteer basis, and like their fellow students, work with very few university provided resources (Bachman, 2015). Regarding this sentiment, a current college boxer stated, “People don’t get any sort of compensation. It’s really just the will to win that keeps them going” (Shaw, 2014, ¶ 10). Propelled by a mission to see the sport once

again recognized as a NCAA sport in the future, organizers have taken great interest in the commitment of their most vital constituents (i.e., boxers and coaches), and their intentions to purchase boxing equipment, both of which are necessary to see the sport recognized as “relevant and safe.”

As such, it is the continued participation of athletes and its importance to the future of this sport that is the conceptual focus of this study. Previous research indicates that enduring participation by athletes is critical to a sport’s long-term sustainability and the finances of their associated organizations (Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004; Vail, 2007). In a similar vein, the commitment of coaches is equally vital to sport across a multitude of different settings (Engelberg, Skinner, & Zakus, 2011; Cuskelly, 2004; Ringuet-Riot, Cuskelly, Auld, & Zakus, 2014). And while volunteer coaches have historically played a significant role in the successful delivery of sport (Giannoulakis, Wang, & Gray, 2008), not all coaches share the same levels of commitment (Engelberg, Skinner, & Zakus, 2006), similar to athletes (Casper & Stellino 2008). Further, previous commentators have recommended examining different sports across different levels of competition (Casper & Stellino, 2008; Sousa, Torregrosa, Viladrich, Villamarin, & Cruz, 2007) and athletes’ purchase intentions of related equipment (Casper, 2007). With the return of intercollegiate boxing in its relative infancy, combined with the dearth of literature on club sport and potential commitment differences across roles (e.g., player, coach, etc.), this unique setting provides a great landscape to examine this topic to advance the literature on sport commitment in addition to providing pragmatic implications for this emerging sector. Taking the above into consideration, the purpose of this research is to examine the commitment to a club level sport among boxers and coaches. A secondary purpose is to analyze these constituents’ purchase intentions of boxing equipment.

Review of Literature

Sport Commitment

Conceptually, the commitment construct has been used to examine involvement with a job, or some other type of target behavior (Young & Medic, 2011; Rusbult, 1983). Sport commitment is a psychological construct representative of enduring involvement in a sport activity (Casper & Stellino, 2008; Scanlan, Carpenter, Schmidt, Simons, & Keeler, 1993). The sport commitment model (SCM; Scanlan et al. 1993) measures this by examining a respondent’s sport motivation and participation data. The framework most commonly used in the literature is comprised of seven factors (for definitions see

Table 1): sport commitment (defined above), sport enjoyment, involvement alternatives (other priorities), involvement opportunities (valuable opportunities), personal investments, social constraints and social support (Casper & Stellino, 2008; Scanlan et al., 2013). In its entirety, the SCM captures both the “want to” and “have to” components of sport commitment (Scanlan et al., 2013). Involvement alternatives, or alternatives to sport participation, is the only factor hypothesized to have a negative impact on sport commitment (Casper et al., 2007; Young & Medic, 2010).

Table 1. Sport Commitment Model Construct Definitions.

Sport enjoyment refers to a positive affective response to a sport experience.

Involvement alternatives are outside priorities that could reasonably take the place of current sport participation for an individual.

Involvement opportunities are valuable opportunities that are only presented after continued involvement in a sport activity.

Personal investments are personal resources invested into the sport activity that could not be recouped if participation were discontinued.

Social constraints are social expectations that create pressures to remain in the current sport activity.

Social support refers to the support a person receives from individuals that are close to him or her.

Note. From Casper et al., 2007 and Scanlan et al., 1993

As research in this area has progressed, the model has been updated, modified, and utilized in a host of different sport contexts (Carpenter & Scanlan, 1993; Casper, 2007; Casper & Andrew, 2008; Scanlan, Russell, Magyar, & Scanlan, 2009; Scanlan, Russell, Wilson, & Scanlan, 2003). Results from these analyses show “mounting evidence for the external validity of the model” (Scanlan, Russell, Beals, & Scanlan, 2003, p. 398). Initiated by Scanlan and colleagues (1993), they unsurprisingly found that children enjoy sport and increasingly dedicate time and effort to their respective sports

over the duration of their athletic careers (Scanlan et al., 1993). Elite athletes are somewhat similar, as they also highly enjoy and are positively attracted to their sport; however, they typically do not allow outside influences to detract from their sport participation (Scanlan et al., 2003; Scanlan, Russell, Scanlan, Klunchoo & Chow, 2013). This result is in contrast to the involvement alternatives for master's level swimmers. Among this group, data suggested the more enticing the outside options were – they increasingly had a negative impact on swimmers' commitment to the sport (Young & Medic, 2011).

Commitment differences were also found among recreational and intercollegiate tennis players, where college players and those of higher skill levels were more committed than leisure players and novices (Casper & Andrew, 2008). Similar results exist across age, with younger adults being less committed than their older counterparts (Casper, 2007; Casper & Stellino, 2008). Predictors of sport commitment also vary across competitive levels of youth gymnasts (Weiss & Weiss, 2007). A significant implication from the following works is the more skilled an athlete becomes, the more committed he or she becomes to the sport (Casper & Andrew, 2008). However, it stands to be noted that if committed athletes begin to feel entrapped, they can become increasingly susceptible to burnout (Raedeke, 1997).

Regarding the commitment of coaches, Raedeke, Warren, and Granzky (2002) suggested that “a commitment perspective may help develop a more complete understanding of why some coaches continue coaching while others don't” (p. 74). Raedeke (2004) found that the commitment of coaches was relatively stable across one year of time, yet acknowledged that commitment is dynamic, therefore subject to change. Similar to athletes, Raedeke et al. (2002) found differences across coaches who continue in the sport in contrast to those individuals who quit. Specifically, active coaches are more committed and invested, whereas former coaches, like some athletes (Young & Medic, 2011) who see the greater benefits associated with involvement alternatives, are more likely to be driven away from the sport (Raedeke et al., 2002). Feelings of entrapment among coaches may also lead to burnout (Raedeke, Granzky, & Warren, 2000); or quitting altogether among officials if similar conditions exist (VanYperen, 1998).

Regarding the dynamic nature of commitment, increases in the construct over time may in part explain the role evolution of individuals moving from athlete to coach. For example, Schinke, Bloom, and Salmela (1995) found that athletes with a burning

desire to continue their involvement with a sport seek out coaching after their playing careers are over. In their development of a career stage model centered on coaches, the base for all coaches was their initial sport participation. Based upon the previous literature, it is proposed that there are potential commitment differences among athletes and coaches.

H1: Boxing coaches will report higher scores than boxers on each measure of the SCM.

Purchase Intentions

Purchase intentions, or the motivation to purchase products (Dees, Bennett & Villegas, 2008; Spears & Singh, 2004), are predictive of purchase behaviors (Pavlou & Fygenon, 2006; Petty, Haugtvedt, & Smith, 1995) and can be influenced by pre-existing attitudes and familiarity towards a brand (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Brucks, 1985; Casper, 2007; Harlam, Krishna, Lehmann, & Mela, 1995; Laroche, Kim, & Zhou, 1996; Pope & Voges, 2000). Because of the potential impact of purchase intentions on sales and therefore, sport participation, assessments of the variable have historically been a topic of interest for many sport properties (Crompton, 2004; Hong, 2011).

As purchase intentions relate to the commitment construct, more committed individuals display greater intent and willingness to pay price premiums for products (Keh & Xie, 2009). Specifically in sport, Casper, Gray, and Stellino (2008) extended the SCM by providing evidence of its predictive ability with purchase intentions utilized as a dependent variable (18% of the variance). Further, Casper (2007) found that tennis players who were more committed, of a higher skill level and who earned more money on an annual basis, were willing to spend increased monies on tennis equipment. These results indicate that increases in sport commitment could lead to greater expenditures on sport-related equipment (Casper, 2007; Casper et al., 2008). In conjunction with the previously noted evolving commitment of coaches (Schinke et al., 1995), and sport commitment's relationship with purchase intentions (Casper, 2007), the second hypothesis is proposed.

H2: Boxing coaches will report significantly greater intentions to purchase products than boxers.

Methodology

Sample

Participants were 155 members of the USIBA, at least 18 years of age, who were either a coach or boxer at a member institution. The entire email list for the association consisted of 326 members, for an overall response rate of 48%. Eighty-three percent of the sample was aged 18 to 25. Boxers comprised 72% of the sample, coaches made up the remaining 28%. Caucasian (40%) males (80%) were the most prominent demographic of respondents. The 152lb weight class was the most frequently competed in division (24%); 42% of participants identified themselves as beginner boxers.

Questionnaire

The online, Survey Monkey generated survey consisted of four sections: the SCM, boxing equipment purchase intentions, demographics and a book scholarship raffle drawing. The SCM measures of sport commitment, sport enjoyment, involvement alternatives, involvement opportunities, personal investments, social constraints and social support were all included on the instrument. Each construct of the model was measured on a 5-point Likert type scale (e.g., 1 = Not at all dedicated to 5 = Very dedicated).

A distinction was made on the instrument to distinguish between athletes and coaches, to allow for multivariate group comparisons across the two most important roles in college boxing – participation as a competitor (i.e., boxer) and as a coach. This method was also used by Raedeke et al. (2002), who also analyzed the commitment of current and former coaches. As such, a sample SCM item for a boxer read, “How dedicated are you to boxing?” If the respondent were a coach, the item read, “How dedicated are you to coaching boxing?” Table 1 shows all the items of the SCM along with the corresponding means, standard deviations, and Cronbach’s alpha values.

Purchase intentions of boxing products were also measured on a 5-point Likert type scale (e.g., 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree). The item read, “If USIBA had an equipment sponsor, I would be more likely to purchase their products.” Demographic items assessed age, gender, race/ethnicity, weight class of participation and competition level (i.e., beginner, novice or elite). The final section (optional) allowed participants to enter their name into a raffle for a book scholarship that was awarded at the conclusion of the study.

Results

All SCM measures were found to display good construct reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), with acceptable Cronbach alpha scores ranging from .75 to .87 (see Table 2). To address H1, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. Within the general linear model (GLM), each construct of the SCM was used as a dependent variable, with self-identification as a coach or boxer utilized as the categorical, independent factor. To test the equality of variance-covariance matrices and ensure the robustness of the MANOVA, Box's M test was performed and was found to be insignificant ($p > .05$). Based on this result, the assumption was met and I felt comfortable performing the analysis.

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations and Cronbach Alphas for SCM.

Variable	Mean	SD	α
Sport Commitment <i>How dedicated are you to boxing/coaching boxing?</i> <i>What would you be willing to do to be able to keep boxing/coaching?</i> <i>How hard would it be to quit boxing/coaching boxing?</i> <i>How determined are you to keep boxing/coaching boxing?</i> <i>Do you want to keep boxing/coaching boxing?</i>	4.39	.60	.84
Sport Enjoyment <i>Do you enjoy boxing/coaching boxing?</i> <i>Are you happy when you box/coach boxing?</i> <i>Do you have fun boxing/coaching boxing?</i> <i>Are you satisfied with boxing/coaching boxing as your choice of an activity?</i>	4.75	.44	.87
Involvement Alternatives <i>How interesting do you think these activities would be?</i> <i>How much fun do you think these activities would be?</i> <i>How much would you like to do these activities instead of box/coach boxing?</i> <i>How difficult was it for you to pick boxing/coaching boxing over your alternate activity?</i>	2.91	.88	.82
Involvement Opportunities <i>Would you miss being considered a 'boxer/boxing coach' if you stopped participating?</i> <i>Would you miss your friends if you quit boxing/coaching boxing?</i> <i>Would you miss the good times that you had if you discontinued participation?</i> <i>Would you miss the unique experiences that you get by boxing/coaching boxing?</i>	4.48	.63	.82

Personal Investments	4.13	.70	.75
<i>How much time do you put into your boxing/coaching boxing participation?</i>			
<i>How much effort have you put into your boxing/coaching boxing participation?</i>			
<i>How much of your own money have you spent on boxing/coaching boxing fees?</i>			
<i>How much of your own money have you spent on equipment?</i>			
Social Constraints	2.11	.98	.84
<i>I feel that it is necessary to box/coach boxing to be with my friends.</i>			
<i>I feel that I box/coach boxing to be with my friends.</i>			
<i>I feel that I participate in boxing/coaching boxing so others do not feel that I am a quitter.</i>			
<i>I feel that I box/coach boxing more for my friends/significant other than for myself.</i>			
Social Support	3.42	1.06	.80
<i>People say things to make me feel good about boxing/coaching boxing.</i>			
<i>Other people encourage me to box/coach boxing.</i>			
<i>Significant others say things to keep me boxing/coaching boxing.</i>			
<i>I feel that I receive support from significant others about my boxing/coaching boxing.</i>			

A significant multivariate effects difference was found, Wilk's $\Lambda = .838$, $F(7, 125) = 3.46$, $p < .05$, indicating significant differences exist on SCM measures among coaches and boxers. Univariate analyses displayed that coaches ($M = 4.56$, $SD = .56$) were significantly more committed to the sport than boxers ($M = 4.32$, $SD = .61$), $F(1, 153) = 4.75$, $p = .03$; and coaches ($M = 4.56$, $SD = .52$) were more personally invested than boxers ($M = 3.99$, $SD = .70$), $F(1, 134) = 19.57$, $p = .00$. No other significant differences were found on any measure of the SCM (see Table 3).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for SCM.

Comparison	Sport		Involvement		Involvement		Personal		Social		Social			
	Commitment		Enjoyment		Alternatives		Opportunities		Investment		Constraints		Support	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Role														
Coach	4.56*	.56	4.77	.43	2.96	.96	4.55	.51	4.56*	.52	2.04	1.07	3.41	1.17
Boxer	4.32*	.61	4.74	.45	2.90	.86	4.45	.67	3.99*	.70	2.13	.95	3.43	1.02

Note: *Significant difference at .05 level.

After finding significant sport commitment differences among coaches and boxers, the decision was made to statistically control for those differences to best analyze H2. Therefore, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted using sport commitment as the covariate. Levene's test was insignificant ($p > .05$), revealing the equality of variance assumption across the two groups was met. Results from the ANCOVA indicated no significant purchase intention differences across coaches and boxers, $F(1, 92) = .400, p = .529$ (see Table 4).

Table 4. Analysis of Covariance for Purchase Intentions and Sport Commitment as Covariate.

	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η_p^2
Main Effect			
Role	.400	.529	.004
Covariate			
Sport Commitment	.347	.558	.004

Note: No significant purchase intention difference across coaches and boxers.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study analyzed the commitment of club level, intercollegiate coaches and boxers. The SCM and all of its associated constructs were measured in addition to future purchase intentions of boxing equipment. Extant literature on commitment has largely overlooked this emerging area of sport, with this being the first empirical work in the area to examine commitment and purchase intention differences across sport roles.

Over the past decade participation in club sports has skyrocketed in the United States (Pennington, 2008), with intercollegiate boxing among the sports experiencing a surge in popularity on campuses across the country (Bachman, 2015). Sparked by a new association driven to restore the glory of the once heralded sport, organizers hope to migrate from its commonly referenced dead sport title (Chase, 2015). Naturally, club boxing organizations will need committed constituents to fulfill objectives (Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004; Vail, 2007), and those individuals will need to purchase equipment to advance the sport forward.

To that end, the commitment to boxing among the sport's current group of intercollegiate constituents is high. These results indicate both boxers and coaches are likely to continue their participation in the sport (Carpenter & Coleman, 1998; Scanlan et al., 1993). Further, since commitment can represent resistance to change, the construct

is important to the future of the sport with respect to participation frequency and purchase behaviors (Petty et al., 1995). Taken in conjunction with the reported increased participant interest at various college boxing clubs across the country (Bachman, 2015), efforts should be aimed at furthering existing commitments, and generating interest and commitment among a new group of participants.

Hypothesis 1 was supported in part, as coaches did not report greater scores than boxers on all measures of the SCM. However, they were slightly more committed ($M = 4.56$; $M = 4.32$) and personally invested ($M = 4.56$; $M = 3.99$) than their boxing counterparts. Although these results would need to be directly examined in a future longitudinal study, previous research indicates that commitment increases over time (Carpenter & Coleman, 1998; Carpenter & Scanlan, 1993) along with the probability of future participation (Casper, 2007). To that end, it could be that the commitment of boxing coaches is elevated because of their perpetual desire to continue participation in the sport after their competitive playing days have passed (Schinke et al., 1995). This finding provides some precursory quantitative evidence of the commitment differences among coaches and athletes, and within this setting, would seemingly support the anecdotal evidence that many of intercollegiate boxing's current coaches are former boxers themselves.

On the contrary, it should be noted that it is also possible that the coaches' commitment did not increase over time. Rather, they are simply more motivated than the boxers because they have always been more motivated. Due to the nature of cross-sectional survey research, specifically the collection of data at a single point in time, comparisons of commitment among coaches and participants over time were not possible. However, in the future they certainly could be. In fact, a study designed in this manner would advance the literature as a previous study on coaches exclusively, found that their commitment did not change significantly over one year (Raedeke, 2004).

Coaches were also found to be significantly more personally invested than boxers. This result indicates that coaches perceived they contributed more money and dedicated greater time to the sport than boxers. Intuitively, this makes sense at any level of sport – as coaches are the leaders of teams, developers of game plans, providers of knowledge, etc. All of these tasks require greater time preparation than for a boxer who only shows up to train. Coaches also perceive they spend more money than boxers on the sport. It could be in some situations that coaches do provide more resources than boxers. As such, it would be expected that coaches spend more on

fees, mitts, heavy bags and other equipment that boxers may feel less inclined to expend personal monies on.

Equipment purchase intentions across the two roles were also analyzed, as previous examinations of the concept were based almost exclusively upon skill level of participants (Casper, 2007; Casper et al., 2008). After controlling for sport commitment differences among coaches and boxers, no purchase intention differences were observed between the two groups. Therefore, H2 was not supported. This result comes in contrast to Casper (2007), who found that greater skilled tennis players displayed elevated intentions to purchase equipment over their lower skilled counterparts.

Above all, the role difference between coaches and boxers at the intercollegiate club level may not suffice as a segmentation variable to distinguish future purchase intentions of sporting equipment. In this setting where participants and coaches both need to make purchases (e.g., gloves, mitts, etc.), the intentions were high ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.24$). Perhaps in part, this finding supports the anecdotal evidence that club sports are primarily self-supported (Bachman, 2015; Pennington, 2008).

The present study advances the literature on the sport commitment of club level intercollegiate coaches and participants. Prior to the present study, within the realm of club sports, commitment to the sport and differences across roles were largely overlooked. Though this level of competition lacks the glamour of major intercollegiate athletics (Pennington, 2008), club level sports are indeed a significant component of the American college student's life and merits continued exploration. Results from these analyses have the potential to improve the conceptual understanding of the commitment of coaches and participants involved with this level of sport.

Sport commitment is critical to the sustainability of sport organizations and takes on even greater significance for upstart club level associations like the USIBA. Those with a vested interest in the future of a sport organization (or sport) should pay close attention to the commitment of these stakeholders as the results have the potential to influence present and future outcomes. Within this particular club level boxing association, coaches were more committed and personally invested, a finding that illuminates the need for further exploration of this topic across additional settings (e.g., professional sport, youth sport, sanctioned intercollegiate sports, etc.).

Finally, club sports are typically self-supported and necessitate that constituents invest resources to purchase equipment and other items. For other club sport organizations, this study shows how committed coaches and boxers are willing to invest

resources to continue participation, at an equal level. Further, both parties displayed a high level of equipment purchase intentions. Although no differences were found among the two groups, a potential equipment partner for the organization should feel comfortable these constituent groups will continue to purchase products.

Limitations and Future Research

As with any empirical study, the current work has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, only coaches and boxers of one club level intercollegiate sport were examined. In a similar vein, data were only collected from one college boxing association, not both. As such, the data gathered from this association's boxing membership should not be accepted as representative of the NCBA. However, it stands to be noted that many programs have dual membership. Second, because sport commitment can change over time (Carpenter & Coleman, 1998; Carpenter & Scanlan, 1993), the expressed commitment of each study participant may not be representative of his or her commitment in years to come. Because of this fact, longitudinal research is necessary to provide the most accurate depiction of an individual's sport commitment.

Regarding future research, since it was determined that coaches were slightly more committed than boxers, the factors that contribute to the differences in commitment among these two should be explored further. Noting that commitment is comprised of thinking and emotions (Casper, 2007), insight into these specific antecedents might help identify why volunteer coaches support a sport they typically receive minimal compensation or recognition from, along with the perceptions of boxers who receive virtually no media attention. Depending upon the scope and design of such a work, the results may have the potential to aid in the recruitment and retention of club sport coaches and participants.

Generally, fan support for boxing and other club level intercollegiate sports should also be examined. Studies of this scope may shed light on the preferences of those attending and supporting sports at this level. Results of these works have the potential to aid in the future improvement of attendance, consumer interests, and the marketing activities associated with this level of sporting competition.

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