

The variables that explain loyalty in non-profit karate organisations

Authors' Contribution:

- A Study Design
- B Data Collection
- C Statistical Analysis
- D Manuscript Preparation
- E Funds Collection

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Abstract

Background and Study Aim:

Despite society's growing interest in sports, the total membership of federations is the same as ten years ago. This study aims to know about the principal factors that influence the "loyalty" of Spanish karate federation members.

Material and Methods:

From a population of 72,910 members of karate federations a sample of 629 individuals was obtained, with a sampling error of 3.97 a confidence level of 95.5% and $p = 0.5$; $q = 0.5$. The data obtained were collected from 11 of Spain's 19 regional federations (71% are men and 29% women, all of them members of karate federations). The largest group is aged between 45 and 64, a majority of whom have been members for more than 20 years.

Part I: literature review. This work makes an in-depth exploratory of over one hundred relevant. Part II: original research). A correlational study based on a survey of sportsmen who are members of Spanish karate federations included the variables that can influence the fidelity of the karate federation. Each of the indicators has followed a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

Results:

All loyalty indicators show an average above 4.10, although with a high standard deviation. All loyalty items are directly related (at a significance level of $p < 0.01$) with all indicators of other empirical variables (perceived quality, commitment, trust, satisfaction and happiness).

Conclusions:

One of the novelties of this study is the consideration of happiness as a strategic variable. This study shows that it is not enough to just be a member of a federation, since members need to be happy and feel satisfied with the federation if their loyalty is to be maintained and improved and even result in recommendations to potential sportsmen and women. Another of the innovations in this paper is its field of study, namely loyalty in sports governing bodies.

Keywords:

commitment • happiness • perceived quality • personal satisfaction • trust

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Sport – activities or games, usually involving physical effort or skill. Reasons for engagement in sports include pleasure, competition, and/or financial reward.

Karate – activities in which participants learn self-defence mainly through the use of hand-to-hand combat. Judo involves throwing an opponent to the ground while karate (which includes kung fu and tae kwon do) involves kicking and punching an opponent.

Personal satisfaction – the individual's experience of a sense of fulfilment of a need or want and the quality or state of being satisfied.

Athletes – individuals who have developed skills, physical stamina and strength or participants in sports or other physical activities.

Happiness – highly pleasant emotion characterized by outward manifestations of gratification; joy.

INTRODUCTION

Loyalty is one of the principal objectives of marketing and is sometimes even equated to the concept of marketing itself [1]. Loyalty is a variable that has been extensively researched in the literature of both psychology and marketing and many authors have studied the variables that explain loyalty. There are, however, three variables that are repeated in many proposals and models: satisfaction; trust; and commitment [2-5]. Perceived quality is another of the variables that most commonly appear in the literature on consumer loyalty, and it is included by authors such as [6-8]. In addition to these four variables that are typically studied by the literature, this article includes happiness – a new variable which has been shown in recent studies to influence both satisfaction and loyalty [9-11]. Most authors who study loyalty from a marketing viewpoint do so from the perspective of behavioural loyalty, i.e. repeating the exchange relationship [2, 12, 5, 9]. Many of them also study loyalty from the perspective of attitudinal loyalty [2, 13].

There are also authors who study resistance to change [4, 14] and word-of-mouth [15, 7, 16] as consequences of loyalty.

Another of the innovative aspects of this work is the field of study, specifically, loyalty in sports governing bodies. Spanish sport's governing bodies, known as federations, are unusual organisations in that they are private non-profits but also, in many cases, perform functions typically carried out by the Public Administration, i.e. governmental or other public services. They thus collaborate with such services. Sport's governing bodies operate as mixed organisations, being both public and private in nature. Additionally, in Spain, it is the civil service or some other public body that has the last word as regards recognition of these sport's governing bodies – another aspect in which they differ from other associations [17].

The purpose of sports governing bodies is to promote and advance the sport [18], and, although they are private organisations, it is the Public Administration that legitimises and endows them as bodies for the development of high-level and high-performance sport. It is the Public Administration that provides these organisations with their principal financial resources in order to improve Spain's performance at the international level [19].

There is the same number of licensed members of such bodies or federations as ten years ago. Member numbers have indeed grown over the last two years, but when the timeline is extended backwards, there has been hardly any change overall (see table 1).

Despite the general population's growing interest in physical activity and sports, there has not been a proportional increase in the number of members of non-profit sport organisations [19]. For-profit sport organisations have made a very strong entry into this market and are attracting more and more consumers. Non-profit sport organisations, however, are not taking on this increasing competition [20, 21].

Although sport's governing bodies are non-profits, they exist to promote and popularise their sport, and that implies that one of their principal aims is to increase their memberships. This paper can therefore provide information that is especially useful to members of the Governing Boards of these federations that are aiming to improve their chances of increasing the number of licensed members by implementing marketing strategies [22].

In this context, this work aims to make an especially in-depth study of a key variable that may be one of the principal influences on the statistics – member loyalty. The non-profit

Table 1. Evolution of number of licensed members (2011-2021).

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Spanish Population	46.667.175	46.818.216	46.727.890	46.512.199	46.449.565	46.440.099	46.527.039	46.934.632	47.332.614	47.398.695	47.432.805
Enrolment	3.548.118	3.498.848	3.394.635	3.390.459	3.504.306	3.586.133	3.761.498	3.866.867	3.945.510	3.823.205	3.628.188
Percentage	8%	7%	7%	7%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%

Source: Statistical Yearbook for Sport 2022 (2022).

organisations have been unwilling to use marketing tools for fear of being identified with for-profit organisations [23]. Although currently such prejudices against marketing have rather been abandoned, and many of these sports governing bodies do use marketing instruments. In many cases a lack of marketing may be due to a lack of knowledge or experience of marketing, and/or a lack of training.

One of the new developments in this study is an in-depth treatment of loyalty as a variable in the case of sports governing bodies. Loyalty in its most general sense has been extensively studied and reviewed in the literature, and there are many theses that link it directly to marketing [24, 25, 1]. However, the more the field of loyalty is narrowed down, the less literature there is on the matter.

Concept of loyalty and its main antecedents

Loyalty has been conceptualised by various authors in the fields of both psychology and marketing. Many authors have made in-depth studies of this concept from the marketing perspective, and all agree that loyalty comprises all those behaviours involving same-brand purchasing repeatedly, both now and in the future [25, 26, 12], despite situational influences and marketing efforts that have the potential to cause switching behaviour [26].

Loyalty is made up of two concepts which combine to give the variable the greatest explanatory power. These two concepts are: behavioural aspects or purchase intentions; and attitudinal loyalty [5, 27]. Behavioural loyalty has been identified as customers' willingness to repurchase the product or the services, and to maintain a relationship with the supplier or service provider. Attitudinal loyalty, however, is the consumer's level of commitment toward a product/brand and their promotional attitude towards the supplier or service provider [25, 12].

By focusing on loyalty in the field studied in this paper, i.e. sport, it becomes clear that it is more difficult to conceptualise loyalty when the subject is services than when discussing products. This is partly because, in the case of services, it is impossible to separate the consumer from the person providing the service, and this participation by the client in the interpersonal component of services – their production and delivery

– adds emotional dimensions to loyalty [28]. The individual's underlying willingness to repurchase, together with evaluation of the alternatives, is inseparable from the notion of loyalty [29].

This study aims is knowledge about the principal factors that influence the "loyalty" of Spanish karate federation members.

PART I. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent decades, the literature on loyalty has multiplied and we have found many studies that aim to explain it. These ideas are summarised in Table 2 and the sections below, which explain the principal antecedents of this variable.

Perceived quality as an antecedent of loyalty.

Service quality is defined as the discrepancy between a consumer's prior expectations for a given service and his or her perception regarding the purchase or services [15, 32]. This implies that, for the same perception, the higher the consumer's expectations, the lower the perceived quality will be [15].

The fact that services are intangible and heterogeneous means that clients perceive the exchange relationship to be riskier, with credibility being one of the attributes that is given most weight when evaluating perceived quality [47]. These are some of the strategies related to service quality that may assist in creating and maintaining consumer loyalty: speed of delivery; efficiency; sympathy; ease of contact; frequency of communication [28].

Many authors have confirmed, through empirical studies, that there is a significant and positive correlation between perceived service quality and loyalty [6, 48, 8, 49-51]. Then again, there are models that include satisfaction, trust [13] and commitment [52] as mediating variables between perceived quality and loyalty. Therefore, the first research question posed in this paper is the following: Is Perceived Quality an antecedent of Loyalty?

Commitment as an antecedent of loyalty

Commitment is understood to be the implicit or explicit promise of a long-term relationship between the parties [24, 53]. Simplifying the equation, one can consider commitment

Table 2. Definitions of “loyalty” and other empirical variables of this work in the literature review.

Construct	Definition	Year	Author(s)
Loyalty	“To re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product/ service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour”	1999	Oliver RL [26]
	(. . .) “the willingness of average business customers to repurchase the service and the product of the service provider and to maintain a relationship with the service provider/ supplier” Attitudinal loyalty “the level of customer’s psychological attachments and attitudinal advocacy towards the service provider/supplier”	2001	Chaundhuri & Holbrook [12]
		2007	Rauyruen & Miller [5]
	“Loyalty is a complex multidimensional variable with little consensus concerning the specific dimensions and how they interact to determine a behavioural outcome”	2016	Pressgrove & Mckeever [30]
Perceived quality	“Perceived Quality is the consumer’s judgment about an entity’s overall excellence or superiority”	1987	Zeithaml VA [31]
	“It is a form of attitude, related but not equivalent to satisfaction, and results from a comparison of expectations with perceptions of performance”	1988	Parasuraman et al. [15]
	“The consumer’s perception of overall service quality results from a comparison between expectations and perceptions of the different components of service. With perceptions of services held fixed, the higher the expectations, the lower the perceived quality”	1993	Boulding et al. [32]
Commitment	“An enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship”	1993	Moorman et al. [33]
	“An exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it”	1994	Morgan & Hunt [34]
	“The degree of the membership’s psychological attachment to the association”	2000	Gruen et al. [35]
Trust	“A key condition in the long-term development of relationships. High levels of trust are said to reduce uncertainty and diminish perceptions of risk in a relationship”	1994	Morgan & Hunt[34]
	“The willingness of the average consumer (user/donor) to rely on the ability of the brand (company/organization) to perform its stated function”	2001	Chaudhuri & Halbrook [12]
	“Trust as having two components: performance or credibility trust and benevolence trust”	2018	Siradeshmukh et al. [36]
Satisfaction	“Summary psychological state resulting when the emotion surrounding disconfirmed expectations is coupled with the consumer’s prior feelings about the consumption experience”	1980	Oliver RL [37]
	“Satisfaction is consequently related to providing what is being sought to the point where fulfilment is reached”	2000	Andreassen [38]
	“Satisfaction is defined as the contentment of the customer with respect to his or her prior experience”	2014	Sanz-Blas et al. [39]
Happiness	Happiness has been identified with the quality of life. Happy people tend to be prosperous in their lives, both externally and internally	1997	Veenhoven R [40]
		2002	Diener & Lucas [41]
	Happiness is a psychological state that any normal person would like to feel for as long as possible, taking into account the sensations it brings	2008	Vasconcelas AF [42]
	Happiness is considered as a multifaceted variable that on the one hand is composed of positive affection, absence of negative affection and judgments about satisfaction with life	2002	Diener et al. [43]
		2020	Núñez-Barriopedro et al. [11]
	Happiness is the positive psychological state derived from a pleasant, delicious and satisfying experience	2005	Lyubomirsky et al. [44]
		2008	Ahuyja A [45]
	2017	Jang et al. [46]	

to be the motivation that pushes a party to trust a given company [33], or to be the psychological attachment to the organisation [35]. Commitment implies the conviction by both parties that maintaining the relationship will be more beneficial than ending it [53]. All definitions of commitment agree that there is a psychological component (bond, link, promise or dedication) and a motivational component (maintaining the relationship; repeated purchasing; remaining in the organisation) [54].

People experience commitment in different ways, i.e. commitment is multi-dimensional [54]. According to certain authors, commitment may be cognitive or affective [55, 5]; affective commitment has especially been studied from the employee's point of view [56]. Other authors, however, consider that commitment typically has three dimensions: affective; normative; and continuance [57, 4, 54, 58].

The literature includes many works that model attitudinal loyalty with commitment [25, 59, 4, 5, 54, 51, 60]. One of the potential consequences of commitment that is taken into account is word of mouth, which is a very important aspect of attitudinal loyalty [25]. In other cases, resistance to change is very important, [59] as is intention to repurchase [5, 54].

Commitment is a very important ingredient for success in a relationship [34] and is also a key variable in marketing [2]. Commitment is very closely related to reciprocity, loyalty, and rejecting alternatives. All these variables are related to the heart of the meaning of relationship [61]. A commitment by both parties acts as a powerful sign of quality in the exchange relationship. This is the first step in building trust in the relationship and influencing the development of social norms that will regulate future exchanges [62]. Therefore, the second research question posed in this paper is the following: Is commitment an antecedent of loyalty?

Trust as an antecedent of loyalty

Many authors agree that trust is one of the basic ingredients for success in relationships [24, 33, 63]. Trust in an organisation is based on the consumer's certainty of the quality and integrity of the service offered [33, 34, 2, 3]. Trust is the belief by one of the parties that the actions the other party takes will necessarily satisfy his/her needs [64]. In relationships between the consumer and companies,

the psychological benefits of security and trust are more important than special treatment or the social benefits arising from that relationship [65]. Trust is an involvement in a process, which has been well thought-out and carefully considered, while brand attachment or affect is spontaneous, more immediate, and less reasoned [12]. Trust, like commitment may have both affective and cognitive dimensions [66]. Many studies defend trust as one of the direct antecedents of loyalty and/or purchase intention [2, 12, 3, 67, 51].

Some authors consider that trust is a mediating variable of commitment and loyalty [34, 3]; in fact, for [3], empirical results do not confirm the hypothesis that trust has a direct influence on loyalty. Authors [34], even reach the conclusion that there are differences in weight between these two variables (commitment and trust), depending on consumer type (consumers having association-oriented profiles and others having a weaker, more functional profile). A special model is that of [13], who consider trust to be a mediating variable between perceived quality and satisfaction, which in turn influences attitudinal loyalty. In another paper, Anderson and Swaminathan [68] found that the positive influence of satisfaction on loyalty is moderated by trust. Therefore, the third research question posed in this paper is the following: Is Trust an antecedent of Loyalty?

Happiness as an antecedent of loyalty

Happiness is a psychological state that any normal person would like to feel for as long as possible, given the sensations it brings [45]. Likewise, happiness has been defined as the positive psychological state derived from a pleasant, delicious and satisfying experience [44, 46, 69]. Happiness can be seen from two perspectives, one that refers to a specific moment and the other to an imperishable duration in time [70]. The first results from a particular positive situation or experience, while the second is a generally positive psychological state that is cumulative over time [40].

Happiness has been identified in many occasions with quality of life, in fact, if most of a population is happy, that population's quality of life will be good [72, 41]. Happy people tend to be prosperous in their lives, both externally and internally [71].

According to numerous studies, happiness and loyalty are positively related [71-73]. These studies

empirically confirm that both concrete loyalty and abstract loyalty influence happiness. In fact, the optimal balance between one and the other will contribute to maximizing overall happiness. Customer satisfaction does not imply happiness, but in order to lead the customer to loyalty one must seek his happiness [74, 75] rather than merely concentrating on customer satisfaction – which is what has been pursued for the past 50 years [76].

Happiness is considered to be a multifaceted variable that is composed of positive affection, absence of negative affection and judgments about satisfaction with life [43, 11]. Therefore, the fourth research question posed in this paper is the following: Is happiness an antecedent of loyalty?

Satisfaction as an antecedent of loyalty

General satisfaction is a general assessment based on all the purchases and the consumers' experience of using a product or service [77, 78]. Another definition of satisfaction is customer's emotional or sentimental reaction to the perceived differences between expectations and actual implementation [79, 37]. This definition may cause confusion between satisfaction and perceived quality, but these variables are different. The principal difference is that satisfaction is a type of attitude, a perception over the long term, while perceived quality measures a specific transaction [15].

Many authors consider that satisfaction is an antecedent to loyalty [79-83]. And this relationship between satisfaction and loyalty is positive [84]. The influence satisfaction has on loyalty is more complex than it appears [85, 14].

Satisfaction is the most emotional antecedent to loyalty and purchase intentions [5]. Satisfaction is related to meeting the consumer's needs, and when these needs are fulfilled repeatedly, it is possible to lead the customer to feel an emotional bond, which also constitutes commitment [86]. Therefore, the fifth research question posed in this paper is the following: Is Satisfaction an antecedent of Loyalty?

Sport organization loyalty

The sports industry generates billions of dollars; a better understanding of the relationship between the product and its consumers is thus a key factor for the marketing managers of sport organisations. Maintaining relationships over time, independently of whatever factors may

arise, is also of key importance. Loyalty therefore becomes a crucial element in maintaining relationships over time and thus an element on which marketing managers must focus [87].

Sport organisations include all those bodies that pursue sports-related activities. They may therefore be companies that offer goods (sports clothes, sports apparatus and materials, etc), services (personal training; broadcasting games on television, etc), ideas (consequences of belonging to a club or taking part in a sport: slimming; giving members an identity) or a combination of all of these [88]. The way loyalty is explained may vary as a function of the type of sports product in question and also of the different types of consumer – such as those attending events, those watching, listening to or reading the media, those purchasing products with licenses, etc. [7].

Sports products have unique aspects that affect the basic conditions for selling them: they are products that are inherently uncertain; they are inconsistent and open to subjective interpretations; they take place under highly competitive conditions; and marketing managers for these products do not have full control over the marketing mix [89]. It is also true, however, that it has been shown empirically that members of sport organisations tend to behave, in their sport and its money-making activities in the same way as in other areas of consumption [14].

It is undoubtedly true that all types of sport organisations aspire to win the loyalty of the sports consumer. The literature includes various examples of the variables that explain this loyalty. Satisfaction and perceived value, both for the spectators and participants in sporting activities, significantly influence consumer intentions [90-94]. In addition to these two variables, some investigators have suggested the following to explain loyalty to a specific sports service: frequency of attendance; brand image; and service attributes [95].

Resistance to change, being a component of loyalty, has also been studied in sports literature. The influence of satisfaction and perceived value on resistance to change have been confirmed, but commitment does not exert a significant influence [14].

Within sports literature, much research has been done into consumer loyalty to sports teams. In this

field, the most highly valued variables are: trust in the team [7, 87]; attachment to a given team [96, 87]; brand image [97, 87]; and commitment [7].

In the world of sport, the keys are ongoing research into training practices, development of these practices, and innovations to them. Applying this concept to sports management, the development plans of the leaders of sports companies should work with this same innovation and experimentation in order to achieve successful results [98, 99].

Non-profit organizations loyalty

Despite these organisations' growing interest in marketing, the literature in this field is considerably less abundant than for business organisations. However, given the current competitiveness between organisations of this type, marketing does occur, and the studies of this marketing are a necessity for this type of organisation [23]. This group of organisations is characterised by the divergence of opinions and concepts and it is made up of a set of very heterogeneous enterprises [100]. Spanish sports federations are classified as non-profit organisations, and specifically are mutual-benefit non-profit organisations [100]. In mutual-benefit organisations, the members are direct beneficiaries of the actions taken by the organisation [100]. Thus, within the broad range of non-profit organisations, we limit our field to mutual-benefit organisations and organisations that have similarities with them. In the non-profit sector, loyalty is one of the most important attitudinal variables in maintaining relationships [101]. The literature on non-business organisations discusses the same variables as are used in other fields, such as satisfaction [102, 30, 103], service quality [102, 3, 91, 103], commitment and trust [35, 30, 104]. Regarding the public sector, Tan et al. [103] propose a model for loyalty in public libraries, with the aim of extrapolating this model to all non-profit organisations. However, the study determines that service quality does not significantly influence loyalty, while the service experience variable does indeed have a significant influence on loyalty and satisfaction.

Research has been carried out into the influence of commitment on the following variables: membership retention, exchange-based participation, and cooperatively based coproduction. In the field of professional associations, commitment

can be broken down into three types: affective; normative; and continuance. The affective dimension reflects the individual's desire to maintain the relationship; this is an emotional bond to the organisation. Normative commitment refers to the feeling of obligation towards the organisation, and the continuance dimension reflects the perceived sacrifice involved in ending the relationship with the service offered by the organisation. These three dimensions are usually known as "I want to maintain the relationship" "I should maintain the relationship" and "I have to maintain the relationship" [35].

We have found some studies of non-profit sport organisations that focus on loyalty [105-109], for example, the study by [110] which examines the variables that influence consumer intentions regarding Mercer University's football programme and its followers. Loyalty is explained by identity, and in turn that variable is explained by attitudes and normative beliefs.

The degree of innovation in an organisation is an important characteristic that is inherently connected to how willing that organisation is to change [19].

PART II. ORIGINAL RESEARCH

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In Spain there are a total of 66 federations in all sports disciplines. For the present work, the discipline of karate has been chosen among all the Spanish sports federations because it is an outstanding case due to the low annual growth of membership numbers [9].

The data have been obtained through primary sources by means of a survey sent to the autonomous Spanish karate federations. From a population of 72910 members of karate federations [10] a sample of 629 individuals was obtained, with a sampling error of 3.97 a confidence level of 95.5% and $p = 0.5$; $q = 0.5$. For convenience, snowball sampling was used, since the members responded voluntarily and distributed the survey to their colleagues. The data obtained were collected from 11 of Spain's 19 regional federations. The fieldwork was carried out during the first quarter of 2019. Of the sample, 71% are men and 29% women, all of them members of karate federations. The sample includes individuals of different ages, although the largest group is aged

between 45 and 64, a majority of whom have been members for more than 20 years.

Internal consistency

Each of the indicators was evaluated based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) (Table 3).

Statistical analyses

The data were analysed using IBM SPSS ver. 26 [111]. To detect significant relationships,

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated [112]. A p-value <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

One of the detail objectives of this work is to find out which variables are related to the “loyalty” of karate federation members in Spain. An analysis is therefore made of the correlation between details indicators of “loyalty” and each details indicators of the following constructs: “perceived quality”, “commitment”, “trust”, “satisfaction” and “happiness”.

Table 3. Variables and question as identification criterion.

Construct	Detail of construct	Question (identification criterion)
Loyalty	Loyalty	I will remain federated in my federation in the future
	Recommendation	I would recommend other people who do karate to federate in my federation.
	preference other recommendation	Even if a friend recommends another karate federation to me, my preference for my federation will not change.
	practical reasons	I am federated for practical reasons
	Motivated	I am motivated to remain federated in the future
	preference other options	Even though I know that there could be other options to federate, I will remain federated in my federation
	activities future participation	I will continue to participate in my federation’s activities
	activities other options	I will continue to carry out activities in my federation rather than in another federation
Perceived quality	activities efficiency	The activities of my federation (championships, courses, trainings, exams, etc.) are developed in an efficient way
	nice atmosphere	My federation provides a pleasant environment for the activities it organizes
	Price	I understand that my federation charges a fair price for the activities in which I participate
	employee effectiveness	The employees of my federation effectively attend to my queries
	global quality	The services and activities offered by my global federation I consider to be of quality
	Expectations	My federation has behaved the way I expected in the activities in which I have participated
Commitment	Value	My federation has great personal significance to me
	Feeling	I feel emotionally attached to my federation
	Belonging	I feel a strong sense of belonging to my federation
	Proud	I’m proud to participate in my federation
Trust	Commitment	My federation is committed to the federations to which it lends its activities
	Trust	My federation is honest with all federated
	Concern	My federation cares about the federations to which they lend their activities
Satisfaction	good be federated	I think it’s good for me to be federated.
	happy be federated	I am happy to be federated in my federation
	Satisfaction	I am satisfied with the activities/services offered by my federation
Happiness	happiness (me)	Participating in the activities of my federation makes me happy
	happiness (they)	The federated are happy when they participate in the activities of my federation
	fee is worthwhile	The fee I paid to participate in the activities my federation has been worthwhile

RESULTS

The variables have a Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of over 0.8, which shows internal consistency. Specifically, for "loyalty" it is 0.910, "perceived quality" 0.915, "commitment" 0.951, "confidence" 0.950, "satisfaction" 0.827, and for "happiness" it is 0.892 (Table 4). All "loyalty" details indicators show an average above 4.10, although with a high standard deviation. Thus, members of Spanish karate federations quite agree with the statements "I will remain a member of my federation in the future", "I would recommend other

people who do karate to join my federation", "Even if a friend recommends another karate federation to me, my preference for my federation will not change", "I am a federation member for practical reasons", "I am motivated to remain a federation member in the future", "Even though I know that there could be other options to membership, I will remain a member of my federation", "I will continue to participate in my federation's activities", "I will continue to carry out activities in my federation rather than in another federation" (Table 4).

Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha and descriptive statistics.

Construct	Detail of construct	Average	Standard Deviation	N	Cronbach's Alpha
Loyalty	Loyalty	4.48	0.885	627	0.910
	Recommendation	4.22	1.084	627	
	preference other recommendation	4.12	1.143	626	
	practical reasons	4.35	0.906	623	
	Motivated	4.25	1.137	626	
	preference other options	4.14	1.131	625	
	activities future participation	4.34	0.992	626	
	activities other options	4.10	1.083	625	
Perceived quality	activities efficiency	3.90	1.166	628	0.915
	nice atmosphere	3.99	1.144	628	
	Price	3.95	1.208	626	
	employee effectiveness	4.04	1.158	627	
	global quality	4.02	1.100	624	
	Expectations	3.93	1.160	625	
Commitment	Value	3.57	1.316	627	0.951
	Feeling	3.31	1.403	624	
	Belonging	3.43	1.361	628	
	Proud	3.84	1.263	627	
Trust	Commitment	3.94	1.202	627	0.950
	Trust	3.79	1.271	624	
	Concern	3.79	1.250	625	
Satisfaction	good be federated	4.58	0.804	627	0.828
	happy be federated	4.20	1.104	628	
	Satisfaction	3.92	1.165	626	
Happiness	happiness (me)	3.81	1.235	624	0.892
	happiness (they)	3.79	1.088	624	
	fee is worthwhile	3.89	1.218	626	

As far as “perceived quality” is concerned, the average rating is around 4, so the karate federation members quite agree with statements about all the dimensions of “perceived quality”, specifically regarding “activities efficiency”, “nice atmosphere”, “price”, “employee effectiveness”, “global quality” and even in “expectations” (Table 4). Regarding “commitment”, they are more indifferent, especially for “I feel emotionally attached to my federation”, “I feel a strong sense of belonging to my federation” and “My federation has great personal significance to me” with an average score of 3.31, 3.43 and 3.57 and a high standard deviation. However, in the case of “I’m proud to participate in my federation” the average is 3.84, so the degree of agreement is quite high (Table 4).

The average evaluations of the degree of “satisfaction” are also quite high, even for the indicator “I think it’s good for me to be a member” it is 4.58. In relation to “happiness” the average evaluations

are around 3.8, so karate federation members are quite in agreement with “Participating in the activities of my federation makes me happy”, “The federation members are happy when they participate in the activities of my federation” and “The fee I paid to participate in the activities of my federation has been worthwhile” (Table 4).

All “loyalty” detailed indices are directly related to all “perceived quality” detailed indices at a significance level of $p < 0.01$. The direct relationship between “expectation”, “global quality”, “nice atmosphere” and “activities efficiency” and the different “loyalty” detailed indices is very strong or strong, with the exception of “practical reason”, for which the relationship is weak. The lowest ($r = 0.120$) between “practical reasons” and “nice atmosphere”. The highest correlation between “global quality” and “expectations” $r = 0.814$, (Table 5).

Table 5. Correlation coefficients between “loyalty” and “perceived quality” detail of construct indicators (** $p < 0.01$).

Loyalty and perceived quality indicators		Indicators (code)												
		loyalty detail of construct								perceived quality detail of construct				
code	name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	Loyalty	1												
2	recommendation	.719**	1											
3	preference other recommendation	.606**	.720**	1										
4	practical reasons	.207**	.174**	.174**	1									
5	Motivated	.658**	.758**	.609**	.236**	1								
6	preference other options	.691**	.759**	.778**	.198**	.741**	1							
7	activities future participation	.632**	.669**	.540**	.232**	.640**	.627**	1						
8	activities other options	.604**	.688**	.634**	.174**	.638**	.734**	.663**	1					
9	activities efficiency	.530**	.681**	.573**	.160**	.576**	.612**	.581**	.635**	1				
10	nice atmosphere	.543**	.697**	.601**	.120**	.619**	.638**	.600**	.642**	.801**	1			
11	Price	.512**	.625**	.498**	.169**	.543**	.575**	.541**	.525**	.618**	.651**	1		
12	employee effectiveness	.548**	.648**	.547**	.258**	.618**	.581**	.592**	.541**	.657**	.671**	.580**	1	
13	global quality	.594**	.731**	.590**	.190**	.649**	.647**	.646**	.664**	.747**	.779**	.654**	.758**	1
14	Expectations	.553**	.684**	.606**	.183**	.607**	.644**	.603**	.617**	.733**	.770**	.631**	.724**	.814**

All “loyalty” detailed indices are directly related to all “commitment” detailed indices at a significance level of $p < 0.01$. The highest correlation refers to “preference other options” and “proud”

$r = 0.671$, the lowest ($r = 0.193$) between “practical reasons” and “value”, (Table 6). Detailed indicators of the “commitment” variable are strongly correlated with each other (Table 7).

Table 6. Correlation coefficients between “loyalty” and “commitment” detail of construct indicators (** $p < 0.01$).

Loyalty	Commitment			
	value	feeling	belonging	proud
loyalty	0.497**	0.466**	0.514**	0.546**
recommendation	0.613**	0.580**	0.623**	0.665**
preference other recommendation	0.579**	0.560**	0.616**	0.605**
practical reasons	0.193**	0.194**	0.212**	0.185**
motivated	0.570**	0.538**	0.583**	0.618**
preference other options	0.636*	0.603*	0.655**	0.671**
activities future participation	0.558**	0.517**	0.544**	0.588**
activities other options	0.591**	0.589**	0.634**	0.653**

Table 7. Correlation coefficients “commitment” indicators detail of construct indicators (** $p < 0.01$).

Variable	Value	Feeling	Belonging
Value	1		
Feeling	0.862**	1	
Belonging	0.837**	0.911**	1
Proud	0.775**	0.784**	0.821**

All “loyalty” detailed indices are directly related to all “trust” detailed indicators at a significance level of $p < 0.01$. The highest correlation refers to “recommendation” and “loyalty” $r = 0.719$, the lowest ($r = 0.169$) between “practical reasons” and “commitment”. However, the relationship between the “practical reasons” indicator (the “loyalty” variable) and all detailed indicators of the “trust” variable is weak, ranging from 0.152 to 0.201 (Table 8). Detailed indicators of the “trust” variable are strongly correlated with each other (Table 9).

All “loyalty” detailed indices are directly related to all “satisfaction” detailed indicators at a significance level of $p < 0.01$. The highest correlation refers to “recommendation” and “happy be federated” $r = 0.823$, the lowest ($r = 0.149$) between “practical reasons” and “happy be federated”. The lowest (weak: ranging from 0.149 to

0.246) relationship between the “practical reasons” indicator (the “loyalty” variable) holds with all detailed indicators of the “satisfaction” variable. (Table 10). Detailed indicators of the “satisfaction” variable are strongly correlated with each other (Table 11).

Again, all “loyalty” detail indicators are directly related to all “happiness” detail indicators at a significance level of $p < 0.01$. The correlation of the “happiness (me)” is slightly stronger than “happiness (they)”. Also the direct correlation of the item “fee is worthwhile” to “loyalty”, is good. However, the relationship between the “practical reasons” indicator (the “loyalty” variable) and all detailed indicators of the “happiness” variable is weak, ranging from 0.176 to 0.198 (Table 12). Detailed indicators of the “happiness” variable are strongly correlated with each other (Table 13).

Table 8. Correlation coefficients between “loyalty” and “trust” detail of construct indicators (**p<0.01).

Loyalty	Trust		
	commitment	Trust	Concern
Loyalty	0.581**	0.536**	0.547**
recommendation	0.717**	0.682**	0.690**
preference other recommendation	0.591**	0.627**	0.600**
practical reasons	0.169**	0.201**	0.152**
motivated	0.642**	0.627**	0.628**
preference other options	0.656*	0.679*	0.667**
activities future participation	0.594**	0.578**	0.557**
activities other options	0.637**	0.633**	0.634**

Table 9. Correlation coefficients “trust” detail of construct indicators (**p<0.01).

Variable	Commitment	Trust
commitment	1	
trust	0.834**	1
concern	0.855**	0.862**

Table 10. Correlation coefficients between “loyalty” and “satisfaction” detail of construct indicators (**p<0.01).

Loyalty	Satisfaction		
	good be federated	happy be federated	Satisfaction
Loyalty	0.546**	0.662**	0.598**
recommendation	0.611**	0.823**	0.756**
preference other recommendation	0.416**	0.678**	0.606**
practical reasons	0.246**	0.149**	0.195**
Motivated	0.651**	0.756**	0.647**
preference other options	0.510**	0.734*	0.674**
activities future participation	0.507**	0.613**	0.602**
activities other options	0.496**	0.655**	0.636**

Table 11. Correlation coefficients between “satisfaction” detail of construct indicators (**p<0.01).

Variable	Good be federated	Happy be federated
good be federated	1	
happy be federated	0.631**	1
Satisfaction	0.509**	0.751**

Table 12. Correlation coefficients between “loyalty” and “happiness” detail of construct indicators (**p<0.01).

Loyalty	Happiness		
	happiness (me)	happiness (they)	fee is worthwhile
Loyalty	0.549**	0.509**	0.559**
recommendation	0.678**	0.650**	0.681**
preference other recommendation	0.553**	0.520**	0.558**
practical reasons	0.198**	0.176**	0.177**
Motivated	0.650**	0.585**	0.644**
preference other options	0.643**	0.595**	0.624**
activities future participation	0.673**	0.587**	0.624**
activities other options	0.661**	0.626**	0.601**

Table 13. Correlation coefficients between “happiness” detail of construct indicators (**p<0.01).

Variable	Happiness (me)	Happiness (they)
happiness (me)	1	
happiness (they)	0.814**	1
fee is worthwhile	0.712**	0.686**

DISCUSSION

One of the innovations of this paper is its field of study, specifically, loyalty in sports governing bodies. Sport’s governing bodies are unusual organizations because, while they are private organizations, they act like public bodies. This specific structure opens new paths of research regarding the loyalty variable within them. The loyalty variable has always been extensively researched in the field of literature of business field and more specifically in the sports field. Nevertheless, there are considerably fewer articles about these non-profit organizations than there are about regular business organizations. The purpose of this paper is to identify, through an extended review of more than one hundred references, the different factors and variables that define loyalty in sports governing bodies that are, to some degree, non-profit in nature.

Sportspeople who are licensed members of sports federations in Spain constitute an important group – in fact, 8% of the whole population [18]. However, over the last 10 years there has been no significant growth in these numbers. If they are to be competitive, the federations and other sports governing bodies must change strategy and discover the needs of their current and

potential clients [86, 19]. This in turn requires an in-depth study of the variables that influence the loyalty of a federation member.

Satisfaction is a crucial element of consumer loyalty; most studies that model loyalty include satisfaction as an explanatory variable, and in practically all cases they demonstrate its positive influence [25, 26, 113, 71, 9]. Despite this, many authors consider that the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty is more complicated than it appears to be [85, 26, 14]; satisfaction has a significant emotional component [5] and this is influenced by the other variables [15, 70, 13, 11]. In many cases, it acts as a mediating variable for other variables [53, 113-115, 10], such as happiness or perceived quality. Perceived quality is clearly connected to satisfaction [16, 116- 118, 60] and both directly and indirectly to loyalty [6, 9]. Similarly, happiness, ability to manage happiness, directly affects satisfaction [12, 10].

We cannot ignore trust and commitment, two variables that are definitely related to each other [63, 2, 62], and are also related to loyalty, especially in the case of non-profit organisations [30, 103, 119, 117] and those that are also sports-related [120, 95]. And we take into

account the two dimensions of both variables: cognitive and affective [55, 5, 68, 56]. This is important because one of our future lines of research could be related to the way in which these variables affect the commitment and trust of members of sports federations; following the lines of research of Hennig-Thurau et al. [3], there are various perspectives that may affect commitment (social, work-related, family-related, etc).

Based on the results of all the "loyalty" items, the members of Spanish karate federations are loyal to their federation, and rate their perceived quality as fairly good for all of its dimensions, and specifically regarding the efficient organization of activities, referred to as activities efficiency, a pleasant environment, referred to as nice atmosphere, price, employee effectiveness, global quality and even with respect to expectations. On the other hand, they are somewhat more indifferent in terms of commitment, although the levels of satisfaction and happiness are also quite high.

One of the objectives of this work is to find out which variables are related to the loyalty of karate federation members in Spain. To this end, based on an in-depth analysis of the literature, an analysis has been carried out of the correlation between loyalty and each of the following constructs: perceived quality, commitment, trust, satisfaction and happiness. In other words, the aim of this work was to answer the question: whether it is possible to manage each of these variables to achieve greater loyalty, or at least to maintain the loyalty of federation members, if a relationship exists. This strategy is due to the fact that, as the members pay yearly fees, it is in a federation's interest to ensure that its sportsmen and women remain loyal and thus prevent loss of market share. In turn, these federations can attract potential athletes to this discipline.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of this study, we can state at a 99% confidence level, that perceived quality, commitment, trust, satisfaction and happiness all directly influence the different dimensions of Karate Federation members' loyalty.

The study also highlights the fact that providing global quality, efficient organization of activities,

a pleasant environment and positive expectations are all key strategies for gaining the loyalty of federation members.

In addition, the greater the commitment and confidence of a federation's members, the more recommendations are generated by that karate federation.

One of the novelties of this study is the consideration of happiness as a strategic variable. The results of this study therefore show that it is not only a matter of being a federation member, since members need to feel happy and satisfied with the federation if their loyalty is to be maintained and improved and even result in recommendations to potential members.

This project has considered the different variables that can influence consumer loyalty. As has been seen from the over 100 relevant bibliographic references provided, the five explanatory variables studied are widely supported in the literature, although in future lines of research a model could be proposed that would explain the loyalty of sportspeople affiliated to non-profit organisations, such as the members of sports federations and other governing bodies in Spain. Research should especially be carried out on how the happiness variable affects loyalty in the Spanish market, since demographic variables have a significant effect on this [120]. Other variables, such as gender, can also affect the way in which variables such as commitment, trust and satisfaction affect loyalty. Although demographic variables do have significant weight, the model could be extrapolated to any other country or region where there are non-profit sports organisations. Comparative data could thus be obtained that would increase our understanding of these matters.

HIGHLIGHTS

One of the highlights of this study is the consideration of happiness as a strategic variable. This study shows that it is not enough to just be a member of a federation, since members need to be happy and feel satisfied with the federation if their loyalty is to be maintained and improved and even result in recommendations to potential sportsmen and women.

Another of the innovations in this paper is its field of study, namely loyalty in sports governing bodies. Sport's governing bodies are unusual organizations because, while they are private organizations, they act like public ones. This specific structure opens new paths of research into the loyalty variable within such organisations.

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