

PEDAGOGY & COACHING

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Identifying advertising language for martial arts via the exploration of differences in communication based on culture and motivations

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Abstract

Background. Studying martial arts and combat sports has gained popularity around the world and the practice incorporates factors such as cultural expectations or norms as well as languages, methodologies, etc. What attracts people to the study and practice of martial arts differs.

Aim. These factors make us realize the complexity of training, but also raise our curiosity about what differences and/or similarities there may be in leadership, communication, and motivations within the field of martial arts geographically and culturally. The results could aid in the language choice for advertising martial arts based on cultural and regional differences.

Methods. By employing a mixed methods approach of both quantitative and qualitative data collection with analysis, a comparison of martial artists (instructors, students, and parents of younger students) was surveyed to better understand the reasons for studying martial arts. In addition, data was gathered about the communication practices within martial arts training from martial artists in different regions of the world and from different martial arts traditions. Based on an international online survey this study of martial artists from the USA, Canada, UK., Australia, New Zealand, and Finland are compared to better understand the significant differences in views, experiences, and communication to address and identify similarities and differences in order to better communicate about martial arts in advertising communication.

Results. Key insights point to the fact that preferred communication styles and advertising communication language must differ based on national cultural influences and martial arts traditions in branding. Advertising of martial arts for the purpose of awareness and/or recruitment means that the style of communication and the perceived benefits of martial arts training of prospective students varies based on the region.

Conclusions. The results of the study point to the advertising and communication needed for the purposes of recruitment and retention of students in martial arts training should be strategically communicated based on cultural and regional differences in preferred communications, and the motivations of those being communicated to, which in turn provides an indication that students' motivations and preferences may differ. The results of this study also help continue the work in understanding what motivates students in different regions, and in which martial arts traditions. Thus, this result helps martial arts' instructors and schools to communicate better with their target audiences such as prospective and/or current students.

Introduction

A global sport according to Carter [2011] is defined as an activity with a shared culture, where some elements of behavior are associated with that sport. Thus, martial arts as a group could be defined as a global sport with a rich history of the development of self-defence and combat enriched with traditions and rituals.

Martial arts is defined by Cynarski and Skowron [2014], as an extensive system of codified practices and traditions of combat that are practiced for a variety of reasons, including self-defence, competition, physical health and fitness, as well as mental, physical and spiritual development. Thus, for the purposes of this paper martial arts will be used as the term for the collective of codified practices and traditions of combat. Involvement in martial arts

and combat sports has universal appeal and many around the world practice and train in various or multiple martial arts [Bickford 2020]. In countries such as France, the Netherlands, Canada, Finland, Australia, and Belgium martial arts are on a list of the ten most practiced sports among children and adolescents [Vertonghen, Theeboom 2010]. In the Nordic region the increase of women participants in combat sports has risen since the late 1990s [Alsarve, Tjonndal 2019]. Interest in studying and discussing martial arts academically has increased as stated by Vertonghen & Theeboom [2010] based on a noted increase in the number of scientific meetings about martial arts, in addition to discipline specific meetings and an overall increase in the number of field-related publications. This study builds on a study conducted by Bickford [2020] which assessed cultural and regional differences in motivations for studying martial arts. This study focuses on the influences of the identified values and the benefits sought and gained by martial arts, the identified similarities and or differences of the national and/or martial arts culture, and how these factors could influence the choice of advertising communication planning and advertising language used. Studies have shown that understanding buyer motivation is essential for marketing message creation as well as product development [Twemlow, Lerma, Twemlow 1996; Thomas 2017]. The main reason for a student's decision to become involved and participate in sports, such as martial arts, can be defined as the relevance that a person perceives in how that sport meets their needs, values, and interests [Beaton *et al.* 2011]. Involvement can be defined and described as the level that a consumer values or believes that the selected sport(s) are relevant and important to their lives and lifestyles [Bennett *et al.* 2009]. These findings emphasize the importance of communication and more specifically that communication is used to attract and retain customers or in the case of martial arts students. Refining of product and service offerings and using more strategic marketing messages as well as identifying new market segments could aid in improved customer alignment based on shared vision and values and increased ability to attract and retain customers [Thomas 2017].

Understanding what people seek is important when creating strategic advertising communication plans. For example, seeking what motivates people to participate in both or either sport and cultural activities is of great interest as many people spend most of their free leisure time involved in these activities where they can fulfil the need for activity, education, and socialization amongst other things [Hallmann *et al.* 2017; Cynarski 2012b]. Studying martial arts due to its focus on both activity and long traditions of culture, especially assessing the sport in different regions and cultures, involves a set of multifaceted factors (cultural norms, languages, etc.) which brings to the forefront the complexity of the training, education, art, and sport and how martial arts is perceived [Figueiredo 2009, 2016]. Leadership is often emphasized

as part of martial arts training. Questions regarding the qualities of successful leaders including the motivations involved to start martial arts, to continue practicing, as well as seeking to understand whether there are possible leadership style references and examples has been studied [Bickford 2020]. This study adds to the leadership and motivation research and seeks to gain a better understanding of benefits sought and gained by those involved in martial arts training and whether there are cultural or regional differences which could influence communication and advertising plans. The results of the study could be applicable and of interest to instructors as well as students of martial arts. The results of the study will provide students of martial arts understanding of what has been learned or developed during their training, what is valued or sought through studying martial arts, and how that compares to others. Thus, the overall aim of this study is to share an understanding of how the discovered motivations, traits, and characteristics of martial artists are important when planning communication and whether there is an indication that these may differ between countries and or martial arts traditions.

Studies about the social-psychological effects of martial arts practice date back to the late 60's and the early 70's [Kroll, Carlson 1967; Pyecha 1970]. The initial studies in this field focused on identifying personal characteristics of martial artists, for example on how these characteristics determined preferences for specific types of martial arts traditions and the extent to which the characteristics of the martial artist changed as a result of continued martial arts involvement and training. Since then, more researchers have become interested in the outcomes of martial arts practice [Vertonghen, Theeboom 2010]. Many have looked at the benefits of martial arts training and focused on specific demographic segments such as youth [i.e. Gubbels *et al.* 2016; Demorest, Koutures 2016; Beesley, Fraser-Thomas, 2019], adults [i.e. Origua Rios *et al.* 2018; Walther, Lacker, Ehlert 2018] or elderly [i.e. Tantiwiboonchai *et al.* 2017; Lee, Song 2016].

What influences the choice to participate can be addressed by looking at marketing communications of martial arts. McNamara [2007] examined the impact of modern marketing strategies on martial arts activity and business in the United States and found that relevance is created through the understanding of students through the instructor-client relationship as well as when more researched and strategic communication is used.

Material and methods

The aim of this study was to identify factors such as cultural differences, personal characteristics and values that may influence the reasons for strategic communication. Questions about whether there are differences and/or similarities in preferred leadership styles and methods,

communication preferences, and motivational factors within the field of martial arts and combat sports and or geographically and how the results could aid in the advertising of martial arts. As stated by Alsarve and Tjonndal [2019] there are strengths and value in a study using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The value in the quantitative data is identifying differences in variables between populations, while the qualitative data adds to the narrative and the reasoning for the results. Thus, this study implemented both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis.

This comparative study of martial arts students and parents of younger martial artists builds on previous research which addressed identifying the type of leadership used in martial arts as well as student motivations, the benefits sought by those students, and how lessons learned in martial arts transferred outside of the dojang [Bickford 2020]. This study also uses 4 regions of the world (Nordics, Australasia, North America, and the U.K) where martial artists and or their parents were surveyed via an online, Qualtrics, survey containing Likert scale, ranking, and open-ended questions regarding their experiences and personal observations.

The electronic survey was distributed via email to key contact people in clubs or organizations in the countries of interest. In addition, social media (on Facebook and Twitter) was used to recruit respondents in the identified regions. The survey was approved by the University of Nebraska-Kearney's Institutional Review Board (IRB# #021518-1). Voluntary participants were asked about their basic socio-economic status such as gender, income, education level, household size, age, and number of years they had been in martial arts, whether they are, or were going to be or aspired to be instructors, about how long they had practiced martial art(s) and which one(s). In addition, the focus of the open-ended questions was on personal motivations, preferred leadership and communication styles, and personal reasons for studying martial arts. The overall sample consisted of a random group of members in martial arts (instructors, students, or parents of students younger than 19). The survey was open for one year from March 1, 2018- Feb 28, 2019. There were a total 230 responses to the survey out of which 224 full responses were used in the analysis. The statistical analysis was conducted via r studio version 3.5.1. Data output was tested for normality and fell within a normal curve. Consequently, ANOVA was performed to identify statistical analysis.

Results

Participant Overview

Participants were from eight countries (table 1). However, some of the countries were grouped together to increase sample size, but only when countries shared both spatial and culture similarities. The following groupings were

used: United States, Canada, Australasia (Australia + New Zealand), United Kingdom, and the Nordics (Finland, Norway, and Estonia). Of those responses analyzed 47% of the survey respondents were female (n=106) and 53% male (n=118).

Table 1. Percentage of respondents including both male and female from the study's countries & regions

Countries	Percentage of Total	Percentage of Female Respondents	Percentage of Male Respondents
Australia / New Zealand = Australasia	21%	65%	35%
Canada	6%	46%	54%
Finland / Norway / Estonia = Nordics	5%	56%	44%
United Kingdom	8%	67%	33%
United States	60%	39%	61%

[source: Bickford 2020]

As the previous study noted, there was no statistical difference in the respondents' ages, their income level, education level, number of family members in martial arts, or employment status compared to the countries or regions. It was interesting to note that there was a difference in whether respondents were from rural or urban areas per country (p=0.026). Respondents from Canada, United Kingdom, and Australasia reported to be from more urban areas while respondents from the Nordics and the United States reported to be from more rural areas (table 2). According to Meng [2016] rural sports are far behind urban areas in economic support and resources and thus lacking in equipment, construction, and faculty and thus there would be a difference between urban and rural teachings in martial arts. While it was found that there were no significant differences between the countries in income levels, education, or employment status which would lead to economic resources disparities for the students and / or the *dojang/dojos*. The self-reported rural martial artists were from Nordics and the United States may be due to geographic and national definitions between urban and rural. Thus, the definition becomes relative to the country in question. This may have an indication of resources available for communication, but not necessarily on advertising communication or language use.

Table 2. The studies respondents from urban versus rural areas

	USA	Nordics	Canada	Australasia	UK
Average	1.7	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.4
St Dev	0.12	0.12	0.15	0.11	0.16

[source: study results]

The number of years the respondents had been in martial arts did not vary or change by country. Bickford [2020] found that on average women tend to stick to one martial art whereas men were more inclined to practice multiple disciplines (p = 0.001) (table 3). Martial arts and combat sports are historically seen as masculine

sports [Channon 2013]. A study from the United Kingdom found that there were gender differences in the ways sports experiences were defined and interpreted by people. In addition, factors such as money, parents (in the case of adolescents), opposite-sex friends, and in the ways that past experiences in physical education and school sports were incorporated into current sport participation decisions [Coakley, White 1992]. In looking at this difference from the cultural perspective; cultural differences in genders according to Hofstede [2003] discuss the more feminine cultural characteristics as being more social and thus females would have more concern for each other and their communities thus staying with a single sport or fewer disciplines than males. This finding indicated that understanding the national culture, whether masculine or feminine, as well as knowing the preferred training in single versus multiple martial arts should be taken into consideration when creating communication materials for targeting / communicating with specific genders.

Table 3. Respondents including both male and female from the study's countries & regions that reported to be practicing single versus multiple martial arts disciplines

	Male	Women	USA	Canada	Nordics	Australasia	UK
Average	1.48	1.22	1.42	1.46	1.27	1.19	1.27
St Dev	0.35	0.22	0.49	0.51	0.46	0.4	0.46

[source: study results]

Self-defence, improving the level of fitness, increasing the level of confidence, improving discipline, focus, or to train with their child or children were the top reasons stated for starting martial arts. Survey findings show most important traits or characteristics emphasized are confidence, physical fitness, and self-awareness, while the least important trait / characteristic was risk taking. These results of this study correlate to previous research findings in overall sports participation where the main reasons for children starting martial arts were fun and enjoyment, while adults seek ways to improve their health and fitness levels [Hulteen *et al.* 2017]. These findings indicate that instructors across countries and regions are addressing the needs of their students in fulfilling their main needs for participating in the sport and this should be emphasized in advertising communications to attract and recruit students as well as to reinforce the reasons when communicating in order to retain students. After participation in martial arts, respondents noted that they had experienced changes in themselves in their level of confidence, awareness (both self and environmental), and that they felt more physically fit, thus reaching their personal goals of why they started. These changes in the martial artists experiences should be noted in communication aimed at retaining students.

Beyond practicing and the added benefits of cultural influences from practicing martial arts, the respondents stated that the most used martial arts behaviors outside of the *dojo/dojangs* were respect/courtesy/politeness

followed by awareness/environmental observations, confidence, and improvements in behaviors such as body language such as posture and bowing, as well as changes in verbal communication. A study conducted at the Texas Black Belt Academy found that students initially started with the aim of learning self-defence, however retention was because of the social atmosphere, the physical and mental health benefits, and a sense of inner peace that they developed as a result of their training which helped with life outside of the *dojang/dojo* [Block 2015]. Findings of this study also point to the fact that students start training to improve fitness or seek ways for self-defence- while after reflection and training they state to have gained other benefits such as improved awareness of self and environment as well as changes in personal behaviors and methods of communication. Survey respondent comments such as '*For me, it's a lifestyle*,' speaks to how martial arts training has impacted life within and outside the *dojang/dojo* while a comment such as '*Martial Arts has increased my awareness of so many situations and other things such as reading people*,' speaks to the benefits and skills beyond the physical capabilities provided by training and in speaking about the social aspect and bonding '*Karate has changed my life for the better and brought my family closer together*.' These insights provide language and key insights which could be used in advertising communication to prospective students.

Influence of Role Models

The way in which martial artists view role models and leaders varied significantly by gender. ($p = 0.014$). Females tended to state that their role models' leadership behaviors are more important to them more than male respondents. In addition, women felt that it was slightly more important that they or their family members communicate using martial arts communication styles, expectations and /or skills outside of their *dojangs/dojos* (martial arts schools) as they were taught by their instructors and schools. This may be due to how we as societies perceive gender and what we think a man or woman should be or how they should act thus leading to gender expectations [Maclean 2016]. Even historically, and still present in modern society, women tend to lean toward finding other women as friends and role models [Maclean 2016].

Table 4. Male and female respondents view role models and leaders significantly differently by gender

	Male	Female
Average	1.27	1.68
St Dev	0.27	0.34

[source: study results]

By understanding which leader characteristics are seen in the leaders and role models perceived as being successful we can find guides for communication strategies. The top ten characteristics of successful leaders found were caring for others, confidence, respect, mor-

als and ethics, determination and being able to use that as a driver to motivate, communication and being a role model of behaviors and communication (both verbal and non-verbal), and patience [Bickford 2020]. These characteristics were then compared to four transformational leadership dimensions as proposed by Bass and Riggio [2008] and it was found that martial artist leaders are doing well in idealizing influence, they serve as role models, and they are a source of motivation. There is growing recognition in the literature that Transformational Leadership theory (TFL) holds significant potential for coaching in sports [Bass, Riggio 2006; Turnnidge, Cote 2018]. Becoming aware of students' perceived characteristics of successful leaders and role models could aid in student recruitment and retention by having leaders make sure that they embody the leadership styles that not only match their martial arts traditions but also meet the students' expectations to maximize responsiveness to lessons being taught.

The question of whether respondents felt strongly about whether they had grown as leaders in martial arts was marginally significant (p -value = 0.07) (table 5). Overall, the respondents stated that after training in martial arts they themselves felt that they were more respectful/polite outside the *dojo*, followed by an increased awareness of both self and environment as well as feeling more confident [Bickford 2020]. On a closer look of the data North Americans (Canadians followed by Americans) growing as a leader did not matter much, while for the Nordic martial artists this mattered more (table 5). This finding would influence communication and specifically advertising communication and where leadership opportunities and growth could be mentioned.

Table 5. Respondents from each region state how much they feel that they have grown as leaders during their martial arts training

	USA	Canada	Nordics	Australasia	UK
Average	1.68	1.16	2.25	2	2
St Dev	0.48	0.38	0.68	0.66	0.46

[source: study results]

There was no significant difference in how respondents felt when described themselves before they started training versus the time that they have spent training (table 6). The respondents from the Nordics felt that they had become more self-aware through martial arts training and this was significantly different from North America respondents (both Canada and the United States) (p = 0.05).

Table 6. Respondents from each region state whether they had become more self-aware through martial arts training

	USA	Canada	Australasia	UK	Nordics
Average	1.45	1.16	1.75	1.8	2.12
St Dev	0.45	0.38	0.45	0.27	0.54

[source: study results]

From a leadership communication perspective, an instructor from the United Kingdom who has practiced martial arts for 4-5 years stated that "As a martial arts instructor I feel that every student is like one of my children. We want them to improve and get the best out of themselves." This speaks to caring for each individual follower, subordinate, or student and shows how language and word choice from an instructor indicates the bonds and intended student-instructor relationship. This type of language and word choices that reflect a desired relationship could be used in advertising communication in the areas where leadership and relationships are highly valued, such as the Nordics.

Communication

Findings indicate that the Nordic country respondents felt that their leaders verbally communicated about their preferred leadership expectations slightly more than the respondents in the other countries or regions [Bickford 2020]. The way martial artists speak, the way lessons are taught by the instructor using both verbal and non-verbal communication, and the way students are taught, by their instructors and the martial arts' schools' culture and traditions, to communicate was significantly different between the countries (p = 0.019) [Bickford 2020]. Nordic country respondents felt that they are more encouraged and taught at their respective *dojos/dojangs* to speak in a certain manner as compared to martial artists in North America (both United States and Canada) (table 7). Based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions [2003; 2019] Nordic countries would be expected to have more ridged rules and expectations regarding behavior and proper communication. In addition, as the Nordic countries tend to be a more feminine culture people could also be expected to be more helpful to each other regarding those expectations for showing proper behaviors and ways of communicating to meet societal expectations.

Table 7. Respondents from each region state whether they had become more self-aware through martial arts training

	USA	Canada	Nordics	Australasia	UK
Speak in Dojo	Average	1.89	2	3.25	2.24
	St Dev	0.65	0.42	0.65	0.42
Speak Outside Dojo	Average	2.13	2.33	3.21	2.75
	St Dev	0.51	0.67	0.46	0.47

[source: study results]

Also addressing how martial artists communicate outside of their *dojos/dojangs* and whether they continue to use the expected martial arts communication skills learned through martial arts training significantly differed between the countries in this study. The respondents from the Nordics felt that they used those, martial artist communication skills outside of their *dojang/dojo's* more than respondents in North America. The U.K.

and Australian countries fell in between in both questions regarding communication preferences and use. For communication planning purposes this shows that there are regional and cultural differences in preferred and expected communication styles which in turn would lead to influences in the language choice for martial arts advertising communication.

Motivation & Behaviors

What is motivational for the martial artists? Does that differ between martial arts traditions or by geographic regions? Overall, all respondents stated that posters and quotes in the *dojang/dojo* are perceived as being motivational. In some dojangs they may not be present, but overall, the respondents from the United Kingdom felt the strongest about this followed by Australasia and the Nordics. This indicates that the posters displayed in the *dojo/dojang* are being read and influence students. These should be chosen based on the *dojo/dojang* culture, instructors/owners' vision and values but also appeal to the prospective or current students' motivations for training in martial arts, whether to inform or reinforce behavior.

Interestingly, those practicing a single martial art felt that movie icons and legends were more frequently discussed and followed than those who practice multiple martial arts [Bickford 2020]. It could be a result of those practicing multiple martial arts becoming habituated to the discussions of movies and celebrities or perhaps becoming involved and discussing and/or following martial arts icons and legends may be a phase during the martial arts journey. The influence of movies and television shows on target audiences has been shown to influence behavior and martial arts [Bolelli 2016]. In addition, Bolelli [2016] states that martial arts movies typically include the story line with some up close and/or individual climatic sequences of combat or fight scenes which are inspirational, and Thomas [2017] stated that movies have impacted the enrolment and participation in martial arts. For example, the *Karate Kid* movies project an image of the martial arts as accessible to everyone meaning that anyone could take classes and train which resulted in increased enrolments in martial arts schools [McNamara 2008; Thomas 2017]. Respondents in this study listed many movies, and interestingly the preferences for certain martial arts movies did not differ between countries, however the reasons why martial artists watch movies significantly differed by country/region ($p = 0.05$) [Bickford 2020]. It was found that those in the Nordics tended to watch movies more for the role models, character traits, and life lessons while martial artists in the U.K. watched more for entertainment purposes and the actors. Martial artists in Australasia watch movies more for skills, choreography, as well as the storyline and the martial artists in the United States watched for the storyline as well as for rising their spirits or for moti-

vational reasons. The North Americans are a masculine culture meaning competitive and striving for success and this may be the reason for watching the movies for examples such as the storyline and for motivation.

Thus, understanding the reasons and motivations gained from popular movies and how these could be used in advertising to help motivate students to start training should be considered. For example, the *Cobra Kai* television series has gained a global audience and wide following in online social media interest groups. As pointed out by Bowman [2020] it is suggested that people's knowledge about martial arts traditions and terminology may be limited, but media such as movies or television series do influence the desires of people to seek training [Bowman 2020]. Understanding how movies and other popular media may motivate potential and current students and how regional differences and preferences for motivations to watch such popular media differ should influence the advertising language and images chosen to achieve communication and business goals.

Training Choices & Preferences

There was a significant difference between countries and whether the martial artist respondent stated that they practiced one or multiple martial arts disciplines ($p = 0.035$) (table 3). In North America, there was almost an equal amount of single and multiple martial art practitioners (57% of Americans and 54% of Canadian respondents stated that they were practicing a single martial art) and a majority, 89%, of the Nordic martial artist respondents were practicing a single martial art, while both Australia and the U.K. respondents were similar to the Nordic countries as 79% of Australasians and 72% British respondents stating that they practiced a single martial art (Bickford, 2020). For advertising communication this impacts the preferences for those already practicing martial arts and whether they would be open to trying or training in new styles for example. Understanding these regional differences in preferences aids in communication planning and gives insight to the target audience segments within the dojos/dojangs region.

Discussion

Martial arts is a club sport, but yet can be seen as an individual sport/activity may provide insight in addressing issues of leadership and communication development [Bickford 2020]. A variety of research has stated that developing friendships with individuals from different age groups and demographics has aided in personal development, growth, and gaining understanding for others [Kim *et al.* 2014]. Other benefits of martial arts, such as Taekwondo, have been studied and listed as physical, psychological, and mental including gaining

cultural awareness and understanding leading to personal growth and development [Kim *et al.* 2014; Jones *et al.* 2006; Zeng *et al.* 2015]. What inspires people to study and participate in martial arts has been a focus of many research projects [Twemlow, Lerma, Twemlow 1996; Lantz 2002; Kavoura *et al.* 2012; Kim *et al.* 2009; Cynarski 2012a; Jones, Mackay, Peters 2006; Bickford 2020]. Twemlow *et al.* [1996] assessed motivations of 170 students enrolled in martial arts in Kansas, USA and assessed motivations to participate for the activity as self-defence, exercise, improving self-confidence, fun / something to do, karate movies, meditation, and aggression outlet to name a few. Lantz [2002] in turn assessed the process of family development of those participating in the activity and stated that self-defence, physical vitality, concentration, respect, friendship and moral/spiritual/life skill development emerged as key motivators. Understanding the reasons, or motivation, why people chose to participate in a martial arts activity is needed to better address the motivations to participate and how these can then be used in strategic communication with current and/or prospective students. As stated by Twemlow *et al.* [1996] if a dojang does not clearly understand the motivations and needs of its students, both current and future, many may drop out. Thus, there is a need to understand not only the motivations behind practicing martial arts, but also how these can be used in strategic communication to emphasize and relate to students' motivations and needs sought from participation. According to Kidd [2013] during the last two decades there has been a focused effort to utilize sports as a vehicle for broad, sustainable social development, especially in the most disadvantaged communities in the world. Thus, looking at the way sports are viewed in communities and societies as a whole may give an indication of why people will start sports, such as martial arts or what factors play a role in the national culture perspective in regard to sports involvement.

For example, in the Nordic countries such as Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Iceland sports are seen as a voluntary and autonomous practice in relation to national and local authorities [Alsarve 2014; Alsarve, Tjonndal 2019; Halldorsson 2017]. In European countries, sport participation has been estimated at 40% of the adult population [Khan *et al.* 2012]. Sport plays a substantial part in the lives of many Australians. For example, there is a high level of participation in sports where a 2005-2006 study found that between 65.9 percent of Australians participated in some form of sport [Wilson, Pomfret 2009]. Since 2006 there has been a decline in sports participation in Australia as well [Eime *et al.* 2015]. In Britain participation in sports is seen as having an overall positive social impact. For example, DCMS [1999], Policy Action Team 10's report to the Social Exclusion Unit states that arts and sports can help improve neighborhoods, build confidence, and

strengthen community groups. The Scottish in particular state that people who participate in sports are more likely to play an active role in the community in other ways as well [Coalter 2007]. In the United States, organized sports have long been an integral part of the American high school experience [Stevenson 2007] and national data has shown that one quarter of the US adult population participate in some form of organized sport or exercise [Ham, Kruger, Tudor-Locke 2009]. In the United States, similar to the other countries there is a decline in involvement in physical activity [Bassett *et al.* 2015]. Due to the decline in sports involvement the United States has seen an increase in political and institutional support, often in the form of sport-based projects aimed at contributing to positive outcomes in areas including economic development, social inclusion, cultural cohesion, healthy lifestyles, education, gender equity, as well as reconciliation and peacebuilding [Sherry, Schulerkorf, Chalip 2015]. Sport participation is currently a very important topic in Canada as well. The decreasing participation trends in sports has spurred health practitioners to develop policies and program interventions [O'Reilly *et al.* 2015]. The Canadian Sport Policy calls for an increase in the number of Canadians participating in sports bore 2020 [Humphreys, Ruseski 2015].

What factors or characteristics or traits drive people to start training in martial arts and what do martial artists feel that they gain from? How could these health and wellness initiatives be used as a goal in communication together with the culture of the martial arts tradition being practiced or advertised? Is it the instructor, characteristics of the instructor, or idols that drive martial artists to continue training? Studies have shown that children often seek activities that provide fun and enjoyment, while adolescents and adults are more likely to be start physical training and activities to improve health and fitness. Thus, it would lead us to believe that motivations to start would change over time and be different [Hulteen *et al.* 2017]. This in turn indicates that there is a need in a varied communication approach to best communicate with the different age groups, or target audience segments. Thus, changing the advertising communication to better appeal and relate to the motivations in each age group could mean that the communicator (instructor, martial arts training center, or organization) change wording, emphasis, and the explanation of reasons for starting or continuing training based on the targeted groups identified motivations and needs. Additionally, differences in personal characteristics may lead to the need for varied communication plans.

Identifying Personal and National Characteristics

Combat sport involves characteristics such as strength, endurance, risk-taking, strategy, toughness, muscularity and competitiveness that, taken together, can be considered as core contents of a hegemonic (and dominant)

masculinity [Connell 2005; Alsarve, Tjonndal 2019]. Those are in line with a more masculine culture, which according to Hofstede [2003] is a more competitive national culture. Najafi's [2003] findings revealed that practitioners of traditional martial arts emphasize more humility and report more overall levels of hope compared to those involved in modern martial arts. People with these personal characteristics and those in more masculine cultures may be more motivated and driven to compete and succeed. Thus, it could be hypothesized that we would see more driven, motivated, and competitive individuals in masculine countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Australasia.

As stated by Kim *et al.* [2014] martial arts, may provide a way to seek and improve the meaning, purpose, and mission in life providing a mind-body unification leading to a sense of spirituality. This deeper self-reflection and understanding leads to students and members of a dojang/dojo to interact with each other and share various experiences and knowledge, thus improving learning and personal development. This may be seen as leadership development [Bickford 2020]. This interaction with a master as stated by Cynarski [2012b] provides a direct experience that is both physical (movement, exercise), internal to oneself (spiritual) as well as intellectual in that one may realize one's own cognitive needs. It is proposed that this common sharing of experiences and development of a culture within the dojang/dojo would guide communication and particularly word selection.

Studies conducted before the mid '90s indicated that the length of training was found to have a positive impact on personality traits of martial artists [Vertonghen, Theeboom 2010]. Characteristics that are rewarded in many sports have been connected to hegemonic masculinity production and have, for example, emphasized strength, speed, toughness, risk-taking and durability [Alsarve 2018]. The question of what characteristics martial arts practitioners seek to gain by practicing martial arts and whether these differ between regions of the globe to help understand the key characteristics of martial artists and how these could be used in planned advertising communication. In this study a comparison between martial artists is based on multiple variables such as time spent in martial arts training, and number of disciplines practiced.

Cultural Characteristics

Past studies of martial arts cultures have for example looked at comparisons between martial arts styles and revealed differences between styles indicating that each martial arts tradition/style has its own cultural characteristics and qualities [Vertonghen, Theeboom 2010]. Kim *et al.* [2014] discussed cultural recreational activities such as dance, martial arts, and relaxation techniques and found that leisure activities, such as sports, may provide a place and context where cross-cultural awareness and

contacts may be learned and created. In this context cross-cultural contact is defined as "the interaction, communication, or other social processes among people or entities from two or more different cultures" [Commons, Galaz-Fontes, Morse 2006].

Hofstede's [2003, 2019] original four cultural dimensions are used as a rough framework for understanding the national cultural norms in the study's countries/regions. Hofstede originally ranked countries based on four cultural dimensions: individualism/collectivism defined as the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. It has to do with whether people's self-image is defined in terms of "I" or "We"; masculine/feminine where more masculine cultures will be driven by competition, achievement, and success, According to Hofstede Insights [2019] this type of value system starts in school and continues throughout one's life – both in work and leisure pursuits; power distance is defined as the degree to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally; and uncertainty avoidance described as the level that members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created institutions, rules, and regulations that try to avoid these uncertain events or situations [Hofstede 2003, 2019].

Callaghan *et al.* [2012] defined the Hofstede's dimensions and explained that the scores are fairly similar for Australia, Canada and the United States. In addition, New Zealand's scores are fairly close to these as well. In power distance, which is defined as a measure of the unequal distribution of power in society, the countries have low scores and thus power is seen as equally distributed, and leaders or managers are seen as accessible by followers, students, or subordinates. These countries are also extremely close individualism (versus collectivism) which is a measure of the relationship between an individual and his fellow individuals. On masculinity (versus femininity), a measure of the division of roles between the sexes in society, scores for Australia and the United States are again extremely close and they are both more masculine, while Canada displays less of this quality and scores in between a masculine/feminine culture. Regarding uncertainty avoidance, which is defined as a measure of how a society deals with uncertainty and is related to the propensity of a culture to establish laws and formal rules such as codes of ethics. Societies strong on uncertainty avoidance are more likely to establish formal rules to deal with unpredictability. According to Callaghan *et al.* [2012] Australia, Canada, and the United States have extremely close scores and have a higher tolerance for uncertainty. The Nordic countries are characterized as a feministic culture where everyone is to be taken care of with low power distance meaning leaders and followers are seen as equals [Boopathi 2014]. The Nordic countries prefer to avoid uncertainty and thus more norms, and

rules, norms, and rigid behaviors are expected. According to Hofstede Insights [2019] Brittan is low on power distance, similar to that of the Nordic countries where society believes that inequalities between people should be minimized. In addition, the British are described as individualistic, but yet a masculine society where people are success-oriented and driven. The UK scores low on uncertainty avoidance and thus most are ok with uncertainty.

On a larger scale, the national culture of a country is shaped by values from the country's origin to the ongoing social changes of present day. The cultural values of nations have a significant influence on today's life of people and as well in its social, economic, political and business environment [Boopathi 2014]. The impact of national culture on the management, leadership, and behavior of an organization operating in a particular country is unavoidable [Francesco, Gold 1998]. This has an impact on how the organization communicates about its culture both within the dojo/dojang and outside of it. Therefore national cultures of regions studied are compared and discussed together with this study's findings to gain an understanding of possible influences and insights of cultures on martial arts communications.

Conclusions

The results of the study could be applicable to martial arts *dojo/dojang* owners, instructors, and students of martial arts. For school owners and instructors, it is important to identify and understand their customers both current and prospective in order to find ways that could communicate how the students' needs and benefits sought are and/or could be met. For example, what do students seek from martial arts training? For martial arts students this study provides an understanding of reasons why other students like themselves to study or continue to train. Thus, the overall aim of this study was to identify influences of the characteristics, training styles, influence of role models and preferences for communication and how these may differ based on national culture differences.

To the question of what brings students into practicing martial arts and what motivates them to continue were similar to those found in past studies do align with previous research in what many seek which is fun and entertainment for the younger ages while adolescents and adults most often seek improvement with fitness and self-defence. Understanding motivations for different segments such as based on age, gender, region, or national culture will help guide the selection of communication language and visuals. Modern advertising is often personalized and engaging and as stated by McNamara [2007] marketing of martial arts has proven most effective when communication is more personal due to the geographic location of specific schools, or the instruc-

tor-client relationship created based on shared values and goals which in turn impacts the retention of students. Twemlow, Lerma, Twemlow 1996] stated that many also seek to improve self-confidence, fun/something to do, karate movies or television shows, meditation, and an aggression outlet. There were a few similarities between the studies. However, it should be noted that the need for an aggression outlet was not present, nor was the motivation initially to begin based on movies.

In terms of self-defence out of the respondents in this study three stated that they began martial arts due to being a victim the results from the reasons of what motivates students to join martial arts and what they gain from training. For example, as stated in this study by an experienced (21+ years of experience) martial artist from the United States "*Be good followers as well as leaders. The best leaders are the best servant of the students need to learn.*" Being able to empathize with followers or students by being a follower themselves speaks to the characteristic of being a role model, the mission of training, the traditions of martial arts, and which could be used in advertising communication. Using testimonials, where appropriate in communication, may help motivate those in similar situations to start however it should be noted that this is targeted segment of the overall target audience.

Before communication can be planned and conducted the vision or goal must be clear and may need to be more clearly defined by the leaders as well as communicated to their students throughout the students' martial arts journey. Based on the findings from the study the posters and quotes hanging inside the training centers are motivational/inspirational and should conform to the culture of the martial art as well as to the leader's and *dojo/dojang's* goals, vision, culture, and aim to create brand personality, which in turn is a starting point in strategic communication planning. In addition, suggested movies or communication materials showcasing endorses/influencers should be selected based on the reasons martial artists watch movies which varies by country/region since it is known to influence behavior of prospective students.

A martial artist respondent from the United States stated "*I would not be who I am today without martial arts. After training for the past 16 years (from age 5 to age 21), I've grown to be a role model & leader in my dojang, and I'm currently the president of two student organizations at my university!*" [Bickford 2020] shows the influence of the martial arts training and how leadership together with communication development has influenced the individual in question. This shows the impact of the lessons, taught through communication, within martial arts having a positive impact on people's lives and meets and exceeds the needs and benefits sought from training, but this could not be achieved without communication planning in student recruitment and

retention. Also, it should be stated that national culture and behavior norms and expectations may influence how martial artists feel about how they communicate and act in and outside of the dojang [Bickford 2020]. In the Nordic countries for example, the cultural expectations and behaviors may influence impact the students' choice to practice a single martial art instead of multiple. In addition, larger influencers such as the European Union which aims to use sports to implement and carry out a range of social, cultural, and educational policy objectives [Rauhala 2006] may impact this decision as well. Thus, in these cases, the sport is used as a tool for teaching and sharing national culture and cultural expectations. Nordic countries according to Hofstede [2019] display a higher rate of uncertainty avoidance may have an impact on the choice to practice one art and master that prior to moving onto an unknown, and in the Nordic culture equality and respect is part of national culture and thus expected more so from individuals than in other countries.

In addition to national culture, martial arts tradition and the dojo/dojang's culture will also influence the brand personality and what is emphasized to prospective and current students. An example of this was provided by a respondent from the United States who stated that "Martial arts culture and benefits is largely dependent on the community (family style or classroom style) and importance of tournaments (glorifying the fight or glorifying the growth)." When advertising and communicating about martial arts to prospective students for example, it is important to understand the underlying national culture along with the *dojo/dojang's* organizational culture and brand values. In addition, understanding what current and prospective students value and seek to gain from training will also help target communications and help improve the language selection for the intended message.

Limitations

The number of respondents to the survey and how those respondents were recruited through international online networks it should be noted that many respondents to the survey practiced taekwondo. This may show the popularity growth of the sport worldwide or it may simply be a result of the recruitment method it is hard to tell.

Recommendations

In regard to advertising communication additional work in assessment and comparison of marketing communications from martial arts schools/or instructors would be useful to understand how both traditions and the findings of this study are applied and to explore successful advertising communications plans. Also conducting advertising testing and focus groups based on this study would be beneficial.

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Identyfikacja języka reklamy sztuk walki poprzez badanie różnic w komunikacji w zależności od kultury i motywacji

Słowa kluczowe: sztuki walki, przywództwo, komunikacja, reklama, międzynarodowy, kultura

Streszczenie

Tłó. Studiowanie sztuk i sportów walki zyskało popularność na całym świecie, a praktyka obejmuje takie czynniki jak oczekiwania i normy kulturowe, jak również języki, metodologie itp. To, co przyciąga ludzi do studiowania i praktykowania sztuk walki różni się.

Cel. Czynniki te uświadamiają nam złożoność treningu, ale także wzbudzają naszą ciekawość co do tego, jakie mogą być różnice i/lub podobieństwa w przywództwie, komunikacji i motywacji w obrębie sztuk walki w ujęciu geograficznym i kulturowym. Wyniki te mogą pomóc w wyborze języka do reklamowania sztuk walki w oparciu o różnice kulturowe i regionalne.

Metody. Poprzez zastosowanie mieszane podejścia metodycznego zarówno ilościowego jak i jakościowego zbierania danych z analizą, porównanie adeptów sztuk walki (instruktorów, uczniów i rodziców młodszych uczniów) zostało zbadane w celu lepszego zrozumienia powodów studiowania sztuk walki. Ponadto, zostały zebrane dane na temat praktyk komunikacyjnych w ramach szkolenia sztuk walki od ćwiczących w różnych regionach świata i z różnych tradycji sztuk walki. W oparciu o międzynarodową ankietę online to badanie zawodników sztuk walki z USA, Kanady, Wielkiej Brytanii, Australii, Nowej Zelandii i Finlandii służy porównywaniu, aby lepiej zrozumieć znaczące różnice w poglądach, doświadczeniach i komunikacji. Następnym celem jest zajęcie się i zidentyfikowanie podobieństwa i różnic w celu lepszego porozumiewaniu się w zakresie sztuk walki w komunikacji reklamowej.

Wyniki. Kluczowe spostrzeżenia wskazują na fakt, że preferowane style komunikacji i język komunikacji reklamowej muszą się różnić w zależności od wpływów kultury narodowej i tradycji sztuk walki. Reklama sztuk walki w celu uświadomienia i/lub rekrutacji oznacza, że styl komunikacji i postrzegane korzyści z treningu sztuk walki potencjalnych studentów w zależności od regionu różnią się.

Wnioski. Wyniki badania wskazują na reklamę i komunikację potrzebną do celów rekrutacji i utrzymania studentów w szkoleniu sztuk walki powinny być strategicznie komunikowane w oparciu o różnice kulturowe i regionalne w preferowanych

komunikatów, motywacji tych, do których są przekazywane, co z kolei stanowi wskazówkę, że motywacje i preferencje studentów mogą się różnić. Wyniki tego badania pomagają również kontynuować pracę w zrozumieniu, co motywuje studentów w różnych regionach i w jakich tradycjach sztuk walki. Tak więc wynik ten pomaga instruktorom sztuk walki i szkołom lepiej komunikować się z ich docelowymi odbiorcami, takimi jak przyszli i/lub obecni studenci.