Comparison of Motivation Scales in Understanding Korean Immigrant Major League Baseball Consumers

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Sport has been used as a vehicle to assist immigrants with learning a new culture and entering the mainstream of the host society (Coadley, 2009). At the same time, immigrants often use sport as a means to retain their ethnic identity by supporting athletes from their native countries (Min & Kim, 2009). Although numerous studies have investigated sport spectator motivations in general, there have been limited approaches to understand immigrants’ unique perceptions toward experiencing sport in a host society (Kim & Love, 2009). When considering the rapidly growing Asian immigrant population in many major U.S. cities as well as the possible influence of Asian athletes on Asian immigrants’ perceptions toward sporting events, a holistic approach is required to advance our understanding of Asian immigrant sport consumer behaviors as a potential niche market in the sport industry. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand motives of Korean immigrant Major League Baseball consumers through comparing two previously-developed scales: (a) the Sociological Motives of Korean Immigrant Major League Baseball consumers (SM_KI_MLBC) (Kim, DeSensi, & Koo, 2009) and (b) the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC) (Trail & James, 2001).

This study consists of the following steps. First, the researchers reviewed previous theories and studies explaining adaptation patterns of immigrants. Specifically, immigrants tend to show multidimensional adaptation patterns in that they not only adapt to the new culture, but also retain their culture of origin (Berry, 1997; Hurh & Kim, 1984). Second, we reviewed existing scales used to measure the motivation of sport fans/spectators in their attendance at sporting events and selected the MSSC (Trail & James, 2001) and SM_KI_MLBC as scales for this study. Both scales were developed based on data from MLB consumers and showed acceptable construct validity and reliability in previous studies. Third, collected data were analyzed by using the AMOS program. Finally, the last section discusses the findings of the data analysis and provides directions for future study and managerial implications for MLB marketers.

Data were collected in the Los Angeles area in settings such as Korean markets, Korean ethnic churches, and Korean organizations. A total of 206 (131 men and 75 women) Koreans and Koreans-Americans participated in this study. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 60 years (M = 29.42, SD = 7.1), with a majority (67%) indicating single marital status. In addition, 86.4 percent (179) of research participants were born in Korea and the average length of stay in the U.S. was 7.6 years (SD = 7.3). 77.2 percent of research participants had a preference for the local MLB team that had a Korean player on its roster. All items of two scales were rated in a 7-point Likert type scale, anchored by strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (7) and translated into Korean by using a back translation method (Chapman & Cater, 1979) for the data collection.

The Sociological Motives of Korean Immigrant MLB consumers (SM_KI_MLBC)

The SM_KI_MLBC was developed based on data gathered from Korean immigrants, and the scale was found to have good construct validity and reliability (Kim, DeSensi, & Koo, 2009). Based on a qualitative study and adaptation theories (e.g., acculturation theory, Berry, 1990, 1997; assimilation theory, Gordon, 1964; adhesive adaptation model, Hurh & Kim, 1984), the SM_KI_MLBC includes three constructs in the scale: (a) ethnic attachment (3 items), (b) cultural adaptation (3 items), and (c) social adaptation (3 items). Items for ethnic attachment are designed to investigate the influence of the presence of Korean MLB players on Korean immigrants’ motives toward attending MLB games with Korean players. Items for cultural/social adaptation reflect Korean immigrants’ unique motives for attending sporting events as an adaptation tool into the host society.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with maximum likelihood: In order to examine overall measurement model fit, several fit indexes were utilized by using AMOS program, which include CMIN/df, GFI, SRMR, RMSEA, and ECVI. The measurement showed a robust model fit (CMIN(3530)/df (24) = 1.47, N = 206, GFI = .96, SRMR = .056, RMSEA = .048, ECVI = .37). Construct validity was tested by examining convergent validity and discriminant validity. All AVE
values of the three constructs in the measurement were greater than .50 (F1: .76, F2: .69, F3: .80) for convergent validity test), and all AVE values were greater than the squared correlations with other factors (for discriminant validity test). Reliability test showed very high Cronbach’s alpha values (F1: .92; F2: .94; F3 .98), which was within the range recommended by Nunnally, (1967, 1978). Overall, this scale showed a robust model fit, construct validity, and reliability.

Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC)

Trail and James (2001) developed the MSSC in order to measure the motivations behind sport spectator consumption behavior. 27 items were developed under the following nine factors: (a) achievement, (b) knowledge, (c) aesthetics,(d) drama, (e) escape, (f) family, (g) physical attraction, (h) physical skills of players, and (i) social interaction. This study indicated better the content validity, criterion validity, construct validity, and internal consistency of the MSSC compared to previous measurements on sport fans/spectators motivation such as Sport Fan Motivation Scale by Wann (1995) and Motivations of the Sport Consumer by Milne & McDonald (1999).

CFA with maximum likelihood estimation: Overall model did not fit data well (CMIN(1296.27)/df(288)= 4.50, N =206, GFI = .74, SRMR = .16, RMSEA = .131, ECVI = 7.20). In addition, all factors in the scale were highly correlated (.59 -.83). However, Reliability test showed that all nine factors have very high Cronbach’s alpha values (.868 -.964).

The results of the data analysis showed that Korean immigrant MLB consumers have unique reasons to attend MLB games with Korean players. The findings of this study were consistent with the researchers’ expectation that sport is utilized as a means to adapt into the host society, while at the same time, sport plays a role in helping immigrants retain ethnic identity. In addition, the non-acceptable measurement model fit of the MSSC may be attributed to the different sample. The MSSC was developed based on data from American MLB consumers in general, while the current study included only Korean-Americans. Sport marketers in MLB teams should consider the unique motives of Korean immigrants in order to develop effective marketing plans. In other words, sport marketers need to understand the different value Asian immigrants perceive related to sport. However, viewing Asian immigrants as a homogeneous consumer group is a misconception when considering their different culture and value from over 30 different ethnic groups (Kauffman-Scarborough, 2000; Wiesendanger, 1993). In addition, baseball is not equally popular in all Asian countries. Thus, we should note that the findings of this study have limitations in explaining why Asian immigrants in general may attend MLB games. More attention to the fast growing Asian-American (immigrant) sport consumer group in the sport marketing research area is needed to understanding the complexities involved. In addition, when considering the long history of Asian immigration into the U.S., investigating the difference between generations on how they perceive sport will be valuable.