An Examination of the Relationships among Flow Experience, Spectator Satisfaction, Team Loyalty, and Intention to Attend Future Games

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For better understanding of spectators' decision to attend games, it is essential to recognize what factors contribute to spectator attendance. Many previous studies in recent decades have been done regarding the factors to affect attendance at sports games. It has been suggested that spectator satisfaction, team loyalty, and intention to attend games might have great influences on spectator attendance. It implied that they might be the most reliable indicators of actual attendance. In addition, previous studies have been conducted to examine the relationships among them. Future intention was directly influenced by consumer satisfaction (Hellier, Geursen, Carr, & Rickard, 2003; Kuenzel & Yassim, 2007; Murray & Howat, 2002; Tsui, Bennett, & Zhang, 2007) and team loyalty (Sumino & Harada, 2004; Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). Consumer satisfaction had a direct and positive effect on consumer loyalty (Bloemer & Ruyter, 1998; Mittal & Lassar, 1998; Selnes, 1993).

Despite a fair amount of research has been devoted to spectator attendance, little attention has been paid to a spectator's psychological state and its effect on spectator attendance. According to Madrigal (1999), it was believed that a psychological state was one of the significant properties to influence a spectator's attending decision. Such psychological state of a spectator was called as flow. Flow was conceptualized by the balance between challenge of task and skill (knowledge) about task (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Novak, Hoffman, and Duhachek (2003) have represented that flow experience was the optimal psychological state of a performer, characterized by enjoyment, time distortion, deep concentration, and lack of self consciousness. Previous studies have suggested that flow experience had a direct and positive influence on consumer satisfaction (Ghani, 1994), consumer loyalty (Hoffman & Novak, 1996), and future intention (Jang, 1998; Lee, 1999). While a number of studies related to flow experience were found, in fact, minimal empirical research regarding a spectator's flow experience has been conducted in team sport-related research.

Even if there have been many determinants used as indicators of intention to attend future games, this study was undertaken with a specific focus on flow experience of a spectator, spectator satisfaction, and team loyalty as the most relevant and predictable variables of intention to attend future games. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationships of flow experience, spectator satisfaction, team loyalty, and future intention of attendees at sports games. More specifically, with use of structural equation modeling, (a) the effect of flow experience on spectator satisfaction, team loyalty, and future intention was examined; (b) the effect of spectator satisfaction on team loyalty and future intention was examined; (c) the effect of team loyalty on future intention was examined.

Using a convenient sampling method, data was collected from Korea professional baseball spectators who attended a home game. There were 325 usable questionnaires. The survey instrument was slightly modified to improve on inadequacies of existing scales. The survey instrument included eleven items of flow experience, which consisted of four items of enjoyment, four items of focused attention, and three items of time distortion (Madrigal, 2006; Novak, Hoffman, & Duhachek, 2003; Skadberg & Kimmel, 2004), three items of spectator satisfaction (Laverie & Arnett, 2000), six items of team loyalty, which consisted of three items of attitudinal loyalty (Kwon & Trail, 2003; Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000) and three items of behavioral loyalty (Funk & Pastore, 2000), and three items of intention to attend future games (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003). Data were analyzed with frequency and descriptive statistics analysis, reliability analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modeling using SPSS 17.0 and AMOS 7.0.

The results of Cronbach's alpha coefficients of all latent variables were larger than .7, indicating that the items of each latent variable were internally consistent (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). CFA for measurement model of seven-
factor demonstrated satisfactory model fit to the data (CMIN/df = 2.454, NFI = .935, CFI = .961, and RMSEA = .077). Upon estimation of the model fit indices, construct validity was measured. The results of construct validity were confirmed based on convergent validity and discriminant validity. All standardized loadings were relatively high, ranging from .690 to .954 and were statistically significant for the convergent validity. All AVEs were greater than cutoff value of .50 that also confirmed convergent validity (Fornell & Larcher, 1981). For discriminant validity, the estimated correlation among seven factors was ranged from .454 to .821, which was less than the recommended value of .85, confirming discriminant validity (Kline, 1998).

The results of structural model indicated that the model fit yielded a satisfactory within recommended thresholds to the sample data (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hu & Bentler, 1999). The results of path coefficient value revealed that flow experience was significantly related to spectator satisfaction ($\beta = .675, p < .05$), team loyalty ($\beta = .116, p < .05$), and intention to attend future games ($\beta = .407, p < .05$); spectator satisfaction was significantly related to team loyalty ($\beta = .321, p < .05$) and intention to attend future games ($\beta = .504, p < .05$); team loyalty was significantly related to intention to attend future games ($\beta = .352, p < .05$). It was found that intention to attend future games was directly influenced by flow experience, spectator satisfaction, and team loyalty. In addition, spectator satisfaction positively contributed to team loyalty and intention to attend future games as well as team loyalty directly influenced intention to attend future games. However, there was a caution when describing the direct relationship between flow experience and team loyalty, which was statistically significant. The amount of variance flow experience explained in team loyalty was quite small, which indicated that its practical meaning was minimal when the variable was interacting with other variables. Further findings, managerial implications, study limitations, and several directions for future study are presented.