Do Motives Differ Based on Psychological Connection? An Examination of the Psychological Continuum Model with Golf Participants

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Motivation and the psychological connection to the sport have been examined in combination to understand a more nuanced view of sport participation and spectatorship. Such studies have extensively used causal analysis (e.g., Multiple regression analysis and Structural equation modeling) and the findings show there is a significant positive relationship between motivations predicting psychological connection (Alexandris, Funk, & Pritchard, 2011; Amorose & Horn, 2000; Wann, Grieve, Zapalac, & Pease, 2008).

Contrasting to causal analysis, the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM; Funk & James, 2001; 2006; Funk, 2008) employs an ordinal scale in which a sport participant is classified into one of four psychological connection levels (i.e., awareness, attraction, attachment, and allegiance). By using category-based analysis such as Multiple discriminant analysis (MDA) and Logistic regression, PCM levels can be examined in combination with other constructs (e.g., constraints or motivations). Thus, the findings provide several benefits for both academicians and practitioners. For example, examining the motivational factor(s) of each of the levels may verify the hypothesis that motives change throughout the psychological processes associated with participation. Also, unique relationships found based on the hierarchical stages of the PCM may provide practical implications through the use of psychographic target marketing strategies (Funk, 2008).

Scholars hypothesize that motivations change throughout a sport consumer’s lifetime (Beaton & Funk, 2008; Funk, Filo, Beaton, & Pritchard, 2009; Iso-Ahola, 1980) and are diverse based on emotional attachment (Koo & Hardin, 2008; Wann, Grieve, Zapalac, & Pease, 2008). The findings of the PCM study may provide an answer to the aforementioned hypothesis. Based on the hierarchy of effects theory (Palda, 1966) and the escalating commitment theory (Staw, 1981), the PCM examines an individual’s movement from a low to a high psychological connection related to a specific sport activity or team. The strength of the PCM lies in the ability to segment sport consumers into four psychographic segments (i.e., awareness, attraction, attachment, and allegiance). However, better understanding is what differentiates PCM levels within its framework is an important issue. Thus, the purpose of this study was to identify the level of psychological connection of active sport participants and analyze the motives of sport participants based on their reported level of psychological connection to the activity.

Subjects were Korean recreational golfers who had played at 18-hole golf courses. Sampling methods employed strategies quota, judgmental, and convenience strategies. The surveys were collected from December 8th to 11th, 2011, at six outdoor driving ranges in six Korean metropolitan cities. The golf motivation constructs included nine factors (socialization, performance, excitement, esteem, diversion, business, competition, fitness, and skill mastery). The PCM has three dimensions including pleasure, centrality, and sign. The nine PCM items and 16 motivation items were translated into Korean by using back translation procedure. For data analyses, SPSS syntax based on the PCM’s stage-based algorithms, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), an ANOVA, and Multiple Discriminant Analysis (MDA) were conducted.

A total of 714 participants were classified into four levels: awareness (n = 51), attraction (n = 133), attachment (n = 357), and allegiance (n = 173). The results of the CFA for the PCM and motivation construct indicated all model fits were adequate. The ANOVA test revealed that there was a statistical significant difference in the mean score of the total months of golf played among the four levels of the PCM; therefore the longer a golfer played, the more likely there were to be in higher stages of the PCM.
The MDA analysis produced two discriminant functions that present the important motives for the group segmentation (i.e., four levels of the PCM). In function 1, the explanatory power of the Esteem was considerably higher ($rs^2 = 79.2\%$) than other eight factors. Therefore the primary characteristic of function 1 can be defined as self-esteem related to golf participation. In function 2, the explanatory power of Excitement, Diversion, Performance, and Skill Mastery was 38.4\%, 19.3\%, 10.6\%, and 9.2\% respectively. Based on this finding the underlying characteristic of function 2 was the golf game itself as these benefits could be met only by golf participation.

In the function 1, the group centroid values of the four PCM levels gradually increased from awareness ($H_{1.740}$) to attraction ($H_{.738}$) to attachment ($H_{.001}$) to allegiance ($H_{1.077}$). This finding provides empirical evidence to the hypothesis that the strength of motivation increases as a consumer moves up attachment levels of the PCM (Beaton & Funk, 2008; Funk et al., 2009; Iso-Ahola, 1980). The group centroids of awareness and attraction were negative values while those of attachment and allegiance were positive values. This indicates that the esteem motive among recreational golfers may emerge or rise when their level of psychological connection moves from attraction to attachment. In the function 2, the group centroid values of the four PCM levels increased from awareness ($H_{.522}$), to attachment ($H_{-1.12}$), to allegiance ($H_{.09}$), and to attraction ($H_{.489}$). This finding verifies the hypothesized concept of the attraction level which includes needs and internal motives such as health related physical and mental benefits of sport participation (Funk, 2008).

This study demonstrated that there are specific motives that are unique to certain levels of psychological attachment. We validated that, similar to behavioral involvement, as participants become more attached their motives for participation become more important. Additionally there may be some key motives that distinguish the PCM levels. For example, in our study, self-esteem appeared to be a motivational factor that distinguishes higher attached participants. These findings contributed to several theories in sport participation such as the relationship between cognitive and behavioral outcomes and how motives change throughout sport participation. Limitations and implications related to target marketing will be discussed in the presentation.