

**Developing and Testing Sport Consumption Models for Asians in a Host Country:
Examining Cultural Factors**

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Owing to people's varying cultural values and backgrounds, it is evident that there are differences in consumption behaviors/patterns across cultures (Cleveland, Laroche, Pons, & Kasto, 2009). Assael (1992) also posited that culture is the most powerful factor affecting consumer behavior, and cultural differences are reflected in products and services purchased. For instance, in sport consumption setting, a certain sport can be identified as ethnically specific and eventually consumed, such as ice Hockey to the Canadians, soccer to the Brazilians, Taekwondo to the Koreans, football to people from America, and so forth. To better understand such cultural nuance, numerous scholars have sought to investigate general consumption behaviors (e.g., food and clothes) of various ethnic minority groups in a host country (Gentry, Jun, & Tanshui, 1995; Jun, Ball, & Gentry, 1993; Penaloza, 1994, Xu, Shim, Lotz, & Almeida, 2004). Most of the work on ethnic minority consumption was based on the following two cultural factors: ethnic identity and acculturation. However, there have been few attempts made to understand these cultural factors in sport marketing literature.

On the basis of social identity theory, ethnic identity is defined as an individual's retention and attainment of cultural uniqueness that is integrated into the self-concept, which develops within the individual as a member of a minority ethnic group within a host country (Phinney, 1990). Most of prior studies have indicated that one's consumption behavior in a host country (e.g., the U.S.) was varying based on the level of ethnic identity. Specifically, individuals with high levels of ethnic identity were more likely to consume products or services possessing characteristics of his/her own ethnic group (Kang & Kim, 1998; Xu et al., 2004).

Another important cultural factor affecting minority consumption in a host country is acculturation. Acculturation is defined as a complex, multidimensional process of learning by which the behaviors and attitudes of newcomers/minority individuals from diverse cultures are changed as a result of contact with a host/dominant society (Berry, 1980; Stephenson, 2000). Acculturation was once viewed as unidirectional process corresponding to assimilation: while minority individuals obtain the cultural aspects of the host country, they simultaneously lose their own cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors (Phinney, 1990). In this regard, it is suggested that the better minority individuals adapt to a host country, the less they consume sport products reflecting their culture of origin and vice versa. With a cultural pluralism, a bi-directional approach of acculturation has appeared. This approach suggests that minority individuals can learn and adapt to a host country while simultaneously preserving and promoting aspects of their original heritage (Berry, 1990, 1997, 2003). From the perspective of bi-dimensional model, for example, it is plausible that newcomers/minority individuals in a host country follow a popular sport in one country, that in both countries (host and native countries), or neither country sports.

In a host country, newcomers or minority individuals face circumstances in which they accept or reject consumption behaviors or practices different from the ones of their country of origin (Kaufman-Scarborough, 2000). This would undoubtedly impact sport consumption behaviors. Based on the extant literature, in this study fan identification was set to mediate the relationship between cultural factors (i.e., ethnic identity and acculturation) and consumption behaviors. Three sport consumption models using three different fan identifications - (a) Ethnic Player Model, (b) Native Sport Model, and (c) Host Sport Model - were developed and tested to examine whether cultural factors (ethnic identity and acculturation) significantly influence sport consumption behaviors for Asians through fan identifications. Identification with an Ethnic Player (IEP) and Consumption for a Team with the Ethnic Player (CTEP) were placed in the Ethnic Player Model; Identification with a Popular Sport in a Native Country (IPSNC) and Consumption for a Popular Sport in a Native Country (CPSNC) were put in the Native Sport Model; and Identification

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with a Popular Sport in a Host Country (IPSHC) and Consumption for a Popular Sport in a Host Country (CPSHC) were placed in the Host Sport Model.

The target population for this study was Asians in the U.S., as this population has been given little attention in the field of sport management (Ko, Claussen, Rinehart, & Hur, 2008). Specifically, we focused on Asians whose culture of origin is one of the following four countries where they are geographically located in Northeast Asia: (a) China, (b) Japan, (c) Korea, and (d) Taiwan. The reason why we selected these four subgroups was that nearly almost all Asian athletes playing or played in the four major professional leagues (i.e., MLB, NBA, NFL, NHL) in North America have come from the four countries. A total of 303 responses were received yielding 291 useable questionnaires. Of the 291 participants, 30.2% (n = 88) were Chinese; 29.6% (n = 86) were Korean; 21.3% (n = 62) were Taiwanese; and 18.9% (n = 55) were Japanese. For gender breakdown, 54% (n = 157) were male and 46% (n = 134) were female. The average age of the sample was 30.30 years old (SD = 8.23). On average, the participants lived in the U.S. for 9.52 years. The majority of participants were temporarily staying in the U.S. (50.2%; n = 146), followed by 1st generation (22.7%; n = 66), 1.5 generation (19.6%; n = 57), and over 2nd generation (1.71%; n = 5). All measures were adopted from existing scales and modified suitable in the context of this study.

The three proposed models were tested using a Structural Equation Model (SEM) with Amos 19. First, the results of Ethnic Player Model revealed a reasonable fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 209.468$, $df = 73$, $p < .001$; CFI = .96; TLI = .95; SRMR = .06; RMSEA = .08). Looking at the structural relationships, ethnic identity had a significant direct impact on IEP ($\beta = .43$, $p < .01$) and explained 18.49% of variance in IEP. Furthermore, IEP were found to significantly influence CTEP ($\beta = .88$, $p < .01$) and explained 77.44% of variance in CTEP. However, ethnic identity had no significant direct impact on CTEP ($\beta = .04$, $p > .05$), indicating that IEP fully mediates the relationship between ethnic identity and CTEP. In addition, ethnic identity had indirect impact on CTEP through IEP ($\beta = .38$, $p < .01$). Second, the Native Sport Model also fitted the data reasonably well ($\chi^2 = 153.192$, $df = 61$, $p < .001$; CFI = .97; TLI = .97; SRMR = .05; RMSEA = .07). Ethnic identity had a significant direct impact on IPSNC ($\beta = .44$, $p < .01$) and accounted for 19.36% of variance in IPSNC. IPSNC also significantly influenced CPSNC ($\beta = .87$, $p < .01$) and explained 75.69% of variance in CPSNC. Yet, ethnic identity did not directly influence CPSNC ($\beta = -.01$, $p > .05$). These results suggested that IPSNC fully mediates the relationship ethnic identity and CPSNC. Indirect effect of ethnic identity on CPSNC through IPSNC was also significant ($\beta = .39$, $p < .01$). Lastly, the Host Player Model showed good model fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 182.045$, $df = 73$, $p < .001$; CFI = .97; TLI = .96; SRMR = .04; RMSEA = .07). Acculturation had a significant direct impact on IPSHC ($\beta = .54$, $p < .01$) and explained 29.16% of variance in IPSHC. In addition, IPSHC were found to significant affect CPSHC ($\beta = .91$, $p < .01$) and explained 82.81% of variance in CPSHC. However, acculturation had no significant direct impact on CPSHC ($\beta = .03$, $p > .05$). These results indicated that IPSHC completely mediates the relationship between acculturation and CPSHC. Furthermore, acculturation had indirect impact on CPSHC through IPSHC.

This study examined the importance of two cultural factors (i.e., ethnic identity and acculturation) in predicting sport consumption behaviors for Asians in the host country (the U.S.) through fan identification. Theoretically, the findings of this study contribute to the cumulative knowledge in sport consumption literature by providing evidence on the mediating role of fan identification in the relationship between the cultural factors and sport consumption behaviors. In addition, this study has a unique implication in that rare attention in the sport consumption literature was paid to Asians' sport consumption behavior. Further, our findings suggest that the two cultural factors may need to be examined with additional ethnic groups (i.e., African American, Hispanics).

In addition to theoretical implications, the results of the current study provide implications for sport practitioners. First, ethnic identity primarily influenced respondents' perceptions of sport products possessing characteristics of their original culture (i.e., ethnic player playing in the U.S., native popular sports). In this regard, U.S. sport marketers should put their best efforts to employ a culturally based marketing approach to effectively communicate with Asian consumers as well as to increase identification with cultural-related sport products. Second, highly acculturated Asians living in the U.S. tend to show more favorable attitudes toward sport products reflecting attributes of the host country as a way of adapting to the U.S. Even though it seems that U.S. sport marketers do not have to utilize cultural specific marketing strategies with regard to popular sports in the host country, it may be critical for sport marketers to employ either cultural specific marketing or American style marketing strategies to attract Asians depending on their length of residence in the U.S. Detailed findings, implications, limitations, and directions for future research will be presented.