The Effect of Perceived Team Performance and CSR on Team Identification, Pride, Regional Attachment, and WOM intention

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Word of mouth (WOM) intention has been an important issue not only to researchers, but also to sport managers because social network services (SNS) are widely used for WOM purposes. Sport teams have their own SNS channels, and use them to communicate with their fans. Fans find interesting information about their teams through SNS, and they share that information with their friends, families, and colleagues. Research indicates that SNS users tend to share more positive information than negative (Berger & Iyengar, 2013). Additionally, the concept of regional attachment has been studied as an important indicator theoretically and practically in the sport context because every team has its own hometown, which provides a large group of fans (Cooper & Knotts, 2010; Heere, Walker, Yoshida, Ko, Jordan, & James, 2011; Kil, Holland, Stein, & Ko, 2012; Martínez- Herrera, 2002; Rhee & Kim, 2009).

Organizational behavioral research suggests employees’ prideful feelings due to achievements of their organization is positively related to WOM intention (Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zeithaml, 1993; Harrison-Walker, 2001; Sweeney et al., 2014), and group identification (Jones, 2010; Tyler & Blader, 2003). In the sport context, however, very few studies have investigated the role of pride in the sport context (Decrop & Derbaix, 2010).

Fans’ team identification has been indicated as an important factor in predicting their behavior (Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002; Heere et al., 2011; Kwon & Armstrong, 2002; Kwon, Trail, & James, 2007; Lock, Funk, Doyle, & McDonald, 2014; Madrigal & Chen, 2008), and suggests that team identification is related to WOM intention (Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002; Heere et al., 2011; Tsitsou & Alexandris, 2009) and regional attachment (Chapman, 2001; Pollard & Gómez, 2009; Van Der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005).

Along with regional attachment, CSR has been found to be important variables in the sport context, there has been no attempt to investigate the relationship between CSR and regional attachment. Research suggests that CSR is an important indicator of team identification (Kim, Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2010; Walker & Kent, 2009), pride (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010), regional attachment (Hallak, Brown, & Lindsay, 2013; Matten & Moon, 2008) and WOM intention (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011; Tyler & Blader, 2003; Yee, Yeung, & Edwin Cheng, 2010).

Customers’ perceived corporate ability, has been adopted as an important variable in marketing research (Berens, Riel, & Bruggen, 2005; Berens, Riel, & Rekom, 2007; Brown & Dacin, 1997; Lin, Chen, Chiu, & Lee, 2011; Walsh & Bartikowski, 2013). In the sport context, the concept can be applied as fans’ perceived team performance, and research suggests that perceived team performance can be related to team identification (Wann et al., 2010; Wann, Royalty, & Rochelle, 2002), pride (Decrop & Derbaix, 2010; Denham, 2010), and WOM intention (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011; Hartline & Jones, 1996; Maignan & Ferrell, 2004; Mazzarol, Sweeney, & Soutar, 2007; Smidts, Pruyn, & Van Riel, 2001; Yee et al., 2010). Although variables have been adopted and studied separately, no attempt has been made to investigate the relationships of fans’ perceived team performance, CSR, team identification, pride, regional attachment, and WOM intention simultaneously. The literature review enables the authors to assume the following:

H1. Fans’ perceived team performance is positively related to team identification.
H2. Fans’ perceived team performance is positively related to pride.
H3. Fans’ perceived team performance is positively related to regional attachment.
H4. Fans’ perceived team performance is positively related to WOM intention.
H5. CSR is positively related to team identification.
H6. CSR is positively related to pride.
H7. CSR is positively related to regional attachment.
H8. CSR is positively related to WOM intention.
H9. Fans’ pride is positively related to team identification.
H10. Fans’ pride is positively related to regional attachment.
H11. Fans’ pride is positively related to WOM intention.
H12. Fans’ team identification is positively related to regional attachment.
H13. Fans’ team identification is positively related to WOM intention.

Along with testing the hypothesized model, the authors tested the moderating effects of the reference group in terms of spectating sport events. Research indicates that motivations and reactions can be varied because of reference group effects (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Dos Santos, 2013; Dvir & Shamir, 2003; Park & Lessig, 1977; Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004; Weimann, 1991). The basic concept of the reference group is that people consider others’ opinions when evaluating and purchasing what they want (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Weimann, 1991). In this study, the concept was modified to ask whether the respondent was a leader who brought others to watch a sport event. To investigate the moderating effects of the reference group, the authors of this study assumed:

H14. There is a significant group difference in reference group.

To test the research hypotheses, a cross-sectional survey was conducted with fans of Korean professional sport events. A total of 262 valid samples were obtained through an online survey. All items were answered on a 7-point Likert-type scale. This study employed SPSS 21.0 for descriptive analysis, and a structural equation model was employed by using AMOS 21.0 to test the research model. As indicated by $\chi^2/df = 268.999/120 = 2.242$, $p < .001$, CFI = .961, NFI = .932, TLI = .950, SRMR = .0502, RMSEA = .069, the structural model achieved goodness of fit (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham, 2006).

Specifically, an examination of the hypothesized paths indicates significant relationships of team performance to team identification ($\beta = .195$, $p = .001$) and team performance to WOM ($\beta = .126$, $p = .019$). However, there were insignificant relationships of team performance to pride ($\beta = .064$, $p = .265$) and team performance to regional attachment ($\beta = .002$, $p = .972$). The results also indicated significant relationships of CSR to pride ($\beta = .473$, $p < .001$) and CSR to regional attachment ($\beta = .177$, $p = .020$). However, there were insignificant relationships of CSR to team identification ($\beta = .042$, $p = .557$) and CSR to WOM ($\beta = .107$, $p = .094$).

There was a significant relationship of pride to team identification ($\beta = .396$, $p < .001$) and pride to WOM ($\beta = .686$, $p < .001$). However, there was an insignificant relationship of pride to regional identification ($\beta = .044$, $p = .592$). The results also indicated a significant relationship of team identification to regional attachment ($\beta = .332$, $p < .001$) but an insignificant relationship of team identification to WOM ($\beta = .086$, $p = .186$).

Multi-group analysis demonstrated significant moderating effects of the reference group. The results of this study provides clear theoretical understandings of fans’ important indicators in predicting WOM and regional attachment. Specific results will be presented along with theoretical and managerial implications.