Personal Values, Goals, and Involvements in Sport: A Cross-Cultural Study

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While scholars have linked personal values to behaviors in a general context (Kahle, 1996; Kahle, Duncan, Dalakas, & Aiken, 2001), direct application of this topic to sport consumption has been limited (Lee & Trail, 2011). To define values, we are using Trail and Lee’s (2010) definition “as beliefs that guide an individual’s evaluation and selection of goals” (p. 15). A few examples of values include ambition, patriotism, openness, freedom, and worth ethic. Examples of goals include achievement, companionship, and materialism. It is assumed that personal values (and goals) have varying influence on individual behaviors, and thus identifying which personal values and goals have an influence on sport consumptive behaviors will help sport marketers to effectively promote their products.

Lachman, Nedd and Hinings (1994) suggested that when an individual must make a decision, multiple values come into play. The hierarchy of the values determines what decision is made. Rokeach (1973) labeled the hierarchy of values that exist in most individuals as a value system. Schwartz (1992), then, synthesized the information about values concisely. It has been argued that values play a major role in the choice of certain goals (Schwartz, 2004, 2006, 2009). Values are broader and more inclusive in concept than goals, and thus values often account for the ways to attain goals (Mumford, Connelly, Helton, Van Doorn, & Osburn, 2002). Relatively, Homer and Kahle (1988) conceptualized value-attitude-behavior hierarchy in an effort to explain how and why people act the way they do. This model assumes that human beliefs are associated with affective components, which initiate conation and consequently lead to behavior. The same behavioral processes do not always represent these beliefs or values, however.

There is substantive variance in the importance of values and goals within different individuals, and research has indicated that probable ranges of variation can be accurately predicted for individuals within particular cultural boundaries (Rokeach, 1973). This predicted range is a function of the similar and shared socialization processes of the individuals living within a particular culture (Lee & Trail, 2011). Sport is reflected on its unique culture and thus will need to be considered as a cultural boundary.

The objective of this study is to investigate the relationships among a set of personal values/goals and various sport cognitions and behavioral involvements in sport. Particularly, this study aims to cross-culturally compare those value/goal systems between American sport consumers and those sport consumers in a newly industrialized country, China. Our rationalization for the selection of the two countries for data collection is that these two countries represent the two largest economies in the world estimated by the IMF (International Monetary Fund, 2015), and many sport companies consider doing their business in China. Likewise, we believe that because values and goals are socially constructed (Rokeach, 1973), comparing the value/goal systems and how they affect consumptive sport behaviors across cultures is a worthy research effort from scholarly as well as a business stance.

Using a questionnaire (IRB approved) consisting of 103 value/goal items, three team identification items (Trail & Robinson, 2001), three attitude items (Oliver, 1992), and four behavioral items we generated, data collection began in early October and we expect to complete this study by the end of 2015. Considering the total number of questions and adequate power level in analyses, two convenience samples of between 300 and 400 will be collected (one from the U.S. and another from China). Data will be collected from various professional sporting events, aiming individuals with diverse backgrounds. The questionnaire has been tested previously and had been equipped with adequate reliability (Cronbach’s alphas ranged between .70 and .96) and validity (discriminant validity has been established via factor correlations).

Because individuals may differ in their responses to values items, Schwartz (2009) suggested correcting value scores prior to using them for analysis, the so-called MRAT Correction. Therefore, we will compute the MRAT score on
the overall items by calculating the mean score on the items for each individual. Then, all value items will be “centered” by subtracting the MRAT for each individual from each value item for that individual. The centered item scores will then be used to compute the “corrected” mean for each value construct. The same process will be used for the overall goal items as well.

To analyze the data, using SPSS, a series of multiple regression (MR) analyses will be conducted. Using the standard MR procedure, values and goals will be regressed on to each of the criterion variables (i.e., sport fanship, team identification, viewership of televised sports, sport merchandise purchase, readership of sports via print media, frequency of game attendance, listenership of sports on the radio, and internet use specific to sports). To minimize Type I error, a stringent level of alpha (.01) will be used in lieu of the conventional .05 value. Correlation analyses will be used to examine the relationships between values/goals and the chosen criterion variables. Correlation results will deem to be meaningful or substantial if they exceed 4% shared variance (Cohen, 1988). The overall analyses will be replicated for the Chinese data for a cross-cultural comparison.

Among the conceptualizations explaining human behaviors, many factors, including values and goals, play a significant role as antecedents of behaviors (Homer & Kahle, 1988; Krystalis et al, 2008; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992; Trail & Chelladurai, 2002). Our overall findings may determine if values and goals tend to predict sport cognitive involvement relatively well. Our rationalization can be retrieved to Lee and Trail’s (2011) study that approximately 28% of the variance of each cognitive measure was explained by the 16 values and 11 goals. These results were within the range of those found by Homer and Kahle (1988) who determined that values explained anywhere from 25-50% of the variance in attitudes toward products.

Lee and Trail (2011) indicated that values and goals did not predict sport behavior as well as cognitions. The amount of variance explained ranged from a low of 8% in print media readership and 9% in sport merchandise purchasing to a high of 19% in televised sport viewing. Values and goals predicted only 12-13% of the variance in game attendance, radio listenership, and internet assumption. These results were similar to Kahle et al.’s (1986) findings that values were related to various types of sports behaviors (e.g., watching sports on TV or reading sport magazines, etc.). From a cross-cultural standpoint, we expect to find varying results. For example, although American literature often indicates that values and goals predict cognitions of sport loyalty well, not much is known how values/goals affect individuals in other culture.

Overall findings may suggest some insights for applications of the overall findings into practice. For example, as indicated by Lee and Trail (2011), sport fans who attend, watch, purchase, use the Internet, and listen to the radio specific to sports, may appear to be patriotic (or loyal to their country), at least to some extent. Lee and Trail’s used World Cup soccer as an example in sport, and indicated that this type of event often exhibits high levels of rivalry in an international environment. Sport marketers and managers need to realize that patriotic support of a national team does not necessarily transfer over to a support of a new league in that sport. Many people supported the U.S. women’s soccer team in the Olympics and World Cup, but were not interested in watching or attending professional women’s soccer games in the United States. Our results from cross-cultural comparison will further provide us with some visions suggesting how practitioners should approach sport consumers in other cultures from values/goals standpoint. It is worth noting that application of values/goals within sport context/literature has been limited, especially from a cross-cultural view.