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Sporting events hosted by ethnic sport organizations provide ethnic groups an easy and salient way to participate in sport and socialize with their ethnic community. These ethnic sporting events have recently emerged to serve diverse ethnic groups in the U.S. For example, the Korean Sports Association in the U.S.A. hosts their national sports festival every two years (always at a new location). In 2015, the 18th Korean Sports Festival took place in Washington D.C. (see www.kasa-gw.org). Along with American ethnic group’s ever-growing demand for quality sport experiences, researchers have begun to recognize the importance of systematic approaches to understanding these populations. Nonetheless, we still have little information on ethnic sporting events or the participants.

Sport participants’ voluntary willingness to remain in and make efforts toward maintaining a relationship with a sport organization is referred to as their organizational commitment (Dagger & O’Brien, 2010; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Organizational commitment is especially crucial to the success of ethnic sport organizations, as their lack of resources can be compensated by participants’ volunteering or donating support. In the context of recreational sporting events, participants’ commitment to their sport organization is substantially affected by their event satisfaction and perceived benefits of the event (Green & Chalip, 1997, 1998). Green and Chalip (1998) found that in youth sport parents’ higher organizational commitment was affected by greater levels of satisfaction and perceived benefits. Given this, it is hypothesized that ethnic sporting event participants’ commitment to an organization will be positively affected by their satisfaction and the perceived benefits of the event (H1 and H2, respectively).

A number of studies have shown how a society’s socio-cultural and economic aspects are affected by sporting events (Chalip, 2006; Lee, Cornwell, & Babiak, 2012; Sparvero & Chalip, 2007). Lee et al. (2012) developed the scale of social impact of sport. The scale tested university students’ social capital, collective identities, health literacy, well-being, and human capital as a result of being involved in or exposed to different types of sports. As the participants of ethnic sporting events are committed to the organization, they seem to perceive the impact of a sporting event in three ways: individual health, the group’s collective sense, and the host place’s economic development (Agha & Taks, 2015; Chalip, 2006; Lee et al., 2012).

A number of studies have reported that persons’ commitment is related to their mental health, depending on the object to which they are committed (Jain, Giga, & Cooper, 2013; Vecina & Chacón, 2013). Given this, it is worth investigating how ethnic group’s organizational commitment to their sport organization affects health-related indicators. Since sport participation is more likely to bring health outcomes psychologically and physically, it is expected that such commitment positively influences participants’ well-being (H3) and health literacy (H4).

According to Ashforth and Mael (1989), a person’s commitment produces a number of group characteristics such as member identification and cohesion. Social capital and ethnic identity well represent such traits of ethnic groups (Sherry, Karg, & O’May, 2011; Watson & Papamaros, 2002). Therefore, it is hypothesized that an ethnic group’s commitment positively affects the members’ social capital and ethnic identity (H5 and H6, respectively). Lastly, ethnic sporting events are an economic boom to the host destination, with the participants lodging, eating, and shopping within that community. This provides members a sense of doing their part to help the local economy. This study posits that ethnic group’s organizational commitment will have a positive effect on the members’ perceived economic impact of the event in terms of supporting ethnic businesses in that area (H7) as well as American ones (H8).

The purpose of this study is to test a conceptual framework that consists of causal effects of participants’ event satisfaction and perceived benefits of an event on their organizational commitment. The model also includes the causal effects of organizational commitment on participants’ well-being, health literacy, social capital, ethnic identity,
and perceived economic contribution to ethnic and non-ethnic businesses. This study aims at identifying the socio-economic impact of ethnic sporting events by pointing to the dynamics at work among the designed constructs. This study also aims at highlighting the role of organizational commitment by showing how ethnic participants’ sport experience affect, via organizational commitment, these designed constructs.

The data were collected at the 2015 Korean Sports Festival, held in the greater Washington D.C. area. Approximately 3,000 Korean immigrants and Korean Americans from all states participated in this 3-day sporting tournaments, which included 17 sports (www.kasa-gw.org). Over two days, researchers distributed self-administered questionnaires at different sporting venues. The final sample consisted of 186 participants. A majority of the sample consisted of males (63.9%), bachelor degree holders (60.8%); the mean age was 33.4. Approximately 62% of them answered the English version. Back translation technique was applied to maintain a linguistic equivalence between English and Korean (Su & Parham, 2002).

The study adopted from Green and Chalip (1998) the specific items of event satisfaction, perceived benefits and organizational commitment. From Lee et al. (2012), the study employed participants’ well-being, health literacy, social capital, and ethnic identity. The items regarding perceived economic impact of the event are modified from Agha and Taks (2015). A seven-point Likert scale—1 (not at all) to 7 (very much)—was used for all items. All the items’ Cronbach’s $\alpha$ were found to be satisfactory, ranging from .83 to .93.

Structural equation modelling was employed to test the proposed framework. The measurement model achieved an acceptable fit for the data based on the selected approximation fit indices (Schreiber, Stage, King, Nora, & Barlow, 2006; $p < .001$, $459.21/288 = 1.59$, TLI = .95, IFI = .96, RMSEA = .06). All the model’s constructs showed acceptable levels of average variance extracted, ranging from .65 to .83 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The model’s composite reliabilities are from .74 to .91. An acceptable fit of the measurement model for the data led the study to perform comprehensive model testing. The test resulted in acceptable fit indices for the data of the sample ($p < .001$, $560.06/315 = 1.78$, CFI = .94, TLI = .94, IFI = .94, RMSEA = .07). All hypothesized paths were found to be significant ($p < .001$). More details on magnitude and the significance of each path will be shown at the presentation.

For recreational sporting events, the importance of customized strategies for a specific segment has recently risen (Tokuyama & Greenhalgh, 2014). The findings of this study have significant implications that can be leveraged toward maximizing the socio-cultural impact of ethnic sporting events. These strategies, in particular, would work for such a niche market as an ethnic sporting event and its participants. In addition, these strategies would provide insights into where ethnic sporting events contribute to the development of a host society.