Dimensions of Donor Motivation Associated with Donor Behavior in Professional Sport Nonprofit Organizations: Development of a Scale

Minhong Kim, University of Georgia
James J. Zhang (Advisor), University of Georgia

Nonprofit organizations have historically been an instrumental force in human society, which are established to address challenging social and environmental issues. To carry out corporate social responsibilities and promote overall community well-being, various professional sport nonprofit entities have emerged in recent years (Babiak et al., 2013; Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Heinz et al., 2014; Lacey & Kennett-Hensel, 2016). In fact, today almost all professional sport leagues and teams in North America have initiated some forms of philanthropic programs (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Kim & Walker, 2013; Walker & Kent, 2009) or even formed their own nonprofit organizations (Kim & Zhang, 2016; McGowan & Mahon, 2009), and are actively engaged in charitable community activities (Extejt, 2004). As most such nonprofits are classified as public charities that rely heavily on contributions and support from having a large donor base (Sparvero & Kent, 2014), they must focus on increasing donor commitment rather than merely receiving contributions from franchise owners and professional athletes. Despite the growing interest in the sport management literature regarding socially responsible initiatives of professional sport entities, a dearth of research has explored donor motivations in the realm of professional sports. Given that most previous research on sport philanthropy has focused on college athletics donor motivation (Billing et al., 1985; Mahony et al., 2003; Staurowsky et al., 1996; Verner et al., 1998) and why and how sport entities are utilizing philanthropic initiatives (Kent & Walker, 2010; Sheth & Babiak, 2010; Tainsky & Babiak, 2011; Trendafilova et al., 2013), better understanding donors’ primary motives would be the first step for professional sport nonprofit managers to enhance donor relationships and effectively operate and manage their charity programs. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to develop and validate the Scale of Professional Sport Donor Motivation (SPSDM) for measuring donor motivations in the professional sport setting by building on the initial research work conducted by Kim and Zhang (2016) and examining the influence of donor motivations on donor behavior (i.e., future intentions and word-of-mouth).

In addition to conducting a comprehensive review of literature, initial development of the SPSDM took into consideration of the research findings and the measurement framework by Kim and Zhang (2016). They identified seven conceptual areas related to motivations for donating to professional sport nonprofit organizations through a rigorous qualitative research process. By interviewing two professional sport managers who worked for their community outreach programs and receiving open-ended questionnaires from 30 donors who had contributed to professional sport nonprofit organizations, fan identification, awareness of needs/causes, personal cause involvement, charity image, community support, perceived effectiveness, and altruistic reason were revealed from the study. Closely following the procedures for scale development outlined by Churchill (1979) and Hinkin, Tracey, and Enz (1997), a total of 42 items, six items for each factor, were derived for the preliminary SPSDM. In addition to the SPSDM items, the survey form also included two donor behavior factors (i.e., future intentions and word-of-mouth) with six items for each factor for the scale validation process, along with sociodemographic variables for sample description purpose. All of the items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. To collect data, an online survey provider (i.e., Amazon Mechanical Turk) was utilized to conduct the survey. In total, data from 511 research participants were collected.

The data set was then randomly divided into two halves: one for an exploratory factor analysis (EFA; n = 256) and the other for a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and a structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis (n = 255). Adopting maximum likelihood extraction with varimax rotation techniques, the EFA yielded a three-factor model with 31 items, which were labeled as Fan Identification, Community Support, and Charity Image based on an eigenvalue equal to or greater than 1.0 (Kaiser, 1974) and a factor loading equal to or greater than .40 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Conducting the CFA with maximum likelihood estimation, the initial model did not fit the data...
well; subsequently, a model re-specification process was carried out, and the results of the follow-up analyses indicated an acceptable fit of the three-factor model with the data on 22 retained items ($\chi^2/df = 2.638$, RMSEA = .080, CFI = .92). All reliability and validity estimates (Cronbach’s alpha, AVE values, and factor loadings and correlations) for the three-factor model fell within the acceptable ranges.

After developing the SPSDM, a validation process was made to examine the relationships between the SPSDM dimensions and donor behavioral outcomes (i.e., word-of-mouth and future intention) of professional sport nonprofit organizations by using the latest version of AMOS software. Before testing the relationships among constructs, a CFA was conducted to determine the dimensionality of all constructs in the structural model and examine the goodness of fit to the data after the deletion of one Fan Identification item due to a low factor loading. The results of CFA provided evidence of acceptable fit of the measurement model ($\chi^2/df = 2.540$, RMSEA = .078, CFI = .90). In addition, considering the factor loadings (from .70 to .87), Cronbach’s alpha (from .86 to .95), AVE values (from .89 to .92), and factor correlations (from .48 to .94), the measurement properties were deemed reliable and valid. The results of the structural relationships between donor motivation and donor behavior revealed some notable findings. The second-order professional sport donor motivation was shown to have significant impact on donor behavior as a whole ($\gamma = .83$). In addition, the direct effects of the independent variables (Fan Identification, Community Support, and Charity Image) showed statistically significant influences on future intention ($\gamma = .43$, .44, and .68, respectively), as well as word-of-mouth ($\gamma = .40$, .82, and .68, respectively).

The findings of this study have shed some light on identifying unique donor motivation factors in the professional sport setting. Particularly, the community support factor and charity image were found to be primary motives for donors to make monetary contributions to professional sport nonprofit organizations, which is unlike collegiate athletic donors whose core motives were receiving tangible benefits and enhancing prestige of their alma mater (Billing et al., 1985; Ko et al., 2013; Mahony et al., 2003; Staurowsky et al., 1996; Verner et al., 1998). For professional sport nonprofit managers, addressing the interests and needs of the local community would be helpful when initiating philanthropic programs. Maintaining a positive and favorable image of a team or athlete would also compromise the higher level of team and athlete identifications, which would eventually lead to positive donor behavior outcomes.