The Trickle-Down Effect of 2018 Winter Olympics: Does Hosting the Olympics Affect Young People’s Motive, Constraint and Intention to Participate in Sport?

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Building a sport participation legacy among younger generations is one of the key objectives and justifications for hosting the Olympic Games. The legacy is grounded on ‘trickle-down effect’ (i.e., hosting the Olympic Games and watching elite sporting role models will stimulate people’s interest to participate in sport at grass-root level; Coalter, 2007). However, studies on recent Olympics do not always indicate successful delivery of sport participation legacy (Chang, 2016), as studies report positive (Dong & Manga, 2008; IOC, 2013), insignificant (Weed, Coren, & Fiore, 2009), mixed (both positive and negative; Veal et al., 2012), minimal (Hindson et al., 1994), and limited (affecting those already active in sport; Sportscotland, 2004) evidences. Researchers (e.g., Coalter, 2007; Hindson et al., 1994; Reis, Rodrigues, Sousa-Mast, & Gurgel, 2014) explained the unsuccessful capitalization of Olympics-opportunity in promoting sport participation with supply-side failure (e.g., ineffective marketing/promotional strategies). Thus, developing strategies is necessary; understanding people’s decision-making process for sport participation will lay the groundwork.

Motivation is “the energizing force that activates behavior” (Hawkins, Best, & Coney, 2004; p.87) that is formed based on needs, values, and goals, which can be categorized into internal and external motives (Kim & Trail, 2010). Constraint is a factor “perceived or experienced by individuals to limit the formation of leisure preferences and to inhibit/prohibit participation” (Jackson, 1997; p.416); there are three types that are intrapersonal (personal states/attributes), interpersonal (relations), and structural (physical/environmental factors) constraints (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). In making decisions to engage in sport, individuals negotiate between motives and constraints. Fueled by motivation, one should overcome constraints to engage in an activity. Therefore, identifying the key motives and constraints is critical in understanding one’s behavior.

With the case of 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics and young people (late adolescent) living in the host country, Kim (2017) identified the key motives and constraints for participating in winter sport and physical activity. For winter sport, internal motives (i.e., curiosity/experience, pleasure, escape, achievement, physical health, body image, and social interaction), external motives (i.e., accessibility, promotion, and have to participate), intrapersonal constraint (i.e., lack of knowledge/skill, lack of interest, and lack of energy), interpersonal constraint (i.e., no one to do with), and structural constraints (i.e., accessibility, time constraints and commitments, cost, safety concerns, and weather) were identified. The motives/constraints for physical activity was similar to that of winter sport; two differences were that routine/guilt was added as an internal motive replacing curiosity/experience, and weather was dropped from structural constraint. The need to empirically examine the motive and constraint’s influence on one’s decision-making to engage in sport was highlighted (Ahn & Hwang, 2011; Hughes, 2012; Kim, 2017). For a better understanding on the trickle-down effect, learning how the motives/constraints are impacted by the exposure to the Olympic Games is suggested (Coalter, 2007; Hindson et al., 1994). Thus, a study is proposed to (1) examine the influence of key motives and constraints on intentions to participate in sport (i.e., winter sport or physical activity), and (2) assess whether and how the influences of motives and constraints changes before and after the Olympic games.

A study is designed based on pre- and post-event surveys with young people (ages 17 to 21; late adolescents) living in Gangwon province (host community) and Seoul (non-host major domestic city). A questionnaire is constructed to assess one’s motivation, constraint, behavioral intentions for sport participation, and demographics (e.g., Alexandris, Kouthouris, & Girgolas, 2007; Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002; Funk, Alexandris, & Ping, 2009; Gilbert & Hudson, 2000; Pelletier et al., 1995; Trail & James, 2001; Trail & Kim, 2011); scales from previous studies were adopted and modified to fit our context. Back-to-back translation is used to develop Korean and Chinese version questionnaires (Brislin, Lonner, & Thorndike, 1973). Respondents will be recruited through stratified (based on gender)
convenience sampling using intercept method at college campuses, with target sample size of 250 respondents per city (completing both pre- and post-event surveys). Pre-event survey will be administered from 85 to 75 days before the 2018 Games, in the beginning of winter season and before the Olympic-hype. Post-event survey will take place from 1 to 10 days after the conclusion of the 2018 Winter Olympics. Compiling the data collected from the two surveys and after testing the psychometric properties, a series of structural equation model analyses will be conducted. Path analysis will examine the relations among motives, constraints, and intentions for sport participation. Multiple-group SEM with mean structure will compare the three constructs based on time (pre- vs. post-games), city (host vs. non-host), and time x city.

As of the current stage, the questionnaires are constructed and submitted for IRB approval. Data will be collected and analyzed from November 2017 to March 2018. Findings will be ready for presentation by late May 2018. The findings of this study will highlight (1) key motives and constraints forming intentions for sport participation, and (2) how the motives, constraints, and intentions change after hosting/watching the 2018 Winter Olympics. Theoretically, the findings will contribute to learning the decision-making for sport participation, with focus on late adolescent, Asian market, and winter sport. The interaction (or negotiation) between motives and constraints can be assessed, by simultaneously examining the two factors as predictors of sport participation intention (Funk et al., 2009; Kim & Trail, 2010). Novel insights on sport participation legacy will be available, with focus on the process (i.e., the change of ‘negotiation of motivation and constraint’ over the Olympics) and outcome (i.e., behavioral intention) of trickle-down effects. Practical implications will be provided for developing strategies to enhance the trickle-down effect and boost sport participation. Strategies to stimulate motives and mitigate constraints that are identified as key determinants of one’s intention to participate in sport will be suggested.