The Impact of Acculturation and Perceived Risk on Sport Consumption Behavior of Asian and Hispanic Americans

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Hispanics and Asians account for nearly $3 billion in annual spending in the United States (Pew, 2016), positioning them as groups of interest for marketers. In the study of ethnic populations, scholars have identified two factors that have an impact on the consumer behavior decision making process – acculturation and perceived risk (Berry, 1997; Featherman & Pavlou, 2003). Yet, sport marketers have by-and-large failed to adequately study these elements when examining differences in sport consumer behavior across ethnic populations (Gacio Harrolle & Trail, 2007; Kwon & Trail, 2001).

Through the use of mixed research methods (i.e., survey distribution, statistical analyses, open-ended questions), I investigated the impact that acculturation and perceived risk have on the consumption of sport in general and American football specifically. Empirical inquiries were guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1985; 1991). I first examined the impact that acculturation has on sport in general and football specific media and merchandise consumption (Geoscape, 2014; Karg & McDonald, 2011). Second, six elements representing perceived risk (i.e., financial, performance, physical, psychological, social, and time; Dholakia, 2001; Stone & Gronhaug, 1993) were tested as mediating factors in the relationship between acculturation and consumption of American football media and merchandise. Third, respondents were asked to answer an open-ended question on their perceptions of risk in their daily lives.

Empirical results were dissimilar to previous findings in the literature. Through a review of the results, I concluded both Asian (n = 273) and Hispanic (n = 303) respondents were not avid consumers of sport with respondents reporting mean scores of 4.28 and below on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) for all consumption items. I also found that both Asian and Hispanic respondents strongly disagreed with items representing perceptions of risk when consuming American football (i.e., mean scores below 4). Further, no significant differences in sport consumption were reported across levels of acculturation for both Asian, F (12, 701) = 1.58, p = .092; Wilk's Λ = .932, and Hispanic respondents, F (12, 780) = 1.69, p = .065; Wilk's Λ = .934.

A conclusion from these findings is that degree of familiarity with the perceived culture in the United States does not seem to impact sport consumption behavior. Based on the decision tree for establishing and understanding types of mediation (Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010), evidence was also provided in favor of significant mediating effects of risk in the relationships between acculturation and consumption of American football. However, considering the low mean scores across all risk factors the mediating effects were not found to be significant or have a practical application for this group of respondents.

Based on the comprehensive results from the study, I offer theoretical and practical implications for the study of minority ethnic groups. Specifically, I call attention to the results of the open-ended question and how individuals of minority status in the United States perceive risk in their daily lives. I conclude by providing several suggestions and directions for future scholarship on sport consumer behavior and consumption among ethnic minorities.