

Relationship between motivational factors of online sport consumption and future behavioral intentions among Korean college sport fans

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Abstract:

The relationship between sport consumers' motivation and purchase behaviors is a common antecedent in literature focusing on individuals' actual online consumption. This study examined a causal relationship between motivational patterns of online consumption and actual behaviors for Korean sport fans. A convenient sample of South Korean students in 150 numbers of 5 classes at a major private university in the western part of Korea participated in this study. The results indicated that while team and sport related factors such as convenience, team support, and technology knowledge directly influence Korean students' online consumption, interpersonal communication, and escape did not influence online consumption. In addition, Korean students' online consumption positively leads to higher level of merchandise products and game attendance. The results of this study suggest online sport marketers should understand different motivations and behaviors, and develop different marketing strategies to predict sport consumers.

Key Words: Sport consumer online motivation, Sport media consumption, Merchandise consumption, Game attendance

Introduction

More than 40 % of the world's population has used the Internet, including approximately 85% of the population uses in Asia (Internet Live Stats, 2016). Demonstrating the rapid growth of medium of, 40% of participations indicated that they had personal computers and used the Internet for many purposes such reading articles, shopping, watching video, and communicating with others (Hur, Ko, & Valacich, 2007). In particular, South Korea was ranked as one of the most connected online markets; more than 80 % of the population of South Korea had used the Internet, Korea's internet service provide the highest speed and significant capabilities of Wi-Fi services worldwide (Statista, 2015). In addition, 99.8 % of Koreans between ages 10 and 30 connected to the Internet every day (Statista, 2015), and 53 % of college students in Korea had visited a sport-related website through the Internet (Jang, Hwang, & Choi, 2008). While college students are called as the net generation and digital natives (e.g., native speakers of the language of computers, video games, and the Internet), and it is important to understand major internet users' motive for consumption and their patterns in the sport industry (Helsper & Eynon, 2010; Prensky, 2001; Yong, Gates, & Harrison, 2016).

Sports consumers visit sports-related websites to check scores and team products, and purchase tickets to sporting events, and partake of entertainment resources such as articles and videos (Suh & Chang, 2006). Separately, more than \$3 billion has been spent online on sports-related merchandising, including apparel, footwear, and game tickets (Jupiter, 2000). This growth in the sports industry indicates that the Internet is becoming a major tool for sports marketing at the same time that successful business strategy directly leads to organizational accomplishments with ongoing revenue sources (Brown, 2003; Duncan & Campbell, 1999; Hur et al., 2007; Kahle & Meeske, 1999). Moreover, Hur et al. (2007) stated, "sport marketers need to identify psychological needs and predict consumption decisions of online sport consumers" (Hur et al., 2007, p. 522). Sport consumption is characterized by individuals' expenditure on and uses of services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and desires (Solomon, 2014), and many scholars have investigated significant needs related to online sports consumption, such as convenience, entertainment, escape, interpersonal communication, team support, and technical knowledge (Joines, Scherer, & Scheufele, 2003; Hur et al., 2007; Koraonkar & Wolin, 1999; Parsons, 2002; Seo & Green, 2008; Stafford & Stafford, 2001).

Increasingly, the relationship between sport consumers' motivations and their purchase behaviors has been a common antecedent in literature, focusing on individuals' actual online consumption decisions and its relationship with consumers' needs (Carbarino & Strahilevitz, 2004; Wann, Grieve, Zapalac, & Pease, 2008). Another important aspect of online sports consumption with a focus on improving business success concerns dissimilarities in sports consumption patterns based on motivational patterns (James & Ross, 2004; McDonald,

Milne, & Hong, 2002). In particular, Ko (2016) noted that there is a need to understand Korean online sports motivation and its patterns of behavior in Korea given that Korea provides the most advanced high-speed Internet technology, which in led to among the most extensive online consumption in the world (Ko, Choi, Lee, Lee, & Segev, 2016).

Although a number of studies have specified motivational factors that influence online consumption (James & Ross, 2004; McDonald et al., 2002; Wann et al., 2001; Wann, Grieve, Zapalac, & Pease, 2008), there is still little known about how motivation to use sports-related website usages differs, and how it influences consumer behaviors (e.g., visiting game events, watching games on TV, and purchasing merchandise). Therefore, this study has two purposes: 1) to examine any causal relationships between motivational patterns of online sports consumption and actual behaviors among Korean sport fans and 2) to examine the different patterns of online consumer behaviors based on motivations. Thus, this study will contribute to expanding online sports consumer's distinct motives and behaviors as part of the current motivation literatures. The results of this study suggest that online sport marketers should understand different consumer motivations and behaviors and develop different marketing strategies to predict sports consumption patterns.

Theoretical Framework

Motivation for Online Sports Consumption

Uses and gratification theory was introduced for decades ago to explain consumers' satisfaction and their usage (Baran, 2007; Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). In early researches, the groundwork approach examined the media at the functional points, including readers' motivation, patterns, and perspective in consuming newspapers, magazines, and radio programing (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). As communication and media technologies have been developing, such as cable television, then the World Wide Web, and now the Internet, scholars have extended the research on gratification theory to cover the developing communication channels (Hardin, Koo, Ruihley, Dittmore, & McGreevey, 2012). Based on satisfaction and needs, uses and gratification theory was developed to address goal-directed media usage in interpersonal communication, satisfaction of personal needs, self-identified needs and choices, influences both internal and external, socialization with others, entertainment, status seeking, and information seeking (Clavio, 2008; Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973; McQuail, Blumler, & Brown, 1972; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009; Rubin, 1983).

On a separate track, sports psychologists have been focusing on individuals' psychological motives for consuming sports to predict consumers' behaviors based on their needs (Carbarino & Strahilevitz, 2004; James & Ross, 2004; McDonald et al., 2002; Wann et al., 2008). The research has examined diverse consumer motivations such as why fans attend sporting events, purchase merchandise, and watch televised sports (Beccarini & Ferrand, 2006; Funk, Ridinger, & Moorman, 2004; Hardin et al., 2012; Lee, Trail, & Anderson, 2009; Mahony, Gladden, & Funk, 2003; McDonald & Stavros, 2007; Raney & Depalma, 2006; Robinson, Trail, & Kwon, 2004).

Unlike the case with spectators' motivations for sports consumption, online consumption in particular provides easy access to sports-related information (Sheehan, 2002; Stafford & Stafford, 2001), including sharing opinions with others (Stafford & Stafford, 2001; Swinyard & Smith, 2003), supporting a favorite team (Seo & Green, 2008), and escaping from daily routine (Chiger, 2001; Teo, 2002). In addition, scholars have investigated why sports consumers use sports websites and how this use is related to actual behaviors (Ha, Ha, Han, 2013; Hur et al., 2007; Seo & Green, 2008). Previous studies identified numerous motivations for online sports consumption including convenience, interpersonal communication, escape, entertainment, team support, and technology (Hur et al., 2007; Seo & Green, 2008).

For example, *convenience* refers to the fact that sports consumers face no barriers in time and place once it is convenient to purchase products and gather information (Hur et al., 2007; Kaufman-Scarborough & Lindquist, 2002). In particular, the Internet allows consumers to search a variety of websites for sports-related information regardless of time or place and to compare sports-related products that they desire to purchase without visiting traditional stores. This benefit of online consumption provides convenience for sports consumers, which has significant advantages regarding their purchase behavior (Amaro & Duarte, 2014; Wu & Chang, 2005). *Entertainment* refers to sports consumers' psychological benefits from using the Internet to seek fun and games and chat online (Hur et al., 2007; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999), and *escape* refers to relaxing and forgetting one's daily reality (Seo & Green, 2008). In particular, the Internet offers a significant environment for consumers to escape from everyday life through seeking entertainment, which reduces stress (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999; Parson, 2002; Teo et al., 1999). The fifth motivation for online sport consumption is *interpersonal communication*, which is described as individuals' desires for relationships with others on the Internet (Hur et al., 2007; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999). According to Sung (2015), sports consumers' common interests in certain teams or players generate a strong sense of belonging by their sharing personal opinions and interactions with others (Sung, Koo, Kim, & Dittmore, 2015). In particular, the Internet provides a significant environment for sports consumers to communicate with others through live chats and sharing comments related to articles and videos. Thus, the social exchange in online sports consumption is another significant motivator (Hur et al., 2007; Joines et al., 2003). *Team support* refers to sport consumers' motivation to express support for their favorite teams (Hardin et al., 2012; Seo & Green, 2008). In addition, knowledge of insider information about teams is interpreted as team support, and awareness about the team itself demonstrates that a consumer is a true

fan of the team (Hardin et al., 2012). Last, online sports consumers tend to visit sports-related websites to gain *technical knowledge* (McDonald et al., 2002; Ryckman & Hamel, 1993; Seo & Green, 2008). Because sports apply and operate under a number of rules, techniques, and strategies depending on the situation, sports consumers are motivated to learn specific knowledge about sports and teams through websites (McDonald et al., 2002). In addition, more knowledge of the game or sport results yield in enhanced perceptions of the teams and athletes as well as sports consumers' spectating behaviors (McDonald et al., 2002; Ryckman & Hamel, 1993).

Motives on Consumer Behaviors

Consumer behaviors play a significant role in the success of sports organizations. Teams can construct marketing tools to influence consumers' decision-making processes by better understanding consumers' motives (Svatosová, 2013). Sports consumers' game attendance, merchandise consumption, and media consumption (such as watching television) are components of revenue production for sports organizations and have a direct impact on the effectiveness of advertising and promotional strategies (Fink et al., 2002). Previous studies have found differences in consumer behavior patterns based on motivations (Fink et al., 2002; Wann, 1995; Wann, Schrader, & Wilson, 1999). For example, sports consumers who have more knowledge about teams tend to attend sporting events (Fink et al., 2002; Gantz & Wenner, 1991), and they are also more likely to watch games to gather information about the teams (Tuggle & Owen, 1997; Weiller & Higgs, 1999). In addition, understanding players' statistics and tracking teams directly influence game attendance as well as purchasing merchandise (Fink et al., 2002).

Accordingly, another important aspect of online sports consumption concerns potential dissimilarities in sports consumers' motivational patterns, and the literature on online sports consumption indicates that there are many different motives for sports consumers to visit sports-related websites (Wann et al., 2008). For example, Dhurup and Mafini (2013) investigated sports consumers' online sports consumption based on eight different motives: information, entertainment, escape, fanship, team support, and technical knowledge. The study results showed that information sharing and entertainment were the significant motives to visit websites and that escape was the primary motive for consumers' intentions to purchase game tickets in the future. In another study, social relationships through online expression were a potential motive for spectators (Palmer & Thompson, 2007), and social interactions with others in the online space were significant in understanding their culture (Norman, 2014). In addition, finding out team statistics and schedules and watching videos of favorite teams were the most significant motives for fans to use team websites (Abdourazakou, Lorgnier, O'Rourke, O'Reilly, & Abeza, 2013).

Ko et al. (2016) studied online sports motivation and chat patterns for popular sports in Korea and found, for example, that fans chatted frequently and rapidly. Additionally, more than 88% of the sampled participants preferred to watch sports games at home, and most, 61.6%, used mobile devices. The authors tracked their participants' behaviors and found that Korean sports fans' motives for online consumption related to sharing feelings, fun, information, and social interaction. Specifically, they noted that online sports consumption creates unique social interactions compared with off-line consumption and that new advances in IT such as high-speed Internet and Web 2.0 allow sports consumers to share information and communicate with others rapidly and frequently (Ko et al., 2016).

Although a number of studies noted that sports consumers show significantly different motivational patterns depending on their consumption patterns (James & Ross, 2004; McDonald, Milne, & Hong, 2002; Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001; Wann, Grieve, Zapalac, & Pease, 2008; Weener & Gantz, 1989), little is still known about how consumers' motives for sports-related website usage differ and influence actual consumer behaviors. Therefore, this study has two purposes: 1) to examine the causal relationships between motivational patterns of online consumption and actual behaviors among Korean sport fans and 2) to examine the different patterns of online consumer behaviors based on motives. The study findings should contribute to explaining online sports consumers' distinct motives and behaviors in the current motivation literature. In addition, the results of this study suggest that online sport marketers should understand different motives and behaviors and develop different marketing strategies to predict sports consumers' actions.

Rh1: Motivations for online consumption will positively relate with actual online usage.

Rh2: Consumers' online usage will positively affect their behavioral intention to purchase merchandise.

Rh3: Consumers' online usage will positively affect their behavioral intentions to attend game events in the future.

Material & methods

Participants

The data were collected by an online survey method and a convenient sample of South Korean students in 150 numbers of 5 classes at a major private university in the western part of Korea, and an email with a survey link designed by googledoc was sent. Although there is a lack of external validity of collecting data from college students at one university in a country, the chosen sample is considered to be the most useful ages in terms of media usage and sport participation.

With author information, importance of the participation of the contingent employees, purpose of the study, time required to complete questionnaire (10 minutes), rights of participants, and risks involved, the participations were asked to complete a self-administered on-line survey. The 111 numbers of responses were

received, which is an initial response rate of 32.0 percent. Follow up notification has been reported to increase response rate for online survey (Dillman, 2000; Turner & Jordan, 2008). One week after the first email, follow-up emails with the same information in the first email were sent twice every other week. As a result, 110 additional questionnaires were gathered, providing a final response rate of 30.8 percent.

Measurement

Sport consumers' motivation for online consumption was measured by 18 questions of six dimensions including convenience, entertainment, interpersonal communication, escape, team support and technical knowledge (Hur et al., 2007; Seo & Green, 2008). The scale of motivation for online consumption was rooted in the previous work of Hur's (2007) Scale of Motivation for Online Sport Consumption (SMOS) and Seo and Green's (2008) Motivations Scale for Online Sport Consumption (MSSOC). The scale in the current study was slightly modified for purpose of this study. For example, 3 items of convenience (e.g., flexibility for information, easiness of searching, convenience of information online, easiness of gathering information), 3 items of entertainment (e.g., a form of recreation, entertainment value, good time), 3 items of interpersonal communication (e.g., getting along with others, meeting others, not being alone), 3 items of escape (e.g., escape from reality, relaxing period, forgetting about work), 3 items of team support (e.g., team interested in following, supporting my team, demonstrating team support), and 3 items of technical knowledge (e.g., knowing the technical aspect of the sport, knowing the rules of the sport, knowing the strategies of the sport) (Hur et al., 2007; Seo & Green, 2008). In addition, all items of sport consumers' motivation for online consumption were anchored by 5-point Likert scale (1 = 'Strongly Disagree,' and 5 = 'Strongly agree'). Previous studies supported the internal consistencies within the dimensions, convenience .86, Entertainment .86, interpersonal communication .90, escape .77, Team support .77, and Technical knowledge, .88 exceeded the acceptable level .70 suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) (Hur et al., 2007; Seo & Green, 2008).

Two different dependent variables including merchandise consumption and game attendance were measured for consumer behavior (Andrew, Kim, O'Neal, Greenwell, & James, 2008; Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002). In addition, the three constructs were anchored by 5-point Likert scale (1 = 'Strongly Disagree,' and 5 = 'Strongly agree'). Merchandise purchases contained 3 items measuring buying team clothing, buying apparels for others, and easily finding 'licensed team merchandise. The reliability of the merchandise purchase was reported as .75 (Fink et al., 2002). Second, 3 items of game attendance (e.g., attending games in next time, attending at least one game in another city, attending next year) were adapted from Han (2009)'s study. the reliability of game attendance was ranged from .77 to .88 (Han & Ryu, 2009; Kim, Byon, Yu, Zang, & Kim, 2013). Cronbach's alphas for all constructs exceeded the recommended benchmark of .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Data Analysis

The analysis of the survey was performed by SPSS 23 and AMOS 23 programs. Firstly, Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) conducted to evaluate the dimensionality and validity of psychometric properties in motivation for online sport consumption, merchandise consumption, media consumption, and game attendance. Second, structure equation modeling (SEM) was used to examine the direct relationships between independent variables in motivations for online sport consumption and dependent variables in merchandise consumption, media consumption, and game attendance.

Results

Psychometric Evaluation of the Measures

Firstly, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed to measure relationships among each latent construct (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). The numeric value was fixed as one at every first item in the latent construct. The estimates of exact, absolute, parsimonious, and incremental fit indices indicated a good model fit for the initial measurement model: $\chi^2 (435) = 452.902$, $p < .001$; Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR) = .070; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .050; Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .943. The selected model indices indicated that the modified measurement model could be utilized for further examination of causal relationships among the latent constructs.

Evidence of convergent validity was produced by calculating average variance extracted (AVE) of each latent construct (Hair, et. al., 2006). In the current study, the estimated AVE was ranged from .522 to .872 for all latent constructs, which exceeded .50 cut off thresholds recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). In addition, the estimated AVE scores for each latent factor higher than the squared phi correlations (ϕ^2) in the measurement model indicated satisfactory levels of discriminant validity (Hair, et. al., 2006).

Table 1. Psychometric Evaluation of the Measures

Latent Construct	Items	Factor Loading	Reliability	AVE	ϕ^2
Convenience	CON 1	0.871	.954	.872	.008 - .088
	CON 2	0.828			
	CON 3	0.811			
Entertainment	ENT 1	0.742	.737	.611	.029 - .384
	ENT 2	0.723			

	ENT 3	0.846			
Interpersonal Communication	INCOM 1	0.703	.759	.513	.013 - .686
	INCOM 2	0.725			
	INCOM 3	0.833			
Escape	ECAP 1	0.955	.761	.536	.008 - .686
	ECAP 2	0.545			
	ECAP 3	0.513			
Team Support	TMSP 1	0.845	.853	.659	.029 - .366
	TMSP 2	0.802			
	TMSP 3	0.748			
Technology Knowledge	TEC 1	0.729	.826	.612	.038 - .366
	TEC 2	0.711			
	TEC 3	0.821			
Media Usage	USAGE 1	0.688	.843	.524	.027 - .524
	USAGE 2	0.538			
	USAGE 3	0.714			
	USAGE 4	0.831			
	USAGE 5	0.797			
Merchandise Purchase	PURCHASE 1	0.841	.805	.594	.022 - .524
	PURCHASE 2	0.444			
	PURCHASE 3	0.716			
Game Attendance	ATTEN 1	0.887	.815	.398	.029 - .415
	ATTEN 2	0.897			
	ATTEN 3	0.686			

Decomposition of the SEM

The model indices derived from the SEM revealed a good fit to the data; $\chi^2(354) = 571.106$, $p < .001$, SRMR = .069, RMSEA = .064 CFI = .900. In addition, the parameters from media usage to sport consumers' game attendance and merchandise consumption were significant. Decomposition of the significant relationships revealed that convenience, team support and technical knowledge were significant motives for media consumption while interpersonal communication and escape were not motive factors for Korean students. Within the significant factors in online motivations, team support ($t = .631$, $p < .001$) was the strongest factor to motive Korean students to use online media. However, entertainment motive ($t = -.222$, $p = .022$) was negatively related to online consumption for students.

Table 2. Decomposition of Effects with Standardized Values

Outcome	Predictor	Effects		
		Direct	Indirect	Total
Online consumption	Convenience	.209*		.209
	Entertainment	-.281*		-.281
	Interpersonal communication	.737		.737
	Escape	.855		.855
	Team support	.648**		.648
	Technology knowledge	.201**		.201
Merchandise consumption	Convenience		.154*	.154
	Entertainment		-.207*	-.207
	Interpersonal communication		.542	.542
	Escape		.629	.629
	Team support		.477*	.477
	Technology knowledge		.148*	.148
Game Attendance	Online consumption	.736**		.736
	Convenience		.138*	.138
	Entertainment		-.186*	-.186
	Interpersonal communication		.488	.488
	Escape		.567	.567
	Team support		.429*	.429
	Technology knowledge		.133*	.133
	Online consumption	.662**		.662

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

In addition, the significant relationships derived from SEM revealed that online consumption for undergraduate students in Korea directly increase the level of merchandise purchases ($t = 1.736, p < .001$) and the level of game attendance ($t = .662, p < .001$). For instance, one standard deviation increase in online consumption will lead to a .736 standard deviation increase in the merchandise purchase and a .662 standard deviation increases in game attendance.

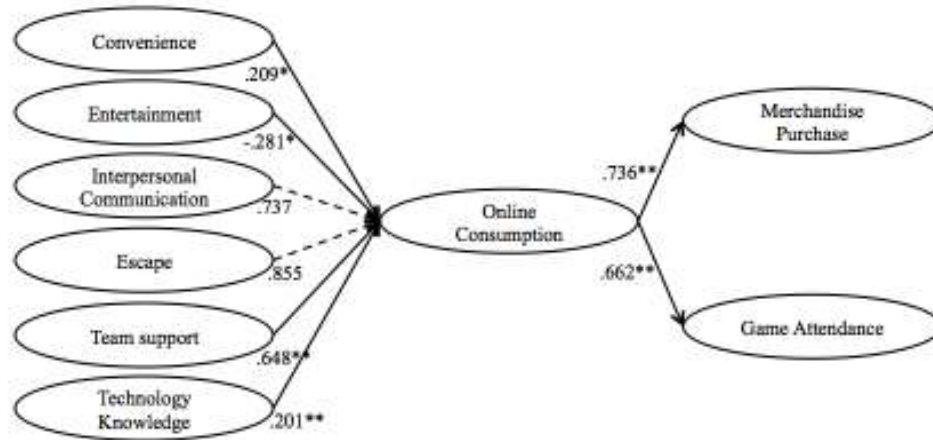


Figure 1. The Full SEM Model Labeled With the Significant Standardized Effects

Discussion

Online sports consumption concerns potential dissimilarities in sports consumers' motivational patterns, and the literature indicates that there are many different motives for sports consumers to visit sports-related websites (Wann et al., 2008). The purposes of this study were to examine the causal relationships between Korean sports fans' motivational patterns of online consumption and their actual behaviors and to examine the different patterns of online consumer behaviors based on their motives.

One of the findings from this study suggested that sports fans' online motives were directly related to their consumer behaviors; for example, motivational factors including convenience, team support, and technology knowledge directly increased the levels of online consumption. Many sports psychologists have observed that understanding consumers' needs is important for predicting their behaviors, and this study's findings significantly suggest that Korean student fans' psychological needs related to online consumption are to gather information and conveniently purchase products, demonstrate their support as true fans, and learn specific knowledge about sports' and teams' rules, techniques, and strategies (Garbarino & Strahilevitz, 2004; Hardin et al., 2012; James & Ross, 2004; McDonald et al., 2002; Ryckman & Hamel, 1993; Seo & Green, 2008; Schrader & Wilson, 1999; Wann et al., 2008). However, interpersonal communication and escape did not influence online consumption for Korean student consumers. It seems that Korean students are more likely go online for direct sports- or team-related information rather than subsidiary functions in their college lives. For example, they were more likely to participate in other social activities provided by their schools such as volunteer services and social clubs to affiliate with other students rather than athletics. According to the Korean Olympic Committee (2015), there is still a lack of sports team operations in Korea; only 61 teams are active at 245 colleges. Although college sports has been growing and significant amounts of money are being invested, it is necessary to develop better college sports environments as communication and escape tools to assist Korean students. Positive social interactions through interpersonal communication during sports directly enhance students' sense of belonging to their universities (Sung et al., 2015). Moreover, students' significant sense of belonging could encourage them to purchase merchandise and attend sporting events (Kwon & Armstrong, 2002; Trail, Fink, & Anderson, 2003).

Consumers' actual behaviors play a significant role in sports organizations' success, and I found in this study that Korean sports fans' online consumption was influenced by convenience, entertainment, team support, and technology knowledge, all of which directly affected their behaviors such as game attendance and merchandise purchases. According to Fink et al. (2002), game attendance and merchandise consumption are the most significant constituents of revenue production for sports organizations, and the findings of this study suggest that online consumption motivated by team support is the strongest influence on consumer behaviors. In addition, Korean sports fans who show the strongest team support have more opportunities to purchase merchandise. The results of this study are consistent with those from previous studies. For instance, Gantz and Wenner (1991) and Fink et al. (2002) found that sports fans' attendance at sporting events was directly influenced by their knowledge. In addition, the fans who have the most knowledge about a team or sport have a greater tendency to watch sports and purchase merchandise because understanding statistics and tracking team information could enhance consumers' excitement to watch games and their identification with their teams (Fink et al., 2002; Tuggle & Owen, 1997; Weiller & Higgs, 1999).

Conclusions

In this study, I examined the causal relationships between motivational patterns of online consumption and actual behaviors among Korean sports fans. The results show that whereas team- and sport-related factors such as convenience, team support, and technology knowledge directly influenced Korean students' online sports consumption, interpersonal communication and escape did not. In addition, Korean students' online sports consumption led to higher game attendance and purchases of more merchandise, which directly relates to the revenue production for sports organizations. Therefore, the results of this study suggest that online sports marketers should understand sports consumers' different motivations and behaviors and develop different marketing strategies to predict their actions.

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