

Korean Sport Consumers' Perceptions of Sports in the United States

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Abstract

This research examined Korean sport fans' perceptions and consumption of United States-based sport. Spectators at two professional Korean Baseball Organization games completed a questionnaire exploring their understanding of sport in the United States and their media consumption habits, as well as their impression of Korean athletes participating in United States-based sport organizations. More than 75% of the respondents consumed United States-based sport, with the primary reason of following Korean players in professional leagues. U.S. sport culture was thought to be more business-oriented, with more financial investment, more talented athletes, and larger fan bases. These beliefs about U.S.-based sport are primarily developed through media consumption and the participants' views of U.S.-based sport evolve as more information is obtained. Sport management and marketing professionals should take advantage of Korean interest in United States' sport and seek to expand its reach in other countries, as well as cater to the plethora of nationalities residing in the United States.

Introduction

The world has evolved into a global society sharing information, ideas, concepts, and knowledge. Advancements in transportation, communication, and technology have made the world small, as relationships have no boundary and businesses reach globally. Sport is one major area breaking down borders, permeating culture, and expanding internationally. The spread of United States (U.S.)-based sport throughout the world is certainly evidence of this, and the development of technology has hastened this process. Residents, in essentially every developed part of the world, can follow sport and international athletes participating in sport in the United States. Satellite television, web streaming technology, and social media allow for near effortless and convenient access (Gruber, 2014; Kaplan 2013).

International Athletes in the United States

The spread of U.S.-based sport across the globe is evident by the widespread participation of international athletes in sport in the U.S. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) reports that more than 17,000 international student-athletes participate in collegiate athletics (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2017). In 2014, Major League Baseball (MLB) and Minor League Baseball (MiLB) had the highest percentage of international athletes, as 26.5% of MLB rosters ("Opening Day Rosters," 2015) and 40% of MiLB rosters (Ortiz, 2014) were comprised of international athletes. At the beginning of the 2017 season, MLB broke the record with 29.8% of players born outside of the U.S. (Associated Press, 2017). The National Basketball Association (NBA) was home to 113 players from 41 countries and territories at the start of the 2016-17 season (Neuharth-Keusch, 2016). In perfect example of international

incorporation, the 2014 NBA Champion San Antonio Spurs had nine of its 15 players born outside of the U.S. (San Antonio Spurs Roster, 2014).

The NBA has made great strides in China, assisted greatly with the success of Yao Ming playing for the NBA's Houston Rockets (Wang, 2004). His presence and athletic ability increased awareness about the NBA across the Pacific region as he became an icon throughout Asia (Wang, 2004). U.S.-born Jeremy Lin burst onto the scene in 2012 and "Linsanity" was the topic of discussion not only in NBA, but also Europe and East Asia. Lin's parents immigrated to the United States from Taiwan and both have ancestral heritage in China (Combs & Wasserstrom, 2013). All three countries have some claim to him, but his ancestral heritage allowed him to create awareness about the NBA in East Asia (Combs & Wasserstrom, 2013).

Beyond individual athletes, organizations are also making an international push. The National Football League (NFL) is one organization advancing an American-based league in international space. While the NFL has history playing outside of the U.S. (see Carabello, 2007), its recent commitment to London has been consistent. Doubling the amount of games from previous years, the NFL played two regular season games in London during the 2013 season, with both games selling out of tickets and as a result, television ratings have also increased dramatically when NFL games are in the United Kingdom (Walker, 2013). The league played three games in London in each of the years of 2014, 2015, and 2016, even selling 84,000 tickets for "two of the smallest and most inconsequential NFL teams of the past decade" for a matchup between Jacksonville and Buffalo (Ingle, 2015, para. 1). The games' success in London has Atlanta Falcon's owner Arthur Blank not only believing more games will be played in London, but feels it is highly likely a NFL franchise will soon be based in London (King, 2014). Blank lauded the success in London and has no reason to believe it is going to slow down with possible expansion into other parts of Europe (King, 2014). In addition to London games, the NFL played a game in Mexico in 2016 and scheduled another matchup in 2017. College football is also expanding across borders, as the University of Notre Dame has played several games in Ireland during the past 20 years (Bertsch, 2013). Success in 2012 and 2013 of games featuring Notre Dame led to a desire to host more contests. In addition, Penn State University and the University of Central Florida also held a game in Ireland during the 2014 season, with more games expected in forthcoming years (O'Rourke, 2013). A college post-season bowl game was also established in the Bahamas beginning with the 2014 season (Fornelli, 2014).

Like its professional and collegiate counterparts, MLB is no stranger to the international marketplace. The 2014 season started in Australia when a series between the Los Angeles Dodgers and Arizona Diamondbacks was played at the Sydney Cricket Ground. This game marked the seventh time in the timeframe of 1999 to 2014 that an MLB season has started outside the United States. Mexico, Japan, and Puerto Rico have also hosted opening games (Jaffe, 2014). MLB International (2017) states a commitment to "showcasing the world's best baseball talent through international events around the globe" (para. 1). Assisting with this mission, MLB broadcasts games in 233 countries and territories and telecasts are re-transmitted in 17 languages (MLB International, 2017). In addition to MLB's effort, internationalization is quite prevalent in MiLB as the Futures Game, an all-star type game for the top MiLB prospects, has its teams determined by the country of birth of the players: World vs. United States (Futures Game Rosters, 2014). As demonstrated, these U.S.-based collegiate and professional programs are competing globally, inviting of international players, and expanding the U.S. sport marketplace beyond borders.

Korea's historical interest in United States sport

One of the most recent countries to adopt more U.S. sport into everyday culture is South Korea. Three athletes, in particular, assisted in this dispersion of American sport. The first came in the early 1990s when Korean television began broadcasting NBA games. In particular, the athletic prowess of Michael Jordan expanded international television broadcasting for the NBA and increased the amount of news and press coverage from Korean outlets (Cho, 2009). However, primarily basketball fans consumed U.S.-based sport at that time. The second influential athlete took Korean interest in U.S.-based sport to a new level. Chan Ho Park entered MLB in 1994, signing with the Los Angeles Dodgers. Park began to flourish in MLB in 1996 appearing in 48 games and pitching more than 100 innings (Chan Ho Park Career Stats, 2014). A third influential athlete, in the realm of professional golf, helped further propel U.S.-based Ladies Professional Golf Association Tour (LPGA) into Korean culture. Women's golfer Se Ri Pak quickly became a major force on the tour. In her 1998 rookie year, Pak won four events including two majors, the McDonald's LPGA Championship and the U.S. Women's Open (Se Ri Pak Bio, 2014).

When South Korea was overwhelmed by an economic crisis, both Chan Ho Park and Se Ri Pak's athletic performances were a solace to the pain-stricken Korean society and as a result, Korean people supported and took a great interest in the two (Lee, 2012). Korean media began to broadcast their games and events live. A Korean broadcasting company, ITV, secured exclusive rights to broadcast all Los Angeles Dodgers' games in South Korea because of Park's emergence in MLB. ITV paid \$5.5 million over three years for these rights (Maeng, Lee, & Cho, 2012). This was a major step for U.S.-based sport permeating South Korean culture. In addition, licensed MLB shops were built in Korean cities and sold uniforms, hats, and clothes of all MLB teams. These products have been purchased and worn by celebrities and seen in television programs and popular press. As a result, this product placement has branded MLB team names and logos to the Korean public (Lim, 2005).

The growing interest in U.S. sport in South Korea has led to Korean-based companies further examining and understanding the effect of advertisement through sport marketing. For example, companies like Hyundai, Kia, and Samsung have all purchased NFL Super Bowl commercials for a sport their citizens do not compete or host. Other Korean companies have working relationships with MLB teams like the Los Angeles Dodgers, which has drafted many Korean players (Lee & Hyun, 2010). MLB, NBA, the Ultimate Fight Championship (UFC), LPGA, and PGA are all broadcast in South Korea. The top priority of the aforementioned leagues for Korean broadcasting companies has revolved around delivering the games of the Los Angeles Dodgers and Texas Rangers, for which Hyun Jin Ryu and Shin Soo Choo were playing in 2017. MBC Sports Plus, a MLB broadcast rights holder since 2010, renewed the contract through 2017 (Hong, Lee, & Lee, 2013). SPOTV relays NBA and UFC events to the Korean public, while LPGA and Professional Golfers' Association (PGA) events, where Korean players participate, are broadcast live via golf-specific cable channels.

Purpose of the study

U.S.-based sport organizations are actively marketing, promoting, and competing in international markets. This, coupled with the increase in international players participating in U.S.-based leagues, makes it important to understand how international sport fans view sport in the United States. The two-decade permeation of American sport into Korean culture makes a Korean view an appropriate first step in understanding this. Therefore, the purpose of this

research is to examine Korean sport spectators' perception and consumption of U.S.-based sport. This research asks Korean sport spectators if, how, and why they consume U.S.-based sport. This is formulated on concepts of sport media consumption, Schema Theory, and inspired by international sport collaboration and research. The significance of this research is found in the areas of furthering exploration into international markets, identifying international consumers that embrace U.S. sport, and learning more about the image of U.S. sport around the globe.

Conceptual Background

Schema theory & framing

Schema Theory is a way of understanding, organizing, and interpreting information. It is how people develop an understanding of their environment whether it be through personal interaction or media consumption. The understanding can range from events or people at the local level to sport on an international scale (Rumelhart, 1980). Schemas or views are formed as information pertaining to a person or event is comprehended by the recipient (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). The information regarding U.S.-based sport for Korean consumers is obtained through media consumption. Thus, it is also important to understand the way media can shape perception.

Through the international lens, U.S.-based sport is primarily consumed through numerous media channels. Whether it is across traditional forms of media such as television, radio, and newspapers or through evolving technology of web-based streaming or social media, international fans are exposed and have access to U.S. sport. Regardless of the vehicle, media is influencing how South Koreans are developing their perceptions of U.S.-based sport. Thus, their schemas or how they understand U.S.-based is primarily developed through media consumption. Scholars have shown how the media can influence public opinion and perceptions of people, events, places, and things (Entman, 1993; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Consumers interpret content and ideas and perceptions are formed based on the content delivered via the many forms of media (Ghanem, 1997). It is through this interpretation or framing through media that perceptions are developed and understandings occur. The interpretation, which are labeled as frames, enable people "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" events or information (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). Gamson and Modigliana (1987) defined frames as a "central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning" to events related to an issue (p. 143). This framing ultimately impacts the schema that is formed by South Korean consumers in regards to U.S.-based sport. Thus, *what* information about U.S.-based sport and *how* it is presented will influence the perception of it by South Korean consumers.

Sport media consumption

Sport media consumption can occur in a variety of ways due to technological improvements during the first decade of the 21st century. Sport media consumption research includes examinations of motivations to watch televised sports; an area that has continued to offer research opportunities as the televised sports has grown in quality of the broadcast and quantity of broadcasts (Bryant, Comisky, & Zillman, 1981; DeNeui & Sachau, 1996; Goldstein & Arms, 1971; Raney & Depalma, 2006; Sargent, Zillman, & Weaver, 1998). The advent of Internet provided opportunities to study online sport consumption from a fan's perspective. Hur, Ko, and Valacich (2007) examined sport consumption from the perspective of shopping online for sport-related products. Seo and Green (2008) examined consumption motives for sport team websites. Further research has examined fantasy sport participation motivation, (Dwyer & Kim,

2011; Ruihley & Hardin, 2011; Suh, Lim, Kwak, & Pedersen, 2010), motivation to use Web sites (Kwak & McDaniel, 2011; Suh & Pedersen, 2010), and motivation for message board use (Hardin, Koo, Ruihley, Dittmore, & McGreevey, 2012). The rise in popularity of Twitter and other social media platforms has provided opportunities to examine how and why fans use these communication outlets (Frederick, Choong, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012; Gibbs, O'Reilly, & Brunette, 2014; Sanderson, 2013). These studies have all examined motivations to consume mediated sports and information about sports. There are contextual differences but the motivations generally fall into the categories of information, entertainment, leisure, social, fanship, team support, and personal interaction.

Understanding global consumers

It is important to examine global sport consumers with this research to improve understanding of international sport marketing and entrepreneurship, professional sport consumption, and learning about the view of U.S. sport from other cultures. This aligns and assists with the concept of glocalization, suggesting that multiple angles should be considered when importing American sport into a different country and culture.

Ratten and Ratten (2011) focused on an inherent “lack of integration” between sport cultures across the globe. Citing massive media events (e.g. the Olympic Games and World Football Cup) and global attention, the authors argued, practically and academically, that there are significant benefits in international learning. Consistent throughout their article was the idea of taking advantage of the marketing, business, and learning opportunities in a global environment. Specifically, as it relates to this research, the authors comment on the importance of identifying and advancing business into emerging markets (e.g. Asia).

Hsieh, Wang, and Yoder (2011) examined professional baseball fandom consumption across two different cultures consisting of fans from the U.S. and Taiwan. Similar to the aforementioned research, Hsieh et al. (2011) suggest a “lack of integration of [consumption factors], and our understanding on cultural differences is relatively sparse when explaining sporting event consumption behaviors” (p. 135). Most importantly, the authors state that family influence was much higher in the U.S., spectator motive of knowledge was only significant in the Taiwanese model, spectator motive of achievement was only influential in the U.S. model, and that much more demographic variables (e.g. gender, age, marital status, and travel distance to event) were influencers in the Taiwanese model (U.S. model only influenced by gender and age). Hsieh et al. (2011) stress the importance in examining different baseball cultures. There must be an understanding of how different cultures consume if sport organizations are going to spread across borders. In one particular important finding, Hsieh, et al. (2011) confirm and stress, “having more elite Asian players on the team has caused more identified Asian fans to watch MLB games” (p. 154; Cho, 2009). This finding, explained in one sentence, carries immense importance for sport managers and marketers hosting international players.

Cho (2009) brought forth ideas of glocalization and globalization. Robertson (1995) describes glocalization in “straightforwardly economic terms” as “the tailoring and advertising of goods and services on a global or near global basis to increasingly differentiated local and particular markets” (p. 28). Cho (2009) applies the concept of glocalization to U.S. sports in South Korea. Glocalization refers to the “global consumption of an American popular commodity and its various accommodations to local contexts” (p. 321). Cho (2009) outlines glocalization from *above* and *below*. *Above*, signifies collaboration between local governments, domestic and transnational corporations, and U.S. leagues to expand American sport. Examples of this, in

South Korea, are government-operated public networks broadcasting international league games based on Korean athlete presence, the using of image and endorsement from international Korean player, and agenda-setting a broadcast “appealing to the national interests of Korean sports fans” (p. 322). *Below*, involves “diverse ways local sports fans consume and appropriate global sports” (p. 321). Examples of this involve the interconnectivity of fans, the relationships developed through international sport, and the online nature of how information is shared between people. Cho (2009) concludes that glocalization, of MLB in South Korea, “shows that the process...is multidimensional, involving both the global and the local” (p. 330).

Purpose of the study and research questions

Globalization and internationalization efforts of sport organizations across the world make it a necessity that researchers and practitioners learn more about consumption and motives of international consumers. The purpose of this research is to understand more about how Korean sport spectators perceive and consume sport based in the United States. The purpose of the study was not to examine the content of media consumed by Korean sport spectators but to understand their perceptions of U.S. sport through the use of media content. This research surveyed attendees of a Korean sporting contest and was guided by the following research questions:

- RQ1: What media outlets do Korean sport fans use to consume U.S. sport?
- RQ2a: Why do Korean sport spectators choose to consume U.S. sport?
- RQ2b: Why do Korean sport spectators choose not to consume U.S. sport?
- RQ3: What differences do Korean sport spectators perceive between Korean and U.S. sport?
- RQ4: What are the impressions of Korean sport spectators when Korean athletes compete in U.S. professional leagues?

Methodology

This research is part of a larger research project examining Korean sport fans. To gather information from Korean sport fans, both quantitative and qualitative measures were employed. This research utilized an in-person questionnaire distributed at Korean sporting events. The following sections will discuss the sample, procedure, instrumentation, and analysis.

Sample and procedure

The participants in this research consisted of Korean sport spectators (18 years of age or older). Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire and recruited from two professional baseball contests in Korean Baseball Organization (KBO) stadiums located in Gwangju and Daejeon, South Korea. Twenty-five recruiters were trained and positioned at two stadiums and were instructed to distribute a questionnaire to spectators. Recruiters were evenly distributed and oversaw specific sections within each stadium. Recruitment occurred twice in each stadium totaling four recruitment opportunities. Spectators were asked if they had previously completed the questionnaire prior to starting to assure questionnaires were only completed once. Recruiters distributed the questionnaire, gave instructions, and asked to have questionnaires returned to the recruiter upon completion once the spectator agreed to participate.

Instrumentation and analysis

The questionnaire consisted of 83 questions, with both quantitative and qualitative measures, and split into three sections. The first section (15 items) addressed participant demographic and general sport consumption areas. The second section (eight items), and the section of focus for this research, focused on questions pertaining to American sport culture. Questions asked in this section focused their consumption of U.S. sport, how they consumed U.S. sport, perceptions of U.S. sport, and opinion when Korean athletes participate in U.S. sport leagues. The final section (60 items) inquired about participants' sport fandom. Understanding the importance of back-translation (Brislin, 1970), the questionnaire was prepared in English, translated into Korean, and then translated back to English to ensure accuracy. The questionnaire was only disseminated in Korean. Questions examining respondents' consumption habits of American sport and opinion of American sport culture were used to address the purposes of this study.

Demographic information was collected and analyzed utilizing descriptive and frequency analysis within SPSS 21.0. To address the open-ended responses, a thematic analysis was utilized following the open, axial, and selective coding procedures set forth by Creswell (2007). Open coding searches for commonality within responses and texts of the participant and "segmenting them into categories of information" (Creswell, 2007, p. 239-240). Axial coding draws out themes shared between multiple responses. Selective coding "takes the central phenomenon and systematically relates it to other categories, validating the relationships and filling in categories that need further refinement and developments" (Creswell, 2007, p. 240; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Through these processes, participant responses were analyzed and organized into categories. Themes were developed based on similarities and differences within categories.

In order to maximize validity, the authors implemented verifying methods suggested by Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002). Peer debriefing and member check methods were utilized to maximize credibility of this study. Through interactions among authors and professionals including professors and experts in the field, the results were verified. After the validity and coding processes, themes and categories were entered into a frequency analysis, utilizing SPSS 21.0.

Results

Sample

The sample consisted of 815 South Korean sport spectators. Questionnaires were collected from two different baseball stadiums (Hanhwa Eagles, $n = 387$; KIA Tigers, $n = 428$). The majority of participants were male (64.4%, $n = 525$), and participants were an average of 33.58-years old ($SD = 8.63$), with one child at home ($u = 0.88$, $SD = 1.10$), household income was approximately \$72,092 USD ($SD = \$88,145$ USD). The participants were asked if, in the past year, they had purchased any American sport merchandise and 43.07% ($n = 351$) indicated they had. Of those that had purchased, the average amount spent on American sport merchandise was \$141.65 USD. This spending ranged from \$9.70 to \$1,940.00 USD comprising of the following breakdown: 13.4% ($n = 47$) spent between \$9.70 to \$29.10 USD, 55.3% ($n = 194$) spent between \$33.95 to \$97.00 USD, 29.0% ($n = 102$) spent between \$116.40 to \$582.00 USD, and 2.3% ($n = 8$) spent between \$697.00 to \$1,940.00 USD.

Research Question 1

The sample responded to what media outlets they use to learn about or follow American sport. Television was the most utilized mass outlet (85.64%, $n = 698$), followed by the Internet (63.56%, $n = 518$), newspapers (11.04%, $n = 90$), magazines (3.56%, $n = 29$), and radio/online radio/podcasts (0.98%, $n = 8$). Breaking it down further, a majority of the participants (75.8%; $n = 618$) indicated they *actively* follow American sport. Of those, the order remained the same: television was the most utilized mass outlet (87.70%, $n = 542$), Internet (65.53%, $n = 405$), newspapers (11.97%, $n = 74$), magazines (4.69%, $n = 29$), and radio/online radio/podcasts (1.13%, $n = 7$).

Research Question 2

The results for Research Question 2a and 2b reveal a majority of the participants indicating they *do actively* follow American sport (do follow, $n = 616$, 75.6%; do not follow, $n = 199$, 24.4%). The open-ended follow-up question asked participants why they did or did not follow American sport. Research Question 2a inquires why Korean sport spectators choose to consume American sport. The overwhelming top theme/reason for those following American sport was because of the *advancement of Korean players* in U.S. leagues ($n = 401$, 65.10% of active followers; 49.20% of sample). Understanding the context of data collection, the two athletes that were mentioned the most were baseball players Shin-Soo Choo and Hyun-Jin Ryu (both playing for MLB teams at time of data collection). The next themes for following American sport were the ideas that *American sport was more entertaining* ($n = 54$, 8.77% of followers; 6.63% of sample) and *American players had more talent* than Korean players ($n = 47$, 7.63% of followers; 5.77% of sample) (see Table 1).

Table 1: Reasons For Following American Sport

Reason	<i>n</i>	Percentage of those following	Percentage of sample
Korean player advancement	401	65.10%	49.20%
American sport is more entertaining	54	8.77%	6.63%
American players are more talented	47	7.63%	5.77%
To check on Korean player status	29	4.71%	3.56%
Like American sport	26	4.22%	3.19%
American sport has better audience and infrastructure	24	3.90%	2.94%
American sport has more star players	21	3.41%	2.58%
Unique audience (e.g. body painting, shirtless, etc.)	14	2.27%	1.72%
Total	616	100.00%	75.58%

Research Question 2b asks why Korean sport spectators choose not to consume American

Table 2: Reasons For Not Following American Sport

Reason	<i>n</i>	Percentage of those following	Percentage of sample
Not fully interested in sport	69	34.67%	8.47%
Only interested in Korean sport	49	24.62%	6.01%
Korean sport is more entertaining and intense	39	19.60%	4.79%
Time difference	19	9.55%	2.33%
No interest if it does not have connection	15	7.54%	1.84%
Korean player advancement	8	4.02%	0.98%
Total	199	100.00%	24.42%

sport. Results indicate the top choice as simply *not fully interested in sport* ($n = 69$, 34.67% of non-followers; 8.47% of sample), followed by having *only an interest in Korean sport* ($n = 49$, 24.62% of non-followers; 6.01% of sample), and *Korean sport being more entertaining* ($n = 39$, 19.60% of non-followers; 4.79% of sample) (see Table 2).

Research Question 3

Four themes emerged, from Korean participants, when asked what they perceived to be different between Korean and American sport cultures. The themes consist of differences in industries (39.39%, $n = 321$), players (27.85%, $n = 227$), fans (17.79%, $n = 145$), and facilities (12.27%, $n = 100$). The following is a list of the coded categories for each theme (see Table 3).

- *Industry*: American sport industry is larger (25.86% of Industry group, $n = 83$), American sport has better infrastructure (23.99% of Industry group, $n = 77$), American sport professional teams invest more (15.26% of Industry group, $n = 49$), Different league structures and formation (10.59% of Industry group, $n = 34$), American sport has better broadcasting systems/agreements (9.66% of Industry group, $n = 31$), American sport has better referees (5.61% of Industry group, $n = 18$), American sport has more professional teams (4.36% of Industry group, $n = 14$), American sport has better minor league systems (2.49% of Industry group, $n = 8$), and Korean sport is more concerned about player upbringing and background than American sport (2.18% of Industry group, $n = 7$).
- *Players*: American players are more talented (70.93% of Players group, $n = 161$), American players have higher annual salary (15.42% of Players group, $n = 35$), American sport has more star players (9.69% of Players group, $n = 22$), and American sport has more international diversity (3.96% of Players group, $n = 9$).
- *Fans*: American sport has greater audience size (40.69% of Fans group, $n = 59$), different cheering style (33.79% of Fans group, $n = 49$), different fandom culture (17.93% of Fans group, $n = 26$), and different fan service from baseball team (7.59% of Fans group, $n = 11$).

Table 3: *Korean Sport Spectators' Views of Differences Between Korean and American Sport*

Theme	<i>n</i>	In-Theme %	Sample %
Industry	321		39.39%
American sport industry larger	83	25.86%	10.18%
American sport has better infrastructure	77	23.99%	9.45%
American professional teams invest more	49	15.26%	6.01%
Different league structure and formation	34	10.59%	4.17%
American sport has better broadcasting systems/agreements	31	9.66%	3.80%
American sport has better referees	18	5.61%	2.21%
American sport has more professional teams	14	4.36%	1.72%
American sport has better minor league systems	8	2.49%	0.98%
Korean sport is concerned with player upbringing and background	7	2.18%	0.86%
Players	227		27.85%
American players are more talented	161	70.93%	19.75%
American players have higher annual salary	35	15.42%	4.29%
American sport has more star players	22	9.69%	2.70%
American sport has more international diversity	9	3.96%	1.10%
Fans	145		17.79%
American sport has greater audience size	59	40.69%	7.24%
Different cheering styles	49	33.79%	6.01%
Different fandom cultures	26	17.93%	3.19%
Different fan service	11	7.59%	1.35%
Facilities	100		12.27%
American stadiums are larger and better	95	95.00%	11.66%
Differences in dome stadiums	3	3.00%	0.37%
American sport has better dugouts	2	2.00%	0.25%

- *Facilities*: American stadiums are larger and better (95.00% of Facilities group, $n = 95$), differences in dome stadiums (3.0% of Facilities group, $n = 3$), and American sport has better dugouts (2.00% of Facilities group, $n = 2$).

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 sought to obtain the opinions and impressions of Korean sport spectators when a Korean athlete participates in American professional leagues. Overwhelmingly, 97.42% ($n = 794$) of participants answered with positive responses. The top themes within the positive response were *enhancement of national prestige* (46.85% of positive responses, $n = 372$), *glad for a Korean star advancing* (15.99% of positive responses, $n = 127$), and *overall pride in Korea* (14.11% of positive responses, $n = 112$). Other noteworthy responses consisted of: *Positive impact for Korean sport* (7.81% of positive responses, $n = 62$) and *give direction, hopes, and dreams to children* (5.92% of positive responses, $n = 47$). While a small portion of the data, there were negative responses (2.58% of sample, $n = 21$). These comments had only two components consisting of: athlete physical and mental burnout and decreasing of South Korea's sport level because star athletes leave for "better" league (see Table 4).

Table 4: Themed-Responses to Korean Athletes Participating in American Leagues

Reason	<i>n</i>	Percentage of Sample
Positive	794	97.42%
Enhancement of National Prestige	372	45.64%
Glad for Korean Start Advancing	127	15.58%
Overall Pride in South Korea	112	13.74%
Positive Impact for Korean Sport	62	7.61%
Give Direction, Hopes, and Dreams to Children	47	5.77%
Korean Players Associated with Star Players	29	3.56%
Foreign Currency Import	28	3.44%
Interest in Foreign Team with Korean Star Player	17	2.09%
Negative	21	2.58%
Athlete physical and mental burnout and decreasing of South Korea's sport level		

Discussion

The results show heavy use of television, web-based media, and newspapers to consumer U.S.-based sport in Korea. Content is being selected and organized in a way to best meet consumer interest. Many Koreans are only seeing highlights and stories about Korean athletes

or organizations that employ Korean athletes. Other details can be easily discovered and found, but the frame and spotlight is on the Korean aspects of the event, story, or sporting outcome. Further, many Korean live broadcasts of U.S.-based sport is translated and voiced-over the original English feed, leaving the framing solely in the hands of the Korean-language broadcast team. All of these aspects are impacting the perception of U.S.-based sport. These perceptions are being shaped by the media and influencing the view Koreans have of U.S.-based sports. These views can possibly influence media consumption habits, decisions to travel to the U.S. to watch events in person, the purchase of merchandise, and the development of fandom of sports in the U.S. This can create a market for U.S.-based sport to expand to further develop fans and revenue.

The results also show the Korean culture as active consumers of U.S.-based sport, purchasers of American sporting apparel, and very accepting towards the international expansion of U.S. sport into their sporting culture. Positive responses regarding Korean players participating in the U.S., media coverage of athletes in Korean, and accepted placement and consumption of U.S. sport retail all indicate an approval of this type of sport glocalization and globalization. This ties back directly to Robertson's (1995) description of glocalization: 'the tailoring and advertising of goods and services on a global or near global basis to increasingly differentiated local and particular markets' (p. 28). American sport is being custom-made to Korean culture specifically with a) media broadcasts shown in South Korea and commentated in Korean language, b) sport highlights of Korean and U.S. stars, and c) the building and offering of retail stores solely devoted to entire professional sport leagues like MLB and NBA stores (as opposed to team-specific shops). Considering the positive interpretation, consumption, and sentiment towards U.S.-based sport and the ability to specifically target, four major areas of discussion are warranted: a) consuming U.S. sport, b) communicating U.S. sport, c) purchasing power of international effort, and d) global impact.

Consuming American Sport

Technological developments and increased access has made viewing and experiencing U.S.-based sport much easier in the 21st century. High-definition televisions, satellite programming, and the expanding World Wide Web have enabled American sport to be consumed around the globe. Fans can now watch American professional sport games, read about their favorite American sports in content produced in the U.S., and interact with American sport in the U.S. and around the world. American sport teams and leagues are actively promoting their brand and image to a worldwide audience. The NFL is playing regular-season games in London, MLB is opening their seasons in Japan and Australia, and the LPGA Tour plans events around the world. This is just a snapshot of the global effort and reach of American-based sport.

The influx of international athletes in U.S. leagues also demonstrates the global nature of the sport product in the United States. Participants in this study clearly indicated that their interest in sport in the U.S. was heightened when Korean players were involved. This relates to sport media consumption motives of fanship and information, as participants want to monitor how well Korean players are performing, as well as to show support. The pressure to win in U.S. sport is no secret, and with that, organizations and coaches are always seeking the best players, regardless of nationality. This is evident by the influx of international athletes in professional and collegiate sport in the U.S. Recruiting and signing international athletes serves two primary functions for a team. One, it can improve the competitive product, and two, it can create a new fan base, a fan base that could encompass an entire country of new fans. In addition, the participants in this study also indicated a consumption of sport merchandise, which again shows

fanship, as well as team support. Along with obtaining a new fan base, having international athletes on a team creates a new source of revenue and target audience. MLB's Los Angeles Dodgers take full advantage of this opportunity and had a promotional event called "Korea Night" in 2014. The night was comprised of Korean-based companies as sponsors, an honoring of the first Korean-born MLB player, and a promotional bobble-head of a Korean-born player. There was also a Tae Kwon Do on-field demonstration and the Korean national anthem was performed (Dodgers Press Release, 2014).

The Internet allows for people across the world to follow their country's athletes when they are competing in the U.S. It is common for colleges to broadcast non-revenue sports, such as tennis, via the Web allowing people to watch a fellow countryman compete in collegiate tennis matches. Message boards and other social networking sites also allow for social and personal interactions with other fans. This gives fans of the same nationality, living in the U.S., the opportunity to connect, as well as fans outside the U.S., the ability to interact with one another. In addition, this type of specifically tailored broadcast gives the media producer a targeted audience to promote products, merchandise, or the organization/university.

In many cases, a combination of sport media consumption motives are being met by watching an event as information, entertainment, leisure, team support, fanship, social, and personal interaction are at all play during the event. It is important that sport organizations and athletes in the U.S. understand this so they can take advantage of an international audience. ESPN has benefitted from this by producing a Spanish-based web site and the NBA has launched the NBA Global platform featuring links to NBA sites for people in Africa, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, Greece, Japan, and the U.K. (to name a few). The NBA has also introduced Latin nights, as well as Chinese nights, featuring uniforms with the team names in Spanish and Chinese in-game promotions celebrating each heritage. These events illustrate that the NBA is well aware of the marketing and business opportunities these communities have to offer.

Communicating American Sport

The second area of discussion focuses on the communication and marketing efforts surrounding U.S. sport in South Korea. Arising simply out of the basic information collected from the participants, it was discovered that a staggering 75.8% of the sampled Korean sport spectators followed American sport. The primary reason for this consumption was the advancement of a Korean player in an American sport (65.10% of followers) followed by the idea that American sport is more entertaining (8.77% of followers). In addition, when examining participant opinion of the differences between Korean and U.S. sport, interpretations that came to the forefront about the American industry being larger, better operated, and invested in more, as well as American players having more talent, higher pay, and more fame. These results should give sport marketers great optimism in reaching out to an international population like South Korea. The challenge of creating brand awareness and brand equity is mostly accomplished.

Finding marketing and media avenues can be difficult when dealing with an international audience. While broad and far-reaching, these participants have identified their consumption preference. A majority of the Korean following of American sport came from television and the Internet with 87.70% and 65.53% of the sample, respectively, indicating consumption in these forms. While low, utilizing newspapers (11.97%) was the surprising third option, over magazines (4.85%) and radio (1.13%). These results show American sport marketers that if targeted properly, they have the potential to reach Korean sport spectators that a) have an interest in the

product and b) are consuming through very popular and accessible mass media outlets. The two mass communication outlets of television and the Internet are the two primary means for international marketers, as they both are easily transmittable, adaptable, incredibly visual, can be produced and edited, and are able to offer live information. With the decreasing influence of print media in South Korea, it would be unwise for international sport marketers to utilize the more traditional print media, unless it is a true niche market still consuming with those outlets.

Focusing in on television, it is important to note that Korean broadcasting companies highlight American sport every day. These news broadcasts report on various sports consisting of MLB, NBA, National Hockey League (NHL), NFL and UFC. Especially, for the events where Korean athletes' activities are ongoing, such as MLB and LPGA, broadcasting companies deliver detailed highlights and reports whenever the contests are on or have concluded. In addition to covering Korean athletes, the news covers other major American sport news. For example, a perfect or no-hit game in MLB, news of a NBA star's final game, or a variety of interesting plays during the NFL season are televised by sport news.

Korean broadcasters are most interested in MLB, where Shin Soo Choo and Hyun Jin Ryu compete (Maeng, Lee & Cho, 2012). MBC Sports Plus, one of sport-specialized cable channels in South Korea, relays live coverage of every game of Choo's and Ryu's teams, commentating over the American broadcast. Additionally, when Korean players compete against or with each other, media companies deploy a broadcasting team to the American venue and commentate in real time. Every day at 12 a.m., sport channels highlight every MLB game of the day. In the off-season, media outlets create and broadcast programs where they visit the spring-training camps of Korean players' teams.

Although not broadcasting as many games as MLB, NBA games and UFC fights are disseminated and attract a specific sport fan. Recently, many Korean fighters have entered matches with UFC, and as a result, television broadcasting of that sport has grown. As for NBA, the only games that are shown on Korean television are the games Koreans would have an interest. Examples of these types of games include an All-Star or playoff games. These games are topical and likely to feature sports stars most Koreans know. In addition, these games carry more intensity and weight than a regular season contest. With the popularity of some American sports, Korean culture has yet to have the demand to broadcast other popular sport matches to the Korean mass. This includes NFL and NHL. These sports most likely do not attract Korean consumption because of the intricate rules and a lack of information on players. As a result, these sport events are not broadcasted in South Korea.

Purchasing Power

Another interesting finding shows that 43.07% of the sample indicated they had purchased sport merchandise based on U.S. sports within the past year. It is evident that not only are Korean sport spectators consuming American sport, they are investing into teams they are following. The average amount spent on American merchandise was \$141.65 USD. The media framing of Korean sport stars, which appears frequently on Korean television outlets or the Internet, has assisted in promoting American sport. As a result, many Koreans have a chance to learn about American sport, take an interest in American sport, and become fans of teams and individual athletes. Interest in athletes such as Clayton Kershaw, Miguel Cabrera, and LeBron James has increased due to their athletic excellence. This has caused some brands, for example MLB and NBA, to distribute and sell in South Korea. One factor assisting the American sport retail market is that in South Korea, just wearing sports clothing with the brand logos is seen as the latest

fashion. Korean students go to school, wear clothes with brand logos of teams, such as the New York Yankees or Los Angeles Lakers, and are equipped with information about American sport from reports from television and the Internet. This type of consumption and purchasing potential indicates that it is more than just buying a hat or jersey; there are real financial opportunities available for American sport merchandisers and brands. This has the potential of a perfect-storm-scenario for sport marketers: 1) star athlete from target country, 2) target country accepting of star athlete participation in other leagues, 3) expendable spending from target country, and 4) identification of most used media outlets to follow U.S.-based sport by target country.

Global and Societal Impact

While not directly dealing with marketing or communication implications, a finding that was truly remarkable to consider dealt with the impact sport, and in this case American sport, can have on an entire country. Understanding perception is difficult and only amplified when in a global context. In this case, would Korean perception be positive when an athlete leaves for the U.S. because the participation is at the “highest” level? Or, would perceptions be negative because the athlete was recruited and signed to a league outside of their country? The results were tremendously positive (97.42% of sample has positive response). Top reasons supporting this response dealt with major emotional areas of enhancement of national prestige, happiness for the Korean star advancing, positive impact for Korean sport, and giving direction, hopes, and dreams to children. With results like that, this goes from being a business or game that signed an international player to something far deeper. Administrators taking on international players need to quickly understand if that player’s home country is similar to this Korean sample. If so, there are so many amazing opportunities to impact a global society, reach and inspire people, and, in this case, enhance an entire national image.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to learn more about how Korean sport fans perceive and interpret U.S. sport. Results indicated a large majority of the sample consuming sport in the U.S., following through mass media outlets of television and the Internet, and purchasing sport merchandise based on U.S. sports. Korean sport spectators followed U.S. sport because of the national pride they possess when Korean athletes participate in these leagues and because of the perceived prestige and skill of the professional leagues. In addition, Korean sport spectators exhibited great character when conveying joy for their nation, Korean sport, and athlete when an athlete is recruited, signed, and competes in an American league. This study has shed light on one international relationship in an ever-shrinking global sport society. This type of work could be expanded to cover more international partnerships, outreach, athlete participation, and a wider sport fan base (as this research collected only from baseball spectators). There are athletes all over the world partaking in ‘more prestigious’ international leagues from baseball in the U.S., cricket in India, or soccer/futbol in European countries. More explorations could chronicle the experience of the athlete, his/her home community or nation, or the shared experience of both when the athlete participates in an international league. In addition to studying these experiences, future research could examine the administrative processes of a) selection of media content and frames, b) recruiting and signing of international athletes, and c) understanding the cultural importance of having an international athlete partake in the sport.

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