Chapter 7

The Influence of Sports Fan Ethnocentrism on Major League Baseball Game Viewing Behavior: A Cross-Cultural Study of Korea and Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the influence of Sports Fan Ethnocentrism (SFE) on the viewing behavior toward Major League Baseball (MLB) games in Korea and Taiwan. The survey was conducted by interviewing respondents from Korea and Taiwan who watched MLB in the 2013 season. It was discovered that Korean viewers have stronger SFE than Taiwanese viewers, and male viewers have a higher level of SFE than females in both countries. Moreover, the results of testing the proposed model revealed that SFE has a positive influence on the attitude toward MLB, which in turn has a positive influence on MLB viewing intention. Although a direct relationship between SFE and viewing intention was not found, a full mediation effect of the attitude toward MLB on the relationship between SFE and viewing intention was confirmed. Differences of the model for Korean and Taiwanese fans are observed and discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

The central concept of ethnocentrism is to understand outgroup attitudes and intergroup relations. Ethnocentrism was first introduced to the sociological literature over 100 years ago where Sumner (1906) defined ethnocentrism as “the technical name for this view of things in which one’s own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it” (p. 13). Segall (1979) also asserted that ethnocentrism is the tendency for any people to put their own group in a position of centrality and consider themselves superior to outgroups. Moreover, many scholars have claimed that ethnocentrism functions by helping to secure the survival of groups and their cultures in addition to increasing a group’s solidarity, conformity, cooperation, loyalty, and effectiveness (Catton, 1960; Lynn, 1976; Mihalyi, 1984; Sumner, 1906).

In the past two decades, the notion of ethnocentrism has been widely applied in marketing research. Shimp and Sharma (1987) initially proposed the concept of “consumer ethnocentrism” to investigate how ethnocentrism can influence consumers’ purchasing behaviors and product decisions. Subsequently, the results showed that ethnocentric consumers have a higher propensity to purchase domestic products rather than foreign products. Additionally, ethnocentrism gives the consumers a sense of identity, feelings of belonging, and, most importantly, an understanding of what purchase behavior is acceptable or unacceptable for the intergroup (Netemeyer, Durvasula, & Lichtenstein, 1991; Shimp & Sharma, 1987). Their studies triggered an increasing concern for the effect of ethnocentrism on consumer attitudes toward domestic products. A review of a series of empirical studies reported consistent results in which variations of ethnocentrism levels influence consumers’ attitudes toward domestic products and their intention to buy them (Han, 1988; Herche, 1992; Hsu & Nien, 2008; Klein, Ettenson, & Morris, 1998; Olsen, Biswas, & Gran-