

# The Effect of Factors on Foreign Spectators' Intention to Attend the Korean Professional Baseball Games

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**Abstract** The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors affecting foreign spectator attendance to provide basic knowledge for Korean professional marketers for effective and efficient marketing strategies. The level of attendance at sports events may be significantly related to teams' revenues because sponsorship and broadcasting revenues depend heavily on the level of team attendance. 395 subjects were selected by convenience sampling method. The data was analyzed by PASW 18.0 for a t-test analysis, and Multiple regression analysis. The results were as follows. First, there are significant differences of attendance intention between attendance experiences. At Leisure, Event/Service, Performance Factors, the mean scores of 'Yes' respondents was statistically higher than 'No' respondents. Second, leisure, performance and event/service had significantly effects on attendance intention.

**Keywords** Attendance Intention, Korean Professional Baseball

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## 1. Introduction

The interest and popularity of professional sports and the sports industry in Korea continue to grow. Today, most Koreans are participating or spectating in many types of sports events (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism[19]). Particularly, the number of spectators of the Korean professional baseball league, as the first professional team sports in Korea, is growing steadily. Korean Professional baseball looks to have recovered from the crisis it experienced in the early 2000s, when audience figures dropped as low as 2.3 million. This coincided with an upswing in the fortunes of Korean football, buoyed by the remarkable performance of the national team at the 2002 World Cup, where Korea finished in fourth place. The turning point came at the Beijing Games. Many women who did not even know the basics of the game were captivated by the sport, and people began to believe that Korean players had become world beaters. Since then, the domestic league

has attracted over 5 million spectators for four consecutive seasons. The Korea Baseball Organization(KBO)[11] expects the total number of spectators to swell to almost 7 million this year, well above the original goal of 6.6 million. In the near future, the number of spectators are expected to increase.

The sports industry is a dynamic, fast growing area, and it provides the opportunity for regional economic development. According to Sage[24], professional sports leagues dominate critical positions of our societies through a variety of communication tools such as television, radio, and the internet. As such, to understand the professional sports industry, it is imperative to perceive that it be a kind of business; that is, a component of the basic economic processes of production and consumption. Therefore, many sports marketers have striven to maximize revenues under a competitive market situation. To maximize team revenue, professional sports franchises have always concentrated on increasing game attendance through improving the quality of their performance and offering special promotions. Professional sports leagues in the sports industry could not exist without spectators. That is, the core of professional sports is attendance, a key determinant of the profitability. Therefore, a major objective of sports marketing is designed to increase attendance, to sell sponsorship and broadcasting rights, and to encourage team merchandise sales. Furthermore, one way to achieve those tasks is to provide specific experience and distinct quality of service to consumers (Hansen & Gauthier[7]; McDonald & Milne[18]). In the end, it is essential that the success or failure of professional sports depend on the level of attendance.

On the other hand, the number of registered foreigners in South Korea as of the end of 2010 was 918,917, comprising 1.88 percent of the total population. Among them, the most numerous were those who came to Korea for employment, at 530,338. They are followed by marriage immigrants (141,654), permanent residency (100,355), study abroad (87,486), specialty employment (38,715), entrepreneurs and investors (13,385). In other words, Korea is showing signs of a multi cultural society in which the vast majority of foreigners are blue collar laborers, marriage immigrants and

students with few high-qualification immigrants. More than half (65.1%) of foreigners live in Seoul metropolitan area, followed by the southeast (11.6%). Recently, the foreign spectators has increased in the Korean professional baseball league games(hankyoreh[5]).

Knowledge of sports consumers will guide sports marketers and sports business in making important decisions about the marketing mix that consists of products, price, place, and promotion (Pitts & Stotlar[23]). And conducting market segmentation, sports marketers need to select the target market that is a segment of the homogeneous group, and then provide distinctive or special promotions satisfying the needs or wants of each user group(Pitts & Stotlar[23]; Gray[3]). Therefore, it is necessary for marketing strategy to attract foreign spectators at the Korean professional baseball league. For this reason, it is necessary to study about the analysis of the factors that influence the attendance of Korean professional baseball league games.

There are a variety of factors that influence the spectators' decision to attend a sports event. These factors include the spectators' motivation, game attractiveness, economic factors, competitive factors, demographics, stadium or facilities, value of sports to the community, sports involvement, and fan identification(Shank[25]). The sociocultural factors constitute environmental, social, and cultural variables and the consumers' psychological state that includes attitudes, beliefs, and motivation concerning these factors.

Hansen & Gauthier[6] identified various factors affecting the overall level of attendance at professional sports events. The categories developed by them may be summarized under four general areas of factors; economic, sociodemographic, attractiveness of game, and residual preferences. The economic category is related to ticket price (Noll[21]), per capita income (Hart, Hutton, & Sharot[8]; Noll[21]), substitute forms of entertainment (Hart et al. [8]; Hill, Maclura, & Zuber[9]; Noll[21]), and the effects of other competitive sports leagues (Hart et al.[8]; Hill et al.[9]; Noll[21]). The sociodemographic category of studies focuses on population size of area (Hart et al.[21]; Pan, Zhu, Gahert, & Broun[22]) and geography (Greenstein & Marcum[4]). The third category, attractiveness of the game, contains several types of studies, all of which have a positive impact on game attendance. Attractiveness of the game mentioned as a situational- factor is primarily related to promotions and special events (Hill et al.[9]), star players (Hill et al.[9]; Jones[11]), team performance (Hart et al.[8]; Hill et al.[9]; Pan, et al.[22]), and closeness of the pennant race (Hart et al.[8]; Noll[21]). The final category, residual preference, deals with game schedule, fan accommodation, and so forth. In summary, some previous studies have discovered that game attractiveness and residual preference variables tend to have a positive impact on attendance. For instance, promotions and individual income factors have consistently had a positive impact on a consumer's decision to attend a sports event. However, ticket prices, substitute forms of entertainment, and competition with other professional

sports leagues have negatively influenced game attendance (Hansen & Gauthier[7]; Noll[21]).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors affecting foreign spectator attendance to provide basic knowledge for Korean professional marketers for effective and efficient marketing strategies. Examining how individual foreign spectators respond to various factors influencing their intention to attend games, team marketers could plan and implement successful marketing strategies to satisfy the foreign spectators' needs and wants. Finally, from the findings of this study, each team could provide specific factors well suited the needs of its target foreign spectators and maximize the level of attendance or team revenue.

The purpose of the study leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 : There will be a significant difference of attendance factors and attendance intention between attendance experience.

1-1. There will be a significant difference of attendance factors between attendance experience.

1-2. There will be a significant difference of attendance intention between attendance experience.

Hypothesis 2 : There will be a significant effect of attendance factors on attendance intention.

The limitations of this study involve mainly three issues.

First, The survey questionnaires were distributed to foreign resident in Seoul and Gyeonggi area, Therefore, the results of the study could not be considered a representative of total foreign spectator's behaviors and preferences of factors influencing attendance at Korean professional baseball league games.

Second, Not all factors influencing Korean professional baseball league games attendance were identified or examined.

Third, Although assumptions of the methods are tested, different sample size among each nationalities and age may occur statistical limitation to the study.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Participants

Foreign residents who are interested in Korean professional Baseball were chosen as research participants. The survey was conducted on the first week until the fourth week of November. The data was collected by convenience sampling method in several university departments, churches and shopping quarters in Seoul, Gyeong-gi area. Graduate students were trained to assist the survey procedure. Out of the total number of 420 copies of questionnaire distributed, 405 were collected and 395 were used by data screening.

### 2.2. Instrumentation

The initial formulation of the questionnaire was self-developed based on previous studies of Hansen &

Gauthier[7], and Zhang, Pease, Hui, & Michaud[27], Hong[10] and Chung[1]. The researcher established some variables that were unique characteristics and closely involved with Korean professional baseball league circumstances. The factors in this questionnaire contained 33 variables influencing game attendance Table (1). A copy of the questionnaire is included in the appendix of this study.

**2.3. Validity Test**

To obtain a valid instrument for the study, one acknowledged professors in the sport management and marketing content area and three researchers have performed content validity and construct validity to evaluate instrument items on both clarity and domain appropriateness. Three types of language (English, Chinese, Japanese) were applied for the research instruments and peer researchers holding degrees from the United States, China and Japan has confirmed the validity and internalization of the instruments.

**Table 1.** Summary of the Instruments Used

Items	Number of Questions
Leisure Factors	5
Event · Service Factors	3
Performance Factors	4
Environment · Facility Factors	5
Accessibility Factors	4
Economic Factors	4
Time Factors	4
Personal Factors	4
Attendance experience	1
Interested in the games	1
Attendance intention	1
Demographic characteristics	7
Total	43

**Table 2.** EFA and Reliability coefficient Result

	Leisure	Performance	Environ Facility	Economic	Accessibility	Time	Personal	Event Service
Leisure2	<b>.810</b>	.107	.163	.070	.000	.068	.041	.001
Leisure3	<b>.774</b>	.229	.051	-.060	.078	.087	.012	-.160
Leisure5	<b>.761</b>	.189	-.007	-.106	.039	.160	-.120	.047
Leisure1	<b>.686</b>	-.030	.109	.067	-.133	.239	-.097	.085
Leisure4	<b>.681</b>	.288	.048	-.187	.020	.217	.154	-.146
Performance3	.199	<b>.843</b>	-.118	.068	-.031	-.021	-.049	-.159
Performance4	.006	<b>.806</b>	-.048	.061	-.023	.145	.139	.116
Performance2	.237	<b>.766</b>	-.101	.071	-.031	-.123	.114	-.149
Performance1	.298	<b>.764</b>	-.099	.045	-.069	-.001	-.164	-.048
Performance5	.036	<b>.567</b>	-.009	.062	.052	.079	.538	.142
Environ/Facility 1	.127	-.146	<b>.714</b>	.052	-.040	-.229	.256	.113
Environ/Facility 4	.027	-.107	<b>.710</b>	.105	.019	-.145	.089	-.021
Environ/Facility 3	.041	-.024	<b>.705</b>	-.066	.157	.200	.036	-.130
Environ/Facility 2	.179	-.087	<b>.629</b>	.056	.162	.297	-.206	.250
Economic1	.005	.138	-.034	<b>.865</b>	.106	.016	.022	-.063
Economic2	.074	.072	-.043	<b>.847</b>	.216	.064	.011	-.036
Economic3	-.108	.010	.126	<b>.823</b>	.095	.054	-.009	.156
Economic4	-.066	.027	.078	<b>.739</b>	-.002	.039	-.016	.220
Accessibility3	-.011	.050	.036	.079	<b>.825</b>	.124	-.100	.198
Accessibility1	.014	.062	.169	.098	<b>.794</b>	-.140	-.217	.094
Accessibility2	.022	-.119	.067	.192	<b>.787</b>	-.170	.229	-.009
Accessibility4	-.091	-.131	.128	.115	<b>.648</b>	-.191	.402	.014
Time 2	.184	.138	.060	-.093	-.047	<b>.752</b>	.144	.090
Time 3	.207	-.076	.178	.232	-.145	<b>.670</b>	-.094	-.052
Time 1	.282	-.013	.020	.129	-.103	<b>.644</b>	.110	.020
Time 4	.065	-.047	.032	.087	.207	<b>.606</b>	.100	.166
Personal 2	.017	.260	.014	.031	.061	-.042	<b>.758</b>	.092
Personal 3	-.166	.226	.164	.034	.030	.102	<b>.619</b>	.083
Personal 4	.268	-.246	.165	.046	.038	.266	<b>.546</b>	-.170
Personal 1	-.125	-.283	.175	.150	.091	.242	<b>.493</b>	.173
Event/Service 3	.004	-.181	.036	.187	.157	.094	.047	<b>.733</b>
Event/Service 2	-.211	-.033	.209	.150	.145	-.412	.187	<b>.520</b>
Event/Service 1	-.010	.451	.164	.030	.148	.036	.247	<b>.491</b>
eigenvalue	3.469	3.421	3.238	3.016	2.665	2.329	2.055	1.757
variance(%)	10.513	10.366	9.812	9.138	8.076	7.059	6.227	5.323
cumulative(%)	10.513	20.879	30.691	39.829	47.904	54.963	61.190	66.514
Cronbach's $\alpha$	.848	.850	.690	.861	.761	.814	.637	.697

As for exploratory factor analysis, principle component analysis which finds the most appropriate estimates has been used. Varimax method among orthogonal rotations, which suggests the existence of correlation between each factors, has been employed for the analysis. Factors with 1 or higher Eigenvalue have been extracted and questions with .5 or higher factor loading value for each factor have been selected. As a result, 8 Factors have been extracted as shown in the Table (2).

#### 2.4. Reliability

The reliability of a measure is concerned with the extent to which that measure is consistent with various conditions and circumstances. There are a variety of reliability measures through any of the following methods: test—retest, internal consistency, alternative form, and analysis of variance procedures under generalizability procedures. The method utilized to measure the reliability of questions related to spectators' preferences toward all variables influencing attendance at Korean baseball games was the Cronbach's [2] coefficient alpha that is the most commonly accepted formula for assessing the internal consistency reliability. The reliabilities for each factors were as shown in the Table (2).

#### 2.5. Data Processing

In order to analyze the collected data, a descriptive statistical method utilize analyzing demographic variables and the spectators' general perceptions related to factors

influencing attendance at the Korean professional baseball league games. An analysis of variance(ANOVA), a t-test analysis, multiple regression analysis were conducted for verify hypothesis test. The results indicated significant F values, a Tukey post-hoc procedure test employed to determine. PASW 18.0 was used for the study. The statistical significance was set at the .05 level.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Difference of Attendance Factors and Attendance Intention between Attendance Experience

As displayed in Table (3), on 5 factors are showed differences between attendance experience. At Leisure, Event · Service, Performance Factors, the mean scores of 'Yes' respondents was statistically higher than 'No' respondents. In contrast, at Time, Personal Factors, the mean scores of 'No' respondents was statistically higher than 'Yes' respondents.

At-test employed to determine the difference of attendance intention between attendance experience. As shown in Table (4), The results had significant difference of attendance intention between attendance experience at significance level .001. The mean scores of 'Yes' respondents(M=3.56) were higher than 'No' respondents(M=2.89).

**Table 3.** Differences in the attendance factors

Factors	experience	n	M	SD	T-value
Leisure	Yes	128	4.05	.723	6.946***
	No	267	3.52	.654	
Event/ Service	Yes	128	3.92	.816	3.374**
	No	267	3.65	.741	
Performance	Yes	128	3.41	.851	4.552***
	No	267	2.98	.879	
Environment/ Facility	Yes	128	3.83	.785	.882
	No	267	3.76	.648	
Accessibility	Yes	128	3.87	.727	.414
	No	267	3.84	.662	
Economic	Yes	128	3.58	.855	-.068
	No	267	3.59	.760	
Time	Yes	128	3.54	1.059	-3.904***
	No	267	3.87	.642	
Personal	Yes	128	3.36	.719	-2.250*
	No	267	3.53	.629	

\*\*\*p<.001, \*\*p<.01, \*p<.05

**Table 4.** Differences in the attendance intention

	Experience	n	M	SD	T-value
Attendance Intention	Yes	128	3.56	.885	6.312***
	No	267	2.89	1.019	

\*\*\*p<.001

### 3.2. Effect Attendance Factors on Attendance Intention

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the correlations among attendance factors and attendance intention. Results of correlation test of constructs (Leisure, Event · Service, Performance, Environment · Facility, Accessibility, Economic, Time, Personal, Attendance Intention) conducted by Pearson's correlation coefficients are shown in Table (5). Correlation test indicates that Leisure, Event Service and Performance shows correlation with Attendance Intention at significance level .001. And Environment Facility, Accessibility correlate with Attendance Intention at significance level .05.

**Table 5.** Correlations among attendance factors and attendance intention

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Leisure	1.000								
2. Event/Service	.424***	1.000							
3. Performance	.350***	.120*	1.000						
4. nvironmen/Facility	.232***	.131**	.031	1.000					
5. Accessibility	.253***	.300***	-.122*	.494***	1.000				
6. Economic	-.043	.098	.120*	.051	.100*	1.000			
7. Time	-.069	-.160**	-.051	.164**	.224***	.256***	1.000		
8. Personal	-.111*	.041	.104*	.297***	.240***	.218***	.300***	1.000	
9.Attendance Intention	.436***	.264***	.293***	.110*	.105*	-.098	-.085	.007	1.000

\*\*\*p<.001, \*\*p<.01, \*p<.05

To analyze the effect of attendance factors on attendance intention, this study attempted to test multiple regressions as presented in Table (6). The results indicated that Leisure( $\beta=.331$ ), Performance( $\beta=.165$ ), Event Service ( $\beta=.101$ ), Environment Facility( $\beta=.013$ ), Accessibility ( $\beta=.006$ ) were high in order.

**Table 6.** Multiple regression analyses among attendance factors and attendance intention

Factors	B	S.E.	$\beta$	t-value
(Constant)	.177	.374		.473
Leisure	.472	.077	.331	6.134***
Event/ Service	.133	.067	.101	1.982*
Performance	.190	.057	.165	3.352**
Environment/Facility	.019	.077	.013	.243
Accessibility	.008	.083	.006	.102
R2=.222, F=22.166***				

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Especially, Leisure, Performance and Event Service had significantly effect on attendance intention. The 3 factors had positively effect on attendance intention(R2=.222, F=22.166). On the other hands, Environment Facility, Accessibility had not significantly effect on attendance intention.

## 4. Discussions and Conclusions

The economic struggle of professional sports leagues or teams has been proven by low gate receipts and broadcasting rights, which has continued to the present. Game attendance in professional sporting events is the critical key to an organizations success(Noll[21]). To increase attendance, team marketers are advised to implement distinct marketing strategies: (a) to classify heterogeneous spectators into homogeneous groups, called market segmentation, (b) to select a target market based on some segmentations, and (c) to position the particular characteristics of baseball games into spectators' minds.

In addition, team marketers may identify all effective factors influencing a spectator's decision making to attend baseball games. Especially, marketers should develop and implement strategies that are under their control and which draw much attention to baseball games. It is imperative for team marketers to segment spectators based on demographic variables, life styles, and product usage rate. As suggested by Hansen & Gauthier[7], the implications of marketing strategies based on differences in ages, gender, and the frequency of games attended will be determined by satisfying the needs of each group who have various motives for attending sports events. Overall, this study attempted to determine the differences in foreign spectators preferences and satisfactions toward all factors influencing the decision to attend Korean Professional Baseball League games.

More especially, this study intended to examine: (a) the differences in the attendance factors between attendance experience. (b) the relatively significant predictors of the attendance factors influencing the foreign spectators' intentions to attend future games

First, Leisure, Event/Service, Performance, Time, Personal factors are showed differences between attendance experience. And there are significant difference of attendance intention between attendance experience. The mean scores of 'Yes' respondents were higher than 'No' respondents. Satisfaction with the experience of attending sports events would be an important predictor of the likelihood of attending future sports activities (Madrigal[16]).

Secondly, Analyzed the effect of attendance factors on attendance intention. The results indicated that Leisure, Performance and Event/Service had significantly effect on attendance intention. It was concluded that as the satisfaction of spectators for these factors increase, their intentions to attend baseball games in the future games would be likely to improve. Lee, Oh, & Cho[15] found that promotional factors were positively related to satisfaction of spectators while attending sports events, Likewise, these factors were considered significantly when spectators intended to attend other games in the future.

The findings of this research were consistent with a study conducted by Matsuoka , Chelladurai, & Harada[17] indicating that spectators' satisfaction with team performance was significantly related to their intentions to

attend future games. Many previous studies (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton[20]; Kim & Lee[13]; Kim & Shin[14]) reported similar findings with this research, stating the core product, team performance, were considered the most significant factors influencing game attendance and spectators' satisfaction.

In order to increase attendance for future games, marketers must be focus primarily on Performance factors such as the home and visiting team's winning records, contention for playoff, rival match, and game schedule that can stimulate attendance intention of foreign spectators.

The following recommendations are made for further research in the area of a marketing strategy:

1. Any future study should be conducted so as to examine foreign spectators' perceptions of attendance factors in other Korean professional sports such as soccer and basketball.
2. Any future study should compare spectators' perceptions of attendance factors between foreign spectators and domestic spectators
3. Any future study should focus on investigating the cost of promotional events encountered by each team.

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