

Content Analysis of LPGA and KLPGA Websites Regarding Core Elements of the Sport Marketing Mix

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The U.S. has the highest Internet usage with over 200 million Internet users, while South Korea is the sixth largest with 31.6 million Internet users (Internet World Stats, 2005). According to Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (2000), sport plays an important role in the new digital market place and the number of sports-related World Wide Web sites has rapidly increased. Sport-related websites are utilized as a means of distributing information and interacting with potential customers. Although the Internet does not entirely replace traditional means of media, the Internet allows sport organizations to tailor and target specific products to a particular group of consumers (Caskey & Deply, 1999; Deply & Bosetti, 1998; Pope & Forrest, 1997). In other words, the development of these websites has accelerated to the point that these sites are not the primary component of sport promotional activities. According to Shin (2003), television has been always a key factor in generating media revenues and exposure for both Ladies Professional Golfers Association (LPGA) and Korean Ladies Professional Golfers Association (KLPGA). However, little attention has been given to systematic analysis to compare the contents of professional golf organizations' websites in relation to the core elements of the sport marketing mix.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to analyze and compare the contents of the LPGA and KLPGA's websites in accordance with the core elements of the marketing mix. In order to analyze and compare contents of the websites, a certain classification system was defined. The classification system for this study was defined on the basis of the core elements of marketing mix. This classification system consisted of 34 items on the following elements: (1) product (e.g., player information, tour results, statistics, or merchandise catalog), (2) price (e.g., information about how to purchase tickets and licensed merchandises), (3) promotion (e.g., information about upcoming events, online-chat room, multimedia, or news; (4) place (e.g., event course information and unique URL name). (5) other (e.g., not belonging in one of the previous categories such as email contact, banner advertisement, or voting poll). The data for this study was gathered using a self-developed instrument. The researchers logged the information that appeared on the official websites of LPGA and KLPGA. Scoring for each item was made by assigning a value corresponding to absence of a category element or different value for presence of a category element. For more reliable scoring process, scoring guidelines suggested by Patton (1990) were considered. In order to address validity issues of the research instrument, the instrument was submitted to a panel of three experts who possess a substantial amount of knowledge and research experience in the field of sport management. According to Kassarijian (1977), random error that can be caused by raters' subjectivity is one of the biggest threats to validity when analyzing contents of a website. Inter-rater reliability was estimated as a way to handle the challenge. The inter-rater reliability was investigated by estimating correlation coefficient between two independent data responded by two independent raters on the same research instrument.

The main finding of the analysis indicates that both KLPGA and LPGA websites were primarily utilized to disseminate information about players' statistics under the element of Product, course information under the element of Place, and sponsors under the element of Other. With regard to the element of Place, unique URL name, upcoming tour schedule, and weather forecast were provided by both websites. In terms of the element of other, both KLPGA and LPGA websites provided external links such as contact options and histories of their organizations. The most interesting finding from this study was that both LPGA and KLPGA websites did not include any content relevant to merchandise and ticket sales. Thus, the contents of LPGA and KPGA websites did not completely fit into the core elements of sport marketing mix. Only 67.3 percent of contents on the LPGA website was devoted to the core elements of marketing mix while 75.7 percent of categories on the KLPGA website was linked to the core elements of marketing mix. Clearly, the LPGA and KLPGA websites were primarily utilized as a mean of providing unique information about their players and events. However, since the websites did not allow website visitors to purchase tickets and merchandise, it can be argued that both LPGA and KLPGA do not seem to fully utilize this technological innovation for potential revenue generation. It is suggested that both organizations should recognize the Web's potential as a marketing communication tool in the competitive market. Therefore, this presentation will elaborate on the connection between the use of the websites in the golf industry and the generation of possible revenue sources based on the findings of the study.