

Perceived Service Quality and Motivation of Fantasy Sports Participants

Young Ik Sub, Indiana University

Choonghoon Lim, Indiana University

Wonyoul Bae, Indiana University

Paul M. Pedersen (Advisor), Indiana University

Marketing

Abstract 2009-061

May 29, 2009

8:00 AM

25 minute oral

(Lexington A)

Fantasy sports – where sports fans build a team with real athletes and compete against each other based upon real-life performance and statistical data – has witnessed dramatic growth over the past decade and is now a segment of the sport industry that includes over 19 million participants just in the United States and Canada (Fantasy Sports, 2007). In addition, the fantasy sports segment generates an estimated \$1.5 billion in revenue per year with 7-to-10% annual growth (McCarthy, 2006). According to Murphy and Church (2000), online sports games such as fantasy sports provide unique opportunities for marketing, advertising, and sponsorship to create loyal users and generate frequent and longer website visits. Moreover, abundant demographic data provided by fantasy sports are offering unique research opportunities for targeted markets which in the past have traditionally not been easy to reach (STATS, 2006).

Despite this growing segment of the sport industry and the intense interest and participation in fantasy sports, few studies have been conducted relative to fantasy sports participants' psychological factors (e.g., perceived service quality, motivation) which can have an impact on sport marketers' ability to maintain and attract fantasy sports participants. In particular, little is known about why fantasy participants use specific fantasy league servers (e.g., CNN.com, NFL.com). In order to fill this hole in the literature and understand the issues involved, the current study revised the Fantasy Sport Participation Motivation Scale (FSPMS) developed by Cooper (2004). This revision was done for this study because the FSPMS was not comprehensive scale (i.e., it did not include some important motivational factors). The present study combined the uses and gratifications theory from the mass communication literature and the traditional sports fan motivation scale in order to establish the theoretical framework to identify motivation of fantasy sports participants. The uses and gratification paradigm provides the face validity because it is an effective framework to understand Internet user behavior based on the assumption that Internet users are more active, in ways such as selecting and searching information (Ruggiero, 2000). Furthermore, according to Shank and Beasley (1998), fantasy sports fans have a similar emotional attachment and high involvement in sports as the traditional sports fans. Therefore, both the uses and gratification theory and the Motivation Scale for Consumption (MSSC) developed by Trail and James (2001) were combined to identify the motivation of fantasy sports participants.

In addition to examining the motivations for fantasy sports participation, the present study also investigated the influence of service quality on using specific fantasy sports servers, because providing superior service quality is a central point to building consumer loyalty and revisited websites. Also, better service quality typically results in higher market share and lower costs (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Malhotra, 2002). Thus, sports marketers need to understand how fantasy sports participants perceive and evaluate the service quality of the fantasy sports servers they are using. The e-SERVQUAL measure developed by Zeithaml et al. was utilized to understand the perceived service quality of sport servers by fantasy sports participants. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to propose the theoretical models explaining the relationship between motivation, perceived service quality, attitudes toward fantasy game, and actual usage (i.e., amount of time and frequency).

Given the amount of time and frequency were employed with different scales, the current study proposed two separate models. Further, the study involved a comparison of the new model with rival models to examine the role of attitude toward fantasy sport as a mediating variable. There were 353 participants in this study, of which there were 161 undergraduate students at a large Midwestern university in the United States that identified themselves as fantasy game participants. The model for motivation consisted of 15 items with five dimensions (i.e., economic, entertainment, escape, fantasy, knowledge, and pass time). The model for service quality consisted of nine items with three dimensions (i.e., usability, trust, and satisfaction). The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method was employed through AMOS 6.0 to analyze the conceptual framework and psychometric property of the scale. As a result, model fit of the SEM analysis was found to be good for both models (Model 1, amount of time spent in fantasy sport: S-B χ^2 / df = 1.696, RMSEA = 0.066, CFI = 0.882; Model 2, frequency of fantasy game participation: S-B χ^2 / df = 1.690, RMSEA = 0.066, CFI = 0.884). The reliabilities for all factors were acceptable, ranging from .74 to .92. These findings suggested that motivation and perceived service quality may be considered as significant antecedent factors to examine attitudes of fantasy sports participants. Further, the proposed models also suggest the significant mediating role of attitudes on actual usage. Given these results, theoretical and practical implications for future research will be discussed in this presentation.