The Effects of Fan Loyalty, Perceived Ease of Use and Usefulness of Sport Teams’ Websites on Attitude and Intention to Use the Websites

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Today, sport teams utilize their websites as an important marketing tool. For example, the Major League Baseball official website generated $90 million in revenue and 700 million hits in 2003 (Miller, 2003). The website allows sport fans to access information about the teams (e.g., players’ statistics and game schedules), share sport information with other fans, and purchase sport products. While the number of sport fans who use teams’ websites has increased, little empirical research has been conducted to understand their decision-making process and examine factors that influence their consumption behavior. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine sport fans’ perceptions and attitudes toward sport teams’ websites and the effects of the perceptions and the attitudes on future intention to use the websites.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM; Davis, 1989; Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989) was adapted as a theoretical framework to guide this study. The TAM consists of three key determinants (i.e., perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and attitude). The TAM was developed based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and has been supported by many studies in various technological environments such as personal computers (Igbaria, Zinatelli, Cragg, & Cavaye, 1997), the Internet (Moon & Kim, 2001), wireless Internet (Lu, Yu, Liu, & Yao, 2003), mobile banking (Luarn & Lin, 2005), and television commerce (Yu, Ha, Choi, & Rho, 2005). For the purpose of this study, we also examined fan loyalty, a sport specific construct, as another predictor of sport fans’ intention to use teams’ websites.

Responses from 245 university recreation sport consumers at a large university located in the Pacific Northwest region were used to test the efficacy of the proposed model. The participants were requested to recall their web experiences of using one of the websites chosen by the researchers (i.e., a professional sport team’s website or a college athletic program’s official website). All participants had actual experiences of using one of these websites.

The overall fit of the SEM analysis with EQS 6.1 was found to be good: $2/df (166.22/95 = 1.75$, RMSEA (.055), CFI (.966), IFI (.966), NFI (.925), NNFI (.957), and SRMR (.039). Specifically, perceived ease of use strongly influenced perceived usefulness (path coefficient = .87 at $p < .05$), and perceived usefulness significantly influenced attitude toward sport teams’ websites (path coefficient = .53). However, no direct and significant causal relationship was found from usefulness to intention. In summary, the TAM model was partially supported in this study. In addition, the result revealed that fan loyalty significantly influenced attitude (path coefficient = .10) and intention to use the websites (path coefficient = .46). The result supports fan loyalty as an important predictor of sport web consumption behavior. Practical and research implications will be discussed in the presentation.