The explosive growth of the Internet has dramatically changed the business environment in sport and media (McDaniel & Sullivan, 1998). Increased levels of interactivity and personalization potential have shifted market power from suppliers to consumers (Mahan & McDaniel, 2006). In particular, the popular online gaming phenomenon, ‘fantasy sport’, has gained unprecedented popularity, with about 30 million participants in the United States and Canada accounting for more than $4 billion spent online (Fantasy Sport Trade Association, 2009).

However, despite its proliferation as a multibillion dollar industry, little research has been conducted to examine the antecedents that explain adoption of fantasy sport leagues.

The current study employs the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM; Davis, 1986) as a theoretical framework in the context of fantasy sport league consumption. An extensive research has well documented the significant effects of perceived ease of use (PEU) and perceived usefulness (PU) as preceding variables in explaining adoption of the information system. Although the TAM is a well-documented model for explaining technology acceptance by users, some scholars have criticized the model for its inability to better account for the factors that explain users’ acceptance of technology systems (cf. Park et al., 2007). Likewise, Davis (1989) also claimed that research should incorporate other variables that could affect intentions and actual use. Further, the majority of research that employed the TAM has largely focused on utilitarian technology systems such as e-commerce, spreadsheet software, and the digital library systems (e.g., Chau, 1996; Davis, 1993, 1997; Jiang et al., 2000) and relatively little is known about the adoption of pleasure-oriented technology systems (e.g., fantasy sport leagues).

Therefore, in order to enrich the explanation of users’ fantasy sport league participation, this study modifies and extends the TAM by employing the media uses and gratification (U & G) approach (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Palmgreen, 1984). The U & G approach assumes that media users are goal-directed, purposive, and motivated when they select and use media. It should be noted that playing fantasy sport league is primarily a hedonic activity (cf. Farquhar & Meeds, 2007; Kwak, Lim, Lee, & Mahan, 2010). Previous research has suggested that perceived enjoyment plays a critical role in adopting hedonic-based technology system (Ha, Yoon, & Choi, 2007). In a recent study, Davis and Duncan (2006) found that exhibiting sports knowledge is one of the main factors driving people to participate in fantasy sport leagues. Based on the above frameworks, we examine the effects of attitude toward televised football (FBATT), perceived football knowledge (PFK), perceived ease of use of the website (PEU), and gender on perceived enjoyment (PE) and participation intentions.

A convenience sample of college students (N = 242), at a large Eastern university, responded to a self-report web-based survey. Data collection started two weeks prior to the kickoff of the 2006 National Football League (NFL) season and continued for three weeks. Fantasy football league was selected for the study because it is the most popular form of the fantasy league sports (Fantasy Sport Trade Association, 2009). Multi-item measures (i.e., FBATT, PFK, PEU, PE, and intentions) were adapted from previous literature on TAM and U & G and showed good internal consistencies (Cronbach’s alpha ranged from .84 to .98). A series of multiple moderated regression analyses were conducted to examine the direct influence of the independent variables on PE and intentions, and to examine potential moderating effects of gender in the relationships between the antecedents and intentions. Specifically, four predictors (gender, FBATT, PFK, and PEU) were entered in the first block and three interaction terms of gender and each predictor (gender × FBATT, gender × PFK, and gender × PEU) were entered in the second block.

The results showed that all independent variables were significant in predicting perceived enjoyment ([gender: β = -.392, t = 3.15, p < .01]; [FBATT: β = .25, t = 3.834, p < .01]; [PFK: β = .157, t = 3.563, p < .01]; [PEU: β = .227, t = 3.041, p < .01]). Four predictors explained 47% of the total variance of the perceived enjoyment. In predicting participation intentions, gender, PFK, and PEU were significantly related to intentions but the effect of FBATT was not significant ([gender: β = -.796, t = -5.117, p < .01]; [FBATT: β = -.139, t = -1.681, p > .05]; [PFK: β = .383, t = 6.926, p < .01]; [PEU:
\( \beta = 0.541, t = 5.783, p < .01 \}). Taken together, the model explained 62\% of the total variance of the participation intentions. In this model, gender significantly moderated the relationship between PFK and intentions.

The current study extends the original TAM by employing constructs derived from the media U & G theory to better account for the fantasy sport consumption behavior. In line with previous literature on the TAM, FBATT and PEU played significant roles in predicting enjoyment and intentions toward participating fantasy sport leagues (Davis, 1989). Findings also support the media U & G theory. Given that fantasy sport consumption is purposive and goal-directed media behavior, the results showed that PFK is significantly associated with PE and intentions (e.g., Davis & Duncan, 2006). Thus, findings suggest that the more a consumer feels knowledgeable about the sport, feels free of effort in using the service website, and likes watching football on TV, the more likely that the consumer would find fantasy sport league enjoyable and exciting. Moderating effect of gender on the relationship between PFK and intentions suggest that the effect of perceived knowledge on intentions is likely to be stronger for males than females (cf. Davis & Duncan, 2006).