The Relationships Between Quality of the Sporting Contest, Entertainment Value, E-Satisfaction and Continued Usage of the Website

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The Internet has transformed the fundamental dynamics surrounding sport businesses (Delpy and Bosetti, 1998). Indeed, websites have been identified not only as a primary source of information (Joinson, 2000; Rha, Montalto, & Widdows, 2003), but also as a prime source of entertainment (But, Nguyen & Armitage, 2005; Karat et al. 2002, Seo & Green, 2008), and an increasingly important point of purchase for consumers (Donghun, 2005; Suh & Chang, 2006).

Seo & Green (2008) have identified entertainment as one of the most important motives for fans to use a sporting website. However, to the extent of our knowledge, no research has been conducted that identifies the factors of entertainment quality of a website in the sport industry. Also, no study seems to specifically address the issues of importance of the quality of the contest on the online service quality, consumer satisfaction and behavioral intents. Although, studies about quality management in the stadiums have identified the quality of the competition as having a strong impact on customer satisfaction (Brady et. al, 2006; Tsuji et al, 2007) and behavioral intents (Yoshida & James, 2010) when compared to other factors.

This paper studies structural relationships between the quality of the contest, and entertainment value, e-satisfaction and continued usage of the website.

Theoretical Background

Contest Quality (CQ) and Entertainment Value of the Website (ENT). Loiacono et al. (2007) propose to go beyond the utilitarian aspects of a website to include its entertainment value. In the sport’s marketing literature, research from Hur et al (2011) mentions that a website needs to address both utilitarian and hedonic fulfillment of the consumer. However, their study doesn’t differentiate the items leading to each form of fulfillment. Another research in online sport marketing defines entertainment as a “motive to enjoy sports and to have fun through use of teams’ web sites” (Seo & Green, 2008, 86). Therefore, in this research, the website is a medium between the consumer and an entertaining content. But, the study also suggests that the entertainment value of a website may be impacted by the quality of the sporting contest, which has usually been characterized as the core product of a sporting event, (Madrigal, 1995; Matsuoka, Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2007; Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008; Yoshida & James, 2010). Thus, we propose:

H1: CQ positively influences ENT.

ENT and E-Satisfaction (SAT). Many studies have demonstrated that perceptions of online services value impact e-satisfaction (Gera, 2011; Zeithaml et al., 2002; Jun, Yang & Kim, 2003; Hur et al. 2011). In particular, their entertainment value seems to strongly impact e-satisfaction (Loiacono, 2002; Thong et al, 2006; Van der Heijden, 2004; Venkatesh, Speier & Morris, 2002; Yi & Hwang, 2003). Therefore, we propose:

H2: ENT positively influences SAT.

ENT and Continued Usage (CU). Ultimately, the viability of a website depends on its continued usage (Karahanna et al., 1999; Bhattacharjee, 2001a). Studies have shown that entertainment value is an important determinant of continued usage (Loiacono, 2002, 2007). Thus, we propose:

H3: ENT positively influences CU.
SAT and CU. The significant positive relationship between e-satisfaction and e-loyalty has been extensively studied (Kim et al., 2009; Kim & Kim, 2010; Shankar et al., 2003; Thong, Hong & Tam, 2006; Tsai et al., 2006; Yang & Peterson, 2004; Yen & Lu, 2008). Thus, we propose:

H4: SAT positively influences CU.

Mediating effect of Satisfaction between ENT and CU. Previous research has revealed that e-service quality has a direct and an indirect effect (through e-satisfaction and perceived value) on e-loyalty-related behavioral intentions (Bansal, 2004; Gera, 2011). For instance, in their review of antecedents to e-satisfaction, Bansal et al. (2004) concluded that most of the antecedents are related either to the website or to the perceived value of the website. Hur et al. (2011) also demonstrated that satisfaction has a mediating role between service quality and behavioral intentions. Therefore, we propose:

H5. SAT mediates the relationship between ENT and CU.

Sample and Procedures

Data was collected via an online survey. We asked participants to name their favorite sport and website, and subsequently, the questions about the quality of the contest targeted the sport that they chose and the questions related to their experience of their favorite sporting website. All items were measured with a seven-point Likert type scale. The sample consists of 263 respondents including 133 (51.8%) males and 119 (46.3%) females.

Measures and Analysis

The scale items used in our research have been developed and modified from the items of existing scales. 27 of the 37 items (i.e., 3 or 4 items for each construct) that had the highest scores in reliability and validity tests were used to produce psychometrically sound and parsimonious structural models. The Cronbach’s alpha of the 11 factors ranged from .762 to 972. EFA was used to assess the degree to which each measure reflects the intended construct. Subsequently, the model, as well as some variants of it, was evaluated using SEM. The efficacy of the proposed model and psychometric properties of the overall scale were tested using SPSS 19 and AMOS 19.

Results and Discussion

Path analysis employed to examine the relationships between variables CQ, ENT, SAT and CU demonstrated an acceptable model fit to the data ($\chi^2$(df)=854.752(395); SRMR=.071; CFI=.952; IFI=.952; TLI=.947; RMSEA=.067) (Hair et al., 2010). CQ explained 53% of the variance of ENT (H1), ENT explained 84% of SAT (H2), and SAT explained 82% of CU(H4), with all path significant at p<.001. Path analysis was employed to examine the relationships between ENT and CU, and also demonstrated acceptable model fit to the data ($\chi^2$(df)=317.961(114); SRMR=.061; CFI=.967; IFI=.967; TLI=.960; RMSEA=.083) (Hair et al., 2010). ENT demonstrated a direct effect on CU as it explained 70% of CU (H3) with a path significant at p<.001. In order to test for mediation, we established that ENT, SAT and CU were significantly related to each other (see results stated above), and we assessed that the relationship between ENT and CU changed ($\beta$ from .70 to .10) when SAT was included in the model which supported mediation (Hair et al., 2010). Moreover, the relationship between ENT and CU was reduced to the point where it was not statistically significant, which demonstrates full mediation of SAT (Hair et al., 2010) (H5).

In summary, the current research makes two theoretical contributions. First, the results augment prior literature on the entertainment value of the website, which to date has not examined the impact of the quality of the contest. Second, the paper analyzes the entertainment value as a 2nd order construct (Loiacono, 2007), which brings more depth to the concept in order to discuss its relationships with other concepts (CQ, SAT, CU), and therefore, allows for new findings. Practically, the research quantifies the impact of the contest on online services consumptions and provides relevant information which will help marketing services and website developers to better assess the quality of their contribution to the website.