Since the inception of the smartphone and tablet, the number of people who can access the Internet via the mobile devices have been dramatically increased (Miller & Washington, 2012). For example, over 1.2 billion mobile phones being used around the world can access the Internet (International Telecommunications Union, 2012). Additionally, there will be more mobile Internet users than personal computer (PC) Internet users by the year of 2015 (Hepburn, 2011). The growing number of mobile Internet users allows access to tremendous amounts of information and products/services available on the Internet, anywhere and anytime (Chae, Kim, Kim, & Ryu, 2002). Due to this fact, mobile commerce (m-commerce), defined as “content delivery and transaction on mobile devices” (Leung & Antypas, 2001, p. 53), is significantly growing. Accordingly, m-commerce is given great attention more than ever. The sport industry is no exception.

Owing to the ever-increasing popularity and growth of mobile Internet use, it allows sport fans to engage in various behaviors using mobile devices, such as searching for their favorite teams’ information (e.g., game schedules, scores, rosters), purchasing merchandise and tickets, and interacting with either other fans or sport organizations (Kang, Ha, Marion, & Greenwell, 2012). Typically, the aforementioned sport fan behaviors with mobile devices occur through the following two primary mechanisms: (a) a mobile website (e.g., m.espn.go.com) – a website optimally designed to be viewed by a mobile phone and (b) a mobile application (e.g., ESPN ScoreCenter). However, if the goal is primarily related to offering mobile-friendly content to the widest possible fans, developing a mobile website would be a practical first step in the organization’s mobile outreach strategy (see Summerfield, 2013). This is because a mobile website has several inherent advantages over a mobile app such as, platform compatibility, searching function, flexible contents update, and cost-effectiveness (Buettner & Simmons, 2011; Summerfield, 2013).

Given a circumstance where sport organizations in the current sport industry are facing some significant challenges, such as a highly competitive and saturated market place, and spiraling operating costs (Gladden & Sutton, 2009), a number of sport organizations are making great efforts to utilize their websites as a cost-effective marketing tool for increasing fans’ level of engagement by developing customized and quality websites. Coinciding with such efforts, many scholars in the field of sport marketing have attempted to examine how sport fans perceive and experience the quality of service provided by sport organizations’ websites (Carlson & O’Cass, 2012; Hur, Ko, & Valacich, 2011; Seo, Green, Ko, Schenewark, & Lee, 2007; Suh, Ahn, & Pederson, 2013). Common findings from the previous work were that the better quality a sport website has, the more fans are likely to trust and satisfy with the website which in turn fosters the website loyalty. For example, Hur et al. (2011) identified five dimensions of sport website quality (information, interaction, design, system, fulfillment) and found that the overall sport website quality significantly affected fans’ satisfaction with and loyalty to the website. Even though the findings have contributed to the better understanding of sport consumers’ perceptions of sport website quality, it is unlikely that the findings can be applied to a mobile sport website context because of several attributes that differentiate the mobile website from the PC-based website such as ubiquity, convenience, localization, instant connectivity, and personalization (Clarke III, 2001; Hyman, 2012).

Researchers outside of the sport context have recently begun to investigate one’s perceptions of mobile website quality and usability in m-business context (e.g., Hyman, 2012; Zhou, 2011). As of yet, however, no efforts were made to understand sport fans’ perceptions of mobile sport websites in spite of the rapid growth and availability of the mobile Internet in a sport consumption setting. As such, it is essential to understand how sport fans perceive and experience mobile sport websites. Churchill (1979) and Netemeyer, Bearden, and Sharma (2003) argued that developing a psychometrically sound measurement scale is a crucial step in establishing and undergirding a strong body of knowledge for any area of scientific research. Considering research on mobile website quality in a sport context is in its infancy, therefore, developing a valid and reliable measurement is needed to help both sport researchers and practitioners better understand sport fan behaviors using mobile phones. Accordingly, the purpose
of this research is to develop a psychometrically valid and reliable measurement scale of a mobile sport website quality.

Following Kim, Trail, Woo, and Zhang’s (2011) procedure for developing relationship quality constructs, a Quality Scale for Mobile Sport Website (QSMSW) is currently being developed through three separate studies: Study 1 (items and domains generation, content validity establishment, initial psychometric property check), Study 2 (confirmation of the factor structure), and Study 3 (cross validation of the scale). More specifically, in Study 1, potential items and domains of the QSMSW were generated from a thorough review of relevant literatures as well as by the authors. The initial QSMSW was composed of 30 items representing the following six dimensions: information (6 items), personalization (4 items), design (7 items), system (6 items), fulfillment (4 items), and interaction (3 items). Then, the content validity of the generated items was established by a four-judge panel of scholars and graduate students in the field of sport management. To check initial psychometric properties of the scale, data is currently being collected from students in a large South-central University. In Study 2, second data collection from students in a mid-size Midwestern University will be carried out to confirm the factor structure elicited in the Study 1. Lastly, the confirmed factor structure in the Study 2 will be cross-validated based on additional data collection from students at the large Midwestern University (Study 3).

Even though a mobile-based sport website has unique characteristics compared to a PC-based sport website, no attempts have been made to understand sport fans’ perceptions of mobile sport website quality in the field of online sport marketing. With the prevalence of mobile Internet service, more and more sport fans are turning their attention directly to mobile sport websites. Thus, service quality provided by the mobile websites is becoming a more important issue than ever. The developed scale will provide a solid framework and a tool for future empirical examinations of mobile sport website quality and its influence on some outcome variables including satisfaction and loyalty. For example, the scale can be utilized to identify casual relationships between mobile sport website quality, and sport fans’ satisfaction with and loyalty to the website. Further, the QSMSW can also be adopted in sport management practice. Sport marketers can use the scale to measure the level of overall mobile sport website quality and thereafter identify which specific components of the mobile website need to be revised or improved. The components could be related to content, interface, interaction, design, security, and others. Going through the above three separate studies, the overall results of the current research will be presented and further implications will be discussed.