Developing Online Sport Consumer Behavior: Online Sport Consumer Information Search Behavior (OSCISB)

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With such fast dissemination of data via smart electronic devices, the number of sport consumers using such devices for sport consumption is also rising (Ha, Kang, & Kim, 2017). Coinciding with the widespread use of online shopping, the Internet plays a major role for consumers seeking product information (Jepsen, 2007). Aligned with this trend, consumers utilize the Internet when searching for product-related information (Peterson & Merino, 2003). It is well known that information search behavior can be attributed to the need to improve online shopping for products, consequently influencing consumers’ pleasurable shopping experience (Scheinbaum, 2012). However, despite sport consumers’ distinctive characteristics (Ha et al., 2017), little research in the context of sport has been conducted.

Given the importance of sport consumers’ online shopping, the current trend raises the question of how the process of information search behavior is associated with decision-making and positive shopping experience concerning sport product consumption. The purpose of this study is to better understand the online information search behaviors of sport consumers. Thus, we will attempt to conceptualize several research questions concerning online sport consumer information search behavior as follows: (1) What factors influence the use of the Internet for sport consumers' information search? (2) What factors influence sport consumers’ perceptions of usefulness or trustworthiness of searched online information? (3) How does sport consumers’ judgment affect their intention to purchase?

Due to the paucity of knowledge concerning the specific factors and factor relationship that comprise online sport shopping, a grounded theory approach will be selected (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). To develop a theoretical explanation of human behavior grounded in data, an iterative process of data collection and analysis will be used from the exhibiting behaviors. The theoretical framework in this study is reflected by constructionists’ assertion that meanings are constructed and developed as human beings interact with each other and their world (Crotty, 2015).

Purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) will be used to gather information, primarily criterion sampling. Semi-structured interviews will be used in order to understand how participants engage in online information search behavior and shopping behavior. The combination of interviews and observations is meant to give an accurate view of the real use and prevent the “say-do” problem. People tend to address what they think they do from what they actually do (Jordan & Dalal, 2006). Axial coding will be used to extend the analytic approach from the initial coding as well as to determine the dominant codes and the less important ones (Saldana, 2015).

By assessing sport consumers’ online behaviors, this study will extend the knowledge of sport consumers’ use of the Internet in the context of sport consumers’ information search as well as facilitate the understanding of sport researchers and practitioners regarding how contemporary sport consumers are associated with the phenomenon of sport information search. In particular, this study will explain (1) how information search behavior is formed, (2) what factors can influence sport consumers’ positive judgment of their information quality, and (3) how sport consumers’ information search behavior on the Internet can be better understood.