

SPORTS EVENTS TOURISM: THE IMPACT OF ONLINE SPORTS MARKETING IN SIGNIFICANCE TO SPORTS CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

Sports events tourism is a major component of sports-related tourism in many countries worldwide. As the sports events market is very competitive, the event organizers must be creative and possess entrepreneurial skills when marketing their sports events. Previous research revealed that the Internet has developed faster than any form of electronic technology or communication. The Internet has been found to be an effective way to create an image for products and services that can impact consumer behaviour while reinforcing satisfaction and loyalty.

Purpose: This study focuses on the sports events tourism and the impact of online sports marketing by using the assimilation theory and the Sports Websites Acceptance Model (SWAM) in significance to sports consumer behaviour by using the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) as the theoretical based.

Methods: A self-administered questionnaire was designed and distributed to 160 respondents among active and passive sports tourists involved in the 2011 Monsoon Cup Terengganu. Convenience sampling was chosen as the research method in collecting data from targeted respondents.

Results: The results reveal that both groups' active and passive sports tourists perceived or experienced a combination of advantages of online sports marketing, namely cheap and costless, customer service and access of information. Initially, the overall of 31 items of advantages were listed and

item of the highest score was obtained from the cheap and costless component when it is "reachable at public amenities", that means it could be reached at almost everywhere particularly at public areas and it is free. It was also identified that in terms of the challenges experienced by active and passive sports tourists in obtaining sports information from the online sports marketing is sports tourism websites did not consist of appropriate colours and audio visuals. This is significance to sports consumer behaviours in order to develop awareness and capture attention of one particular sports tourism events. In short, it leads event organizers to recognize that online sports marketing can should be the major tool of marketing process. Specifically, age and monthly family income do not influence the challenges experienced by active and passive sports events tourist.

Conclusion: Analysing the impact of online sports marketing in significance to sports consumer behaviours provides the basis for further conceptual understanding of advantages and challenges of online sports marketing in the sports event tourism field. Besides, the information gathered gives sport tourism providers and policy makers the opportunity to expand their marketing strategy by fully utilizing on the Internet marketing in order to understand better the demand for sport events consumer in serving existing sport tourists, as well as attract new sport tourists.

Key Words: Sports events tourism/ access of information/ Internet access and online sports marketing

Introduction

Sports tourism is a phenomenon that arises from the unique interaction of people, places and activities (Weed & Bull, 2004). Sports events tourism is believed to be among the world's most popular leisure experiences (Ritchie & Adair, 2004). In addition, sport is now regarded by many to be the world's biggest social phenomenon (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2003) and tourism its largest industry (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006). Sport tourism is defined as "leisure-based travel that takes individuals temporarily outside of their home communities to participate in physical activities, to watch physical activities, or to venerate attractions associated with physical activities" (Gibson, 1998). The global growth and impact of sports events tourism in general is indicated by number of people who travel internationally. In the United States, it is estimated that international arrivals will increase from 730 million in 2002 to 1.55 billion in 2020 (Lansing & De Vries, 2007). According to Tourism Malaysia Corporate Website, the overall

number of arrivals was increased from 23.6 million in 2009 to 24.6 million in 2010 and the number is expected to rise by the end of 2011. In order to continuously generate enormous number of international arrivals to Malaysia, it is believed that the online sports marketing could be considered as a major key factor contributor to assure that this objective can be achieved. According to Berthon, Pitt and Watson, 1996), the Internet has grown faster than all other forms of electronic technology and all other mediums of communication. So many people are now online that the internet is mass media. With the emergence of the Internet came new economic opportunities for business including the sports tourism industry. In addition to online marketing, web-based commerce, or the buying and selling of goods or services via the Internet (Ubois, 1997), has grown rapidly. Thus, this study advances our understanding on sports events tourism and the impact of online sports marketing in significance to sports consumer behaviour.

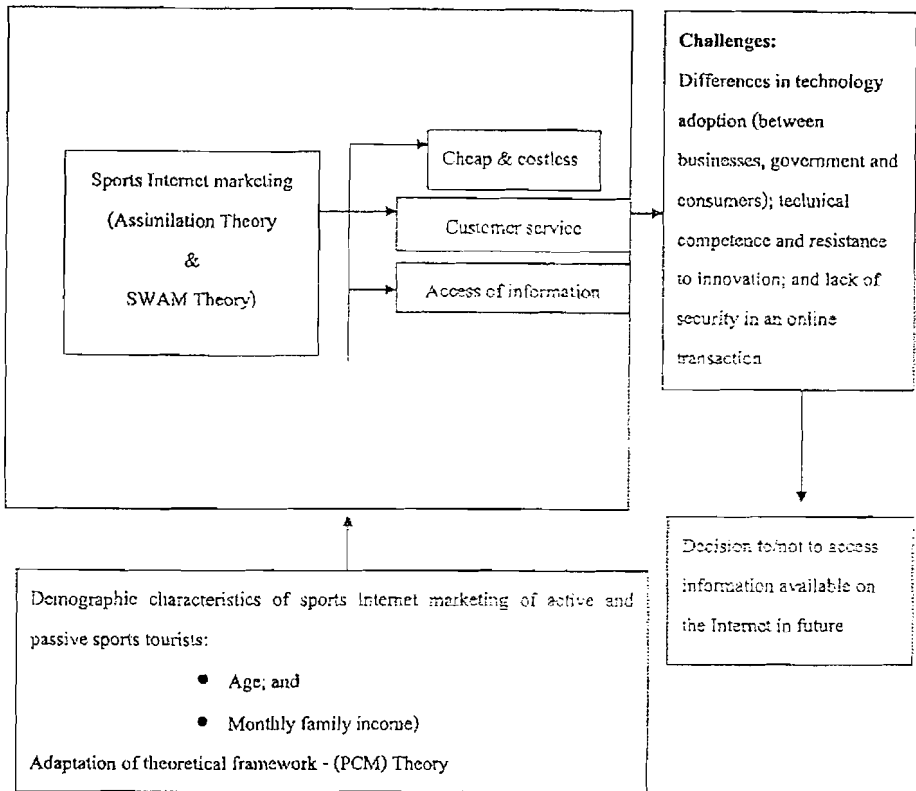


Figure 1 The research conceptual framework on the impact of online sports marketing among active and passive sports tourists

By studying on the sports events tourism impact on online sports marketing in significance to sports consumer behaviours in related to advantages perceived and challenges experiences by active and passive sports events tourism, provides the foundation for promoting theoretical perceptive on the impact of online sports marketing in sports events tourism. Besides, the information gathered may also facilitate sports events tourism organizers towards fulfilling the current demands of sports events tourism consumer. These can be achieved through conducting research from

time to time as the development of online sports marketing developed very significantly. A better understanding on these issues could facilitate and contribute to the development of strategies for promoting participation in sports events tourism activities as well as become the vital marketing tool for sports events tourism organization. On the other hands, the impact of online sports marketing provide an advantages to both sides (the consumer and the organizer) and better known as a win-win situation.

The hypotheses generated were:

(i) There are differences in advantages of online sports marketing experienced by active and passive sports tourists of sports event in terms of age and monthly family income; and

(ii) There are differences in challenges of online sports marketing experienced by active and passive sports tourists of sports event in terms of age and monthly family income.

Methods

The 160 respondents were involved in this present research. All respondent were selected based on their attendants' at the 2011 Monsoon Cup, Terengganu regardless of gender, ethnicity, and other major demographic factors except age and monthly family income. A self-administered questionnaire was designed and distributed equally to all respondents both between active and passive sports tourists that involved in the 2011 Monsoon Cup in Terengganu. Research was conducted through implementation of convenience sampling. The online sports marketing items were

specifically developed in line with the assimilation and SWAM Theory with adding of items of PCM which significant to sports consumer behaviour.

Data Analysis

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to test both hypotheses. A significance level $p < .05$ was used to decide the significance level of the research hypotheses.

Results

A. Advantages perceived by active and passive sports tourists through the online sports marketing

In sports events tourism phenomena, the sports events tourist perceived a combination of advantages through practicing the online sports marketing, namely cheap and costless, customer service and access of information. Initially, the overall of 31 items of advantages were listed and item of the highest score was "reachable at public amenities", that means it could be reached at almost everywhere.

Table 1 Mean and Percentage of Frequencies of Advantages Perceived by Active and Passive Sports Tourists (N=160) (con.)

Cheap and costless										
It is free.	5.69	1.25	1.9	0.6	1.9	11.2	18.8	38.1	27.5	
It is fast.	5.83	1.06	0	0.6	3.8	6.2	18.1	44.4	26.9	
Reachable at any time and any place.	5.83	1.14	0	1.2	4.4	6.9	15.6	41.9	30	
Services provided are affordable.	5.41	1.34	0.6	3.1	6.9	13.8	13.1	44.4	18.1	
It can be reached at almost everywhere.	6.02	4.06	0	0	5.6	11.2	15	41.9	25.6	
Free Internet through WIFI.	5.92	1.13	0	1.2	3.1	7.5	14.4	38.1	35.6	
Reduce cost of expenses.	5.53	1.33	2.5	0	4.4	13.8	16.9	39.4	23.1	
Overall	5.75									

B. The challenges perceived by active and passive sports tourists through online sports marketing

Table 2 revealed that among the 22 items of challenges, the challenge of providing websites

that consist of colours and audio visuals highly challenge the sports tourism organizers effort in dealing with online sports marketing, to meet with the demand of active and passive sports tourists.

Table 2 Mean and Percentage of Frequencies of Challenges Perceived by Active and Passive Sports Tourists (N=160)

Challenges	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentage of Frequencies (%)						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Information need to be concise and precise.	5.95	1.04	0	0	2.5	6.9	20.6	33.1	36.9
Contain mission and vision.	5.96	1.03	0	0	3.1	7.5	13.8	41.8	33.8
Information on management.	5.88	1.17	0.6	1.2	3.1	6.2	15	40.6	33.1
Information on upcoming events.	6.03	1.05	0	1.2	3.1	3.1	12.5	43.8	36.2
Information on previous events.	5.99	0.94	0	0.6	1.9	4.4	14.4	48.4	30
List of participants.	5.79	1.05	0	0.6	2.5	9.4	18.1	43.1	26.2
Results of competition.	5.91	1.07	0	0	3.8	7.5	16.2	38.8	33.8
Information on other related facilities.	5.75	1.08	0	0.6	3.1	10.6	16.9	43.6	25
Appropriate pictures.	5.78	1.15	0	1.2	3.8	10.6	12.5	43.8	28.1
Price ranges of products offered.	5.76	1.31	2.5	0.6	2.5	9.4	12.5	42.5	30.0
Sports manager and knowledge management.	5.94	0.99	0.6	0	1.9	5.6	14.4	48.8	28.8
Sports manager think global.	5.93	0.97	0	0.6	1.2	5.6	20	42.5	30
Sports manager creativity.	5.89	1.02	0	0.6	2.5	7.5	13.8	48.1	27.5

Table 2 Mean and Percentage of Frequencies of Challenges Perceived by Active and Passive Sports Tourists (N=160) (con.)

Websites need to be attractive.	5.96	1.08	0.6	0	1.2	9.4	15	36.9	36.9
Websites should contain colours and audio visuals.	6.49	4.84	0.6	0	2.5	3.8	11.9	39.4	41.2
Websites and user friendly.	6.17	0.97	0.6	0.6	0	3.8	13.1	38.8	43.1
Websites and maps.	6.12	0.99	0.6	0	0.6	6.2	12.5	39.4	40.6
Websites and number of viewers.	5.88	1.19	1.2	1.2	1.2	8.8	12.5	42.5	32.5
Websites highlight on latest upcoming events.	5.96	1.07	0.6	1.2	0	8.1	12.5	44.4	33.1
Websites address should be short and simple.	5.99	1.01	0	0	2.5	7.5	13.8	41.2	35
Websites reachable through many search engines.	6.03	1.08	0.6	0	3.11	6.2	9.4	43.8	36.9
Websites language should be simple and easy to understand.	6.16	1.13	0.6	1.9	0.6	5	10	33.1	48.8
Overall	5.70								

C. Advantages of accessing information experienced by active and passive sports tourist though online sports marketing in term of age

ANOVA scores were significant for access of information listed as "Access organized collection", $F(4, 155) = 2.514, p = .004, \eta^2 = .04$, "Modify organized collection", $F(4, 155) = 2.792, p = .028, \eta^2 = .04$, "Generate awareness", $F(4, 155) = 5.422, p = .000, \eta^2 = .10$, "Gain access to previous information", $F(4, 155) = 4.151, p = .003, \eta^2 = .03$

The group aged 30 to 39 years old highly experiencing the advantages of accessing organized collection, modify organized collection and gain access to previous information through online sports marketing. In the meantime, the group aged 40 to 49 years old highly experiencing the advantage of generating awareness online sports marketing.

D. Advantages of accessing information experienced by active and passive sports tourist though online sports marketing in term of monthly family income

The results of the MANOVA test conducted on advantages of accessing information experienced by active and passive sports tourist though online sports marketing in term of monthly family income were not significant.

E. Advantages of customer service experienced by active and passive sports tourist though online sports marketing in term of age

The results of the MANOVA test conducted on advantages of customer service experienced by active and passive sports tourist though online sports marketing in term of age were not significant.

F. Advantages of customer service experienced by active and passive sports tourist though online sports marketing in term of monthly family income

The results of the MANOVA test conducted on advantages of customer service experienced by active and passive sports tourist though online sports marketing in term of monthly family income were not significant.

G. Advantages of cheap and costless experienced by active and passive sports tourist though online sports marketing in term of age

Scores were significant for cheap and costless items read "Reachable at public amenities", $F(4, 155) = 4.397, p = .002, \eta^2 = .08$, and "Reduce cost" $F(4, 155) = 8.180, p = .000, \eta^2 = .15$

The group aged 30 to 39 years old highly experiencing cheap and costless advantage on both the reaching online sports information at public amenities and reducing cost through online sports marketing.

H. Advantages of cheap and costless experienced by active and passive sports tourist though online sports marketing in term of monthly family income

The results of the MANOVA test conducted on advantages of cheap and costless experienced by active and passive sports tourist though online sports marketing in term of monthly family income were not significant.

I. Challenges experienced by active and passive sports tourists in dealing with online sports marketing in term of age

The results of the MANOVA test conducted on challenges experienced by active and passive sports tourists in dealing with online sports marketing in term of age were not significant.

J. Challenges experienced by active and passive sports tourists in dealing with online sports marketing in term of monthly family income

The results of the MANOVA test conducted on challenges experienced by active and passive sports tourists in dealing with online sports marketing in term of monthly family income were not significant.

Discussion

Sports events tourism have been characterized as 'those sports activities that attract a sizable number of visiting participants and/or spectator... these sports events tourism have the potential to attract non-resident media and technical personnel such as coaches and officials.' Sports events tourism of all-sizes are capable of attracting significant numbers of visitors to a host community as many participants are often accompanied by a small entourage of family and friends. Additionally these events often attract associated media personnel and officials (Lamont & Dowell, 2007).

Standeven and DeKnop (1999) considered sport tourism as falls into two categories, travel to participate in sport and travel to observe sport. Therefore, sport tourism may be defined as travel for non-commercial reasons, to participate or observe sporting activities away from the home range. This recent study divided sports events tourists into two categories namely the active sports events tourists and passive sports events tourists. Both categories are still implied in the definition provide by Standeven and DeKnop (1999) but it was clearly modified that active sports tourists are those travel to participate in sports events with intention to do so whilst the passive sports events tourists are referring to those travel to that particular destinations for other reasons and unintentionally watch the events.

According to Internet and information technology (IT) research, the ability of organizations to assimilate IT throughout their entire business is a pivotal dimension required for capitalizing upon the advantages of Internet applications. This principle is considered a core component of IT strategy in organizations and internet marketing strategy (Armstrong & Sambamurthy, 1999) For example, advantages such as improved customer service and satisfaction, reduced sales costs, the development of consumer databases, more accurate marketing research and improved efficiencies are all potent sources of marketing competitive advantage available through internet applications; each also has ultimate financial implications. Findings revealed that online sports marketing did contribute to the advantages perceived by active

and passive sports events tourist in terms of reducing costs because it is cheap and costless, improve customer service satisfaction and access of information provided by event's organizer through their Websites. In addition, from the sports event organizer perspective, the assimilation theory is also significant. It linked to leadership and management perceptions, in that sport marketers who develop internet strategies from a finite initial perception of the breadth of opportunities are unlikely to investigate and implement comprehensive IT plans.

Online sports marketing have become the best foundation for building fan communities for professional sports league and teams. With the development of more powerful technologies, access to the Internet has increased. Websites are now including media such as audio and video films, podcasts and live broadcasts of league games. More powerful media has also enabled more user interaction and user empowerment. Two key elements in the increasing use of online services to increase the effectiveness of online sports marketing are multimedia and user interaction. Together, they provide an increasingly sophisticated, powerful and user-based medium offers marketing challenges and opportunities to business organizations including professional sport organizations (Ioakimidis, 2010). However, findings in this current study show that the sports events organizers in Malaysia are not fully utilizing the technology and Internet to market their products and services. It can be foreseen when most of the respondent suggested that sports events Websites should

contain colours and audio visual in order to develop awareness among new customer as well as keep retain the existence customer.

Conclusions

The findings suggested that the sports events tourist in Malaysia experiencing the same level of advantages and challenges in sports events tourism activity. Future research should focus on other sports events tourism stakeholders in-line with the online sports marketing to promote the sports events tourism throughout the nation.

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