

Acceptance of Online Sports Marketing Among Faculty of Sport Science and Recreation Student in UiTM (Perlis)

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Abstract

The online marketing has gained prominence among sport event tourists due to its sophisticated features. Even though researchers have examined various factors that influence general consumer use of the Internet, but there are limited research conducted on acceptance of online sports marketing. Thus, a survey was conducted to identify the components of benefits perceived (accessibility, flexibility, interactivity and reliability) and components of challenges experienced (technical challenges and organizational and behavioral challenges) in acceptance of online sports marketing. Using the Sport Website Acceptance Model (SWAM) and Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) as its theoretical framework, this study analyzed the data by applying Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) and independent sample *t*-test to test research hypotheses. A number of 126 respondents among the FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) were involved in this present research. Self-administered questionnaire was distributed equally to 63 male and 63 female students. Research was conducted through implementation of systematic simple random sampling. Findings highlight the advancement on four major points, namely the benefits perceived and also the challenges experienced in acceptance of online marketing, besides the facts that online sports marketing can increase individual's behavioral intention toward the sports event tourism, and website communication can create favorable attitudes toward sport event.

Keywords: Online sports marketing, sport tourism, benefits perceived, challenges experienced

Introduction

The online marketing has significantly changed the landscape of the tourism industry (Mack, Blose, & Pan, 2008). Certainly, tourism is an information-intensive industry that relies on communication with tourists through various channels to market products, and builds customer relationships (Lim, Kim, Choi, Choi, & Lee, 2009; Poon, 1993). The global growth and impact of 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 1.56 billion in 2020 (Lansing & De Vries, 2007). Based on Tourism Malaysia Corporate Website, the overall number of arrivals was increased from 24.7 million in 2011 to 25 million in 2012 and the number is expected to rise in the following years. In order to continuously generate enormous number of international arrivals to Malaysia, the use of information technology within online sports marketing has become a key factor in an organization's

achievement of competitive advantage (Choi & Morrison, 2006; Han & Mills, 2006; Anandkumar, 2008). The online sports marketing has gained prominence among sports events tourists because it is convenient, more efficient and less time consuming service (Filo, Funk, & Hornby, 2009; Heung, 2003; Shilbury, Quick, & Westerbeek, 2003). According to Peterson and Merino (2003), the online marketing becomes the initial or even primary source of information for consumers over time, it is important to present as much information as might be required by the potential tourists on an event website.

Certainly, researchers have examined various factors that influence consumer use of the Internet. Information search has been found to be a significant motivational factor in a number of previous studies (Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005; Pappacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999). The online marketing is a mass media on acceptance of sports events tourism websites by many people to acquire information. Certainly, the Internet has experienced an exponential growth in the number of users and has

created enormous increases in its marketing and communication applications during a considerably short period of time (Ko et al., 2005).

However, to develop sports events tourism websites is not an easy task. A challenge exists for sport event tourism organizations to ensure that their website communication successfully provides relevant event information for consumers. Thus, this study broadens our understanding on acceptance of online sports marketing from two different perspectives. These perspectives are components of benefits perceived in acceptance of online marketing as well as component of challenges experienced once online sports marketing is accepted or being applied. From the event organizers point of view, this research might assist them on strategies to improve their websites communication and eventually rely on the websites as their main marketing tools. By studying the acceptance of online sports marketing in related to advantages perceived and challenges experienced by sports events tourists, provides the foundation for promoting theoretical perceptible 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. Therefore, continuity in carrying similar research from different perspectives is very important.

A better understanding on this particular issue 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 implications of online sports marketing provide advantages to both sides (the consumer and the organizer) and better known as a win-win situation. This research adopted the Sport Website Acceptance Model Theory (SWAM) which was developed by Hur, Ko and Claussen (2011). Initially, SWAM was developed based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM; Davis, 1989). This research also included Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) (Funk & James, 2006; 2001) to study on consumer needs through website communication.

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Use *italic* for emphasizing a word or phrase. Does not use boldface typing or capital letters except for section headings.

Generally the manuscript should have literature

review, methodology, data analysis and results, discussions, conclusions, acknowledgment and references.

The hypotheses generated were:

- (i) There are differences in each component (accessibility, flexibility, interactivity and reliability) of benefits perceived by FSR students in UiTM (Perlis) in online sports marketing in terms of monthly family income groups and gender, and;
- (ii) There are differences in each component (technical, and organizational and behavioral) of challenges experienced by FSR students in UiTM (Perlis) in online sports marketing in terms of monthly family income groups and gender.

Tables and figures

Table 1
Mean and Percentage of Frequencies of Benefits Perceived by FSR student of UiTM (Perlis) (N=126)

Benefits	Mean	Std. Dev.	Percentage of Frequencies (%)						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Accessibility									
I have ability to interact with sports media.	5.41	1.12	0	1.6	4.0	13.5	28.6	37.3	15.1
I have ability to reduce daily tasks into manageable set of links.	5.21	1.02	0	0.8	5.6	15.9	33.3	38.1	6.3
I have ability to access an organized collection of command records.	5.32	1.02	0	0	5.6	13.5	34.9	35.7	10.3
I have ability to generate awareness on sporting events.	5.38	1.02	0	0.8	1.6	16.7	34.1	33.3	13.5
I have ability to establish interactive channel of sports communication	5.30	1.02	0	0	6.3	12.7	34.9	36.5	9.5
I have ability to access to previously inaccessible information.	5.68	3.55	0	0	1.6	16.7	30.2	44.4	6.3
I have ability to keep track of my favourite players.	5.64	1.02	0	0	3.2	11.9	21.4	44.4	19.0
Free Internet	5.67	1.19	0.8	1.6	1.6	10.3	23.0	36.5	26.2

through WIFI.											addresses.									
WIFI helps to reduce costs of expenses.	5.72	1.14	0.8	0	4.0	7.1	24.6	36.5	27.0	Accessible through any search engine.	6.03	0.99	0	0	2.4	4.8	18.3	36.5	38.1	
Overall	5.48									Language used is simple and easy.	6.09	0.94	0	0	1.6	4.8	15.9	38.9	38.9	
Flexibility I am able to buy sport products online.	5.08	12.0	0	4.0	8.7	12.7	30.2	38.9	5.6	Overall	5.87									
Online information is accurate and reliable.	5.13	1.01	5.6	0	0	22.2	32.5	33.3	6.3	Organizational and Behavioural Challenges										
I am able to obtain immediate response and feedback from organizers.	5.13	1.16	0.8	1.6	6.3	15.1	37.3	29.4	9.5	Up-to-date information.	5.87	0.98	0	0.8	1.6	6.3	19.0	46.0	26.2	
I am able to access online information at my own time.	5.56	1.05	0	0	4.0	12.7	25.4	39.7	18.3	Contain organization mission and vision.	5.63	0.99	0	0.8	1.6	8.7	30.2	39.7	19.0	
Online information is flexible.	5.48	0.99	0	0	3.2	14.3	26.2	43.7	12.7	Information on team management	5.67	1.00	0	0.8	2.4	8.7	23.0	46.8	18.3	
Overall	5.28									Information on future events.	5.69	0.98	0	0.8	3.2	5.6	23.8	50.0	16.7	
Interactivity Attractive websites.	5.94	4.53	0	1.6	2.4	8.7	30.2	40.5	15.9	Lists of participants or team competed.	5.66	0.98	0	0.8	2.4	7.1	27.0	45.2	17.5	
Online service is user-friendly.	6.02	5.47	0	0.8	0.8	13.5	26.2	44.4	13.5	Results of the competition	5.79	0.97	0	0	2.4	7.1	23.8	42.1	24.6	
Personal sense of enjoyment.	5.52	1.09	0	0	4.0	14.3	27.8	34.1	19.8	Contain related information.	5.84	1.05	0	0.8	1.6	8.7	19.8	39.7	29.4	
Popular.	5.65	1.03	0	0	3.2	8.7	31.0	34.1	23.0	Contain price ranges and purchasing procedure.	5.77	0.98	0	0	3.2	7.9	19.0	48.4	21.4	
Overall	5.78									Meet international viewer needs.	5.71	1.02	0.8	0	0.8	9.5	24.6	42.9	21.4	
Reliability Quick decision making.	5.28	1.12	0.8	0	7.1	12.7	31.7	37.3	10.3	Overall	5.74									
Secured.	5.25	1.07	0	0	7.1	15.1	33.3	34.1	10.3											
Concise and precise.	5.53	1.03	0	0	4.8	10.3	27.0	42.9	15.1											
Reachable.	5.62	1.06	0	0	4.8	10.3	23.0	42.1	19.8											
Overall	5.42																			

Table 2
Mean and Percentage of Frequencies of Challenges Experienced by FSR student of UiTM (Perlis) (N=126)

Challenges	Mean	Std. Dev.	Percentage of Frequencies (%)						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Technical Challenges									
Information need to be concise and precise.	5.75	1.07	0	0.8	2.4	7.9	26.2	35.7	27.0
Appropriate pictures.	5.82	0.99	0	0.8	1.6	7.1	20.6	45.2	24.6
Eliminates pop-ups.	5.83	1.03	0	0	1.6	11.9	17.5	39.7	29.4
Attractive designs.	5.84	0.96	0	0	1.6	7.1	23.8	40.5	27.0
User friendly websites.	5.87	1.06	0	0.8	0.8	9.5	21.4	34.1	33.3
Contain maps.	5.83	1.01	0	0.8	0.8	9.5	19.8	42.1	27.0
Contain number of viewers.	5.70	1.15	0.8	0.8	3.2	7.1	24.6	38.1	25.4
Short and simple website	5.93	1.02	0	0.8	2.4	4.8	19.0	41.3	31.7

Conceptual framework

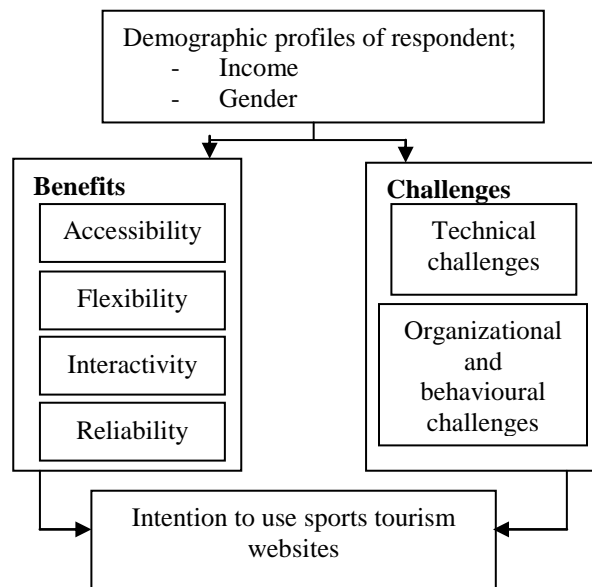


Figure 1 The research conceptual framework on acceptance of sports Internet marketing among FSR student of UiTM (Perlis)

Research methods

Approximately 126 respondents were involved in this present research. All respondent were among the FSR students of UiTM (Perlis). They were selected based on their personal background especially when it deals with experienced and involvement in sports and tourism activities. A self-administered questionnaire was designed and distributed equally to 63 male and 63 female students of FSR UiTM (Perlis). Research was conducted through implementation of systematic simple random sampling. The online sports marketing items were specifically developed in-line with Hur et al.'s (2011) SWAM Theory, which was produced based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM; Davis, 1989). Also adopted was the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM: Funk & James, 2001; 2006) for examining consumer's needs through website communication. The PCM has been employed in a variety of different contexts including Internet-based communication (Filo & Funk, 2005). The PCM conceptualizes the variety of ways individuals relate to sport and recreation objects in terms of four stages along a vertical continuum which include awareness, attraction, attachment and allegiance. Each stage represents an upgraded level of psychological connection that the consumer feels toward the object (Funk & James, 2001). This study focuses on the attraction process to examine whether online sports marketing provide consumers with component of benefits perceived and component of challenges experienced whilst engaged with this particular service.

Data analysis and results

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) and independent sample t-test were used to test both hypotheses. A significance level of .05 was used to decide the significance level of the research hypotheses.

A. There are differences in each component of benefits (accessibility, flexibility, interactivity, and reliability) perceived by FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) in acceptance of online sports marketing

The FSR students of UiTM Perlis were chosen as samples of this study. This is due to their involvement and experiences in sports, recreation and leisure activities. Eventually, the FSR students perceived a combination of four components of benefits (accessibility, flexibility, interactivity and reliability) through practicing the online sports marketing. Initially, 22 items of benefits were identified with nine items of accessibility, five items of flexibility and four items of interactivity and reliability respectively. Unfortunately,

four of the identified items were heterogeneous and cannot be used to generalize the population. The four related items were "I have ability to access to previously inaccessibility information" (accessibility), "I am able to buy sport products online" (flexibility), "attractive websites" (interactivity), and "online service is user-friendly" (interactivity). Thus, findings showed that accessibility was the highest component of benefits perceived in acceptance of online sports marketing, whereby item reading "WIFI helps to reduce cost of expenses" was highly benefiting the FSR students of UiTM Perlis who adopted online sports marketing. It showed that the type of Internet connection affects the frequency and type of online activities (Fox & Jones, 2009; Rains, 2008). This leads to acceptance of online sports marketing on the accessibility components of benefits perceived.

B. There are differences in each component of challenges experienced by FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) in acceptance of online sports marketing.

Table 2 consisted of 19 items related to challenges experienced in acceptance of online sports marketing. These items were categorized into two components, namely the technical challenges, and organizational and behavioural challenges. Technical challenges consisted of 10 items whereby the organizational and behavioural challenges contained of nine items. Findings in Table 2 showed that among these two components of challenges perceived, the component of technical challenges ($M = 5.87$) recorded the highest score, and the item reading "Language used is simple and easy" was highly identified. It could be interpret that respondent preferred websites to be designed in a straightforward communication, avoid jargon etc.

C. Accessibility component of benefits perceived in acceptance of online sports marketing by FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) in terms of monthly family income group

Analysis result of MANOVA conducted on the nine items of accessibility component of benefits perceived in acceptance of online marketing using monthly family income group as the independent variable did not produce significant result, $Wilk's \Lambda = .685$, $F(36, 346) = .978$, $p > 0.05$. The population means of the accessibility benefits perceived by FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) were the same across the five monthly family income groups.

D. Flexibility component of benefits perceived in acceptance of online sports marketing by FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) in terms of monthly family income group

The MANOVA conducted on the five items of flexibility component of benefits perceived in acceptance of online sports marketing by FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) using monthly family income group as the independent variable did not produce significant result, $Wilk's \Lambda = .779$, $F(20, 306) = 1.196$, $p > 0.05$. FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) perceived the same level of flexibility component of benefits in acceptance of online sports marketing disregard of the monthly family income group.

E. Interactivity component of benefits perceived in acceptance of online sports marketing by FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) in terms of monthly family income group

No significant result was obtained from the MANOVA conducted on the four items of interactivity component of benefits perceived in acceptance of online marketing using monthly family income group as the independent variable, $Wilk's \Lambda = .815$, $F(16, 285) = 1.234$, $p > 0.05$. Findings indicate that FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) perceived the same level of benefits of interactivity in acceptance of online sports marketing across the five monthly family income groups.

F. Reliability component of benefits perceived in acceptance of online sports marketing by FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) in terms of monthly family income group

MANOVA's result analysed on the four items of reliability component of benefits perceived in acceptance of online marketing using monthly family income group as the independent variable was not significant, $Wilk's \Lambda = .906$, $F(16, 285) = .581$, $p > 0.05$. It could be assumed that disregard of monthly family income, FSR students observed the same level of reliability benefits in acceptance of online sports marketing.

An extensive body of research reveals that income group has a strong impact on consumer's decision making process (Cooil, Keiningham, Aksoy & Hsu, 2007; Homburg & Geiring, 2001). According to Evanschitzky and Wunderlich (2006) and also Walsh, Evanschitzky, and Wunderlich (2008) individuals earning higher income generally have more education and are able to process the information better. In addition, wealthier consumers engage more in information processing prior to decision making and they are more comfortable when relying on and dealing

with new information including the online information. However, the present research findings did not agree with the previous statements, access to the online marketing can be reached through WIFI service provided free of charge by UiTM (Perlis). Obviously, free access of online information through WIFI can help FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) to reduce the cost of expenses disregard of monthly family income.

G. Technical challenges component experienced in acceptance of online sports marketing by FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) in terms of monthly family income group

The result of MANOVA performed on the ten items of technical challenges component of challenges experienced in acceptance of online marketing using monthly family income group as the independent variable fail to produce significant result, $Wilk's \Lambda = .778$, $F(40, 332) = .569$, $p > 0.05$. The population means of the technical challenges perceived by FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) in acceptance of online marketing were the same across the five monthly family income groups.

H. Organizational and behavioural challenges component experienced in acceptance of online sports marketing by FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) in terms of monthly family income group

No significant result was report on the MANOVA conducted on the nine items of organizational and behavioral challenges component of challenges experienced in acceptance of online marketing using monthly family income group as the independent variable, $Wilk's \Lambda = .597$, $F(36, 332) = 1.361$, $p > 0.05$. Findings showed that FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) observed the same intensity of organizational and behavioral challenges in acceptance of online sports marketing across the five monthly family income groups.

I. Component of benefits perceived in acceptance of online sports marketing by FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) in terms of gender group

The four components of benefits perceived of online sports marketing showed that none of them were significant. Results of *t*-test conducted on the nine items of accessibility, five items of flexibility, four items of interactivity, and four items of reliability were $t(124) = .824$, $p > 0.05$, $t(124) = .692$, $p > 0.05$, $t(124) = .849$, $p > 0.05$ and $t(124) = .911$, $p > 0.05$ respectively.

J. Technical challenges component of barriers experienced in acceptance of online sports marketing by FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) in terms of gender group

Analysis result of *t*-test performed on the 10 items of technical challenges experienced using gender group as comparison identified one item as having significant result. There was a significant difference in the scores of male students ($M = 5.7$, $SD = 0.8$) and female students ($M = 5.8$, $SD = 1.2$); $t(124) = 0.667$, $p > 0.05$ for item reading “Information need to be concise and precise”. This indicates that female FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) experienced more technical challenge in related to “Information need to be concise and precise” compared to the male students. Obviously, this research demonstrates that there is a significant different between males and females in terms of technical challenges in acceptance of online sports marketing. The result is consistent with the gender difference arguments from previous research regarding how males and females process and accept online information in different ways. Rosenthal and DePaulo (1979) found greater stimulus elaboration among women than men when subjects were given adequate time to process information. Similarly, Meyer-Levy and Sternthal (1991) noted that men were more likely to be driven by overall message themes or schemas and women were likely to engage in detailed elaboration of the message content. Specifically, men are considered to be “selective processors” who often do not engage in comprehensive processing of all available information before rendering judgment. In contrast, women are considered to be ‘comprehensive processors’ who attempt to assimilate all available information before rendering judgment. Thus, the finding of this research supported the previous researches done by Meyer-Levy and Sternthal (1991).

K. Organizational and behavioural challenges component of challenges experienced in acceptance of online sports marketing by FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) in terms of gender group

Results of *t*-test conducted on the nine items of organizational and behavioral challenges experienced using gender group as comparison identified one item as having significant difference. The related item reading “Contain related information” reported significant difference in the scores of male students ($M = 5.9$, $SD = 0.8$) and female students ($M = 5.8$, $SD = 1.2$); $t(124) = 0.170$, $p > 0.05$. This shows that male FSR students of UiTM (Perlis) highly experienced organizational and behavioral challenges related to “Contain related information” compared to the female students. Meyer-Levy (1988) examined gender

differences of online marketing behavior in visual-spatial and verbal abilities, and argued that males had a tendency not to process all available information as a basis for judgment. Instead, males relied more on their own opinions which enable them to make decisions more quickly than females. Males rely on only highly available information. Therefore, this research finding supported previous researches by concluded that males were experiencing organizational and behavioral challenges in acceptance of online sports marketing because males requires the websites to be more specific and contain with related information on particular event.

Discussions

Overall, the findings advance four major points. First, four components of benefits perceived in acceptance of online sports marketing were identified that need to be considered by sport event tourism organizations before developing their respective tourism websites. Second, both components of challenges experienced (technical challenges and organizational and behavioral challenges) in acceptance of online sports marketing in terms of gender would be beneficial for sport event tourism organizations in order to increase consumers satisfaction with the website experience. Third, providing the components of benefits perceived and components of challenges experienced in acceptance of online sports marketing can increase individual’s behavioral intention toward the sports event tourism. This finding relates to the important role that website content plays in a sport event tourism organizations’ marketing communication. Sport event tourism organizations may not be able to create consumer needs but they can provide information via website content that allows individuals to more easily determine where, when and how they can fulfill their existing need. The provision of event-specific online information serves as a social-situational catalyst interacting with hedonic and dispositional needs propelling movement from awareness to attraction to the event within the PCM (Funk & James, 2006). Fourth, providing information requirements through website communication can create favorable attitudes toward the event among consumers low in motivation (attraction) to attend the event.

Conclusions

The results revealed that acceptance of online sports marketing in terms of benefits perceived and challenges experienced for this particular group of respondents was not necessarily influenced by monthly family income groups since all of them are experiencing more

or less the same benefits and challenges regardless of level of monthly family income. This is due to researcher's assumption that as students, they are financed by loan, scholarships and so on. Indeed, with free Internet access (WIFI) provided by the learning institution, respondents could not be bothering with their monthly family income. This research demonstrates that there are significant differences between males and females in terms of acceptance of online sports marketing. The results are consistent with the gender differences arguments from previous research regarding how males and females accept and process information in different ways. For instance, it was observed that female attached higher values to a wider variety of both online and offline information sources while choosing sports event. More specifically, this result supports the gender difference argument that females are more exhaustive and elaborative in information search (Meyer-Levy, 1988). This is due to the cognitive as well as behavioral and social level differences. In sum, the different gender attitudes towards acceptance of online sports marketing in this study represent valuable inputs in designing sports events tourism websites, communicating with potential visitors and defining the most appropriate messages to deliver in the online environment. In addition, future research should focus on other sports events tourism stakeholders' in-line with the online sports marketing to promote the development of sports events throughout the nation such as obtaining sponsorship. The extended SWAM (Hur et al., 2011) based on the Theory Acceptance Model (TAM: Davis, 1989) has enable researcher to carry out this research particularly focused on the sport event tourist perspectives.

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