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Drivers of Sports Web Consumption An Exploratory Study in Korea

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Abstract

In the past sports marketers relied heavily on traditional media channel to promote and to communicate with their fans and customers. Ticket sales and sponsorship had been two most important sources of realizing economic value of sports marketing. In marketing of sports, the popularity of sports/teams/athletes is important elements of promotion designed to increase spectatorship, media exposure, sponsorship, etc. The economic value of the sports/teams/athletes is enhanced as popularity increase. Therefore, the sports marketing involves all possible avenues that can bring additional value for the sports marketers including repeat/up/cross sell of related products/services. Thanks to the growing need for effective customer relationship management (CRM), coupled with the advances in technology both in functionality and in popularity, many marketers appreciate the unique capabilities that Internet marketing offers in pursuing target marketing and CRM initiatives. In addition the Internet offers the advantage of global access to highly involved customers.

The purposes of the paper are to facilitate accurate value-added marketing of various sports using the internet and to present a study that called for information based web marketing management. The study revealed that consumers come to and join in different sports web community through different path, for different reasons, and with different intent. The values of the study are twofold: first, it shows an example of a web based consumer behavior analysis across multiple alternatives (e.g., sports); and second, it offers valuable insights to the practice of sports marketing utilizing the Internet, the new medium.

The study was designed to understand and compare web consumer behaviors across various sports. Specifically, the study instrument was designed to measure the motivation, preferences, purchases, concerns, and satisfaction of various sports web community members in Korea. A number of sports web site with 5000 or more registered members were chosen for the on-line survey. A simple Correspondence Analysis was utilized to calculate multidimensional distances of web-related behaviors of various sports. The analysis produced a perceptual map as well as numerical values indicating perceptual distances of variables under investigation. According to the analysis, web community consumers varied in their primary motivation for joining different types of sports web communities (e.g., group versus individual sports). They also showed variations in preferences and behaviors (e.g., information needs and commerce activities). In general, team sports community members decided to join by referral or group pressure, wanted information on the popular athlete(s), and desired off-site group activities with other members (e.g., soccer fan club party). In case of individual sports such as in-line skating or skiing, members were interested in related product information and showed strong intention for commerce activities on the web. In all cases, members showed highest concern about on-line etiquette such as use of appropriate expressions in web community members' communication.

It is believed that given the global nature of the medium (Internet), the interest (sports), and the existence of global forum and broadcasting exposure (Olympics), sports web channel may be an important avenue for global marketing of sports and related interests. While the specific details in results may be culture specific, the general thrust and the process of the study may be applicable to studies attempting to establish similarities of customers across various cultures.