Session: **New trends in management and marketing IV.**
Abstract nr: **EASM-0115**

Mobile TV and Sport: Consumer Motivational Factors

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Background

According to recent predictions by research firm Gartner, mobile phones will surpass PCs as the most common device used to access the Internet worldwide by 2013. Gartner estimates the number of smartphones and browser-equipped enhanced phones will surpass 1.82 billion by 2013, more than the total of 1.78 billion PCs expected to be in service by that time (Walsh, 2010). Sport content is important for telecommunications companies. One promising consequence of increased rollout of third and fourth generation (3G and 4G) mobile networks and smartphones is live streaming and on demand delivery of sport. Dedicated sport consumers are early adopters in the diffusion process of media innovations (Turner, 2000) and may be willing to pay for sport content delivered via mobile platforms. Many mobile service providers promote mobile TV during major sport events such as the 2006 FIFA Soccer World Cup in Germany and the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. From the mobile service providers' perspective sport content via mobile technology was expected to be a "killer application" that would create new revenue streams or even new business models. Nevertheless, in many countries mobile TV is still far from being successful. The 2010 Soccer World Cup in South Africa will be the first time that FIFA distributes mobile TV licenses in order to make all games accessible on mobile devices (FIFA, 2010). Although soccer fans will be able to view games at anytime and anywhere they want, the question remains whether or not they want to view sport on mobile TV.

Objectives

Although some research has focused on consumer behaviour relative to viewing mobile TV (Shim, Park, & Shim, 2008; Choi, Kim, & McMillan, 2009) further research will help to determine the motivation of sport consumers for viewing sport on mobile TV. Specifically, the objectives of this presentation are: 1) to identify the most important benefits and disadvantages of using mobile TV; 2) to identify and analyze factors related to sport consumption, sport television viewing and mobile TV usage; and 3) to identify and analyze the psychological factors related to viewing sport on mobile TV.

Methods

A systematic review of research related to sport and mobile TV was conducted as well as an empirical study that examined the psychological factors related to the consumption of sport on mobile devices. A qualitative survey on benefits and disadvantages of mobile TV with a sample of 171 subjects was conducted at a German university and then carried out at a US university with 132 subjects. Based on those initial surveys two quantitative studies were conducted in which the influence of psychological factors on the intention to view sport on mobile TV was examined. The first quantitative study was conducted online using 2ask software and had a total sample size of 132 subjects. The second study (paper-and-pencil) was conducted at a German university and had a total sample size of 149 subjects. Convenience samples were drawn in order to gain first insights into this innovative research area. Constructs gleaned from the literature, such as fan identification (related to a specific sport, a fan community, a team, an athlete, a coach and a sport broadcaster), and motives for sport media consumption (entertainment, escape, mood management, passing time, information, learning aesthetics, live experience, permanent access and fashion/status) were highlighted as psychological determinants of the intention to view sport on mobile TV.

Results

The empirical findings from these studies and the results from an extensive literature review on consumer behaviour regarding sport on mobile TV contributed to understanding the nature of consumer demand for sport on mobile TV. The first two surveys revealed that, from the consumers' perspective, the most important disadvantages of viewing sport on mobile TV are cost, size of the viewing screen, and quality of the images. The most important benefits, however, are convenience aspects resulting from mobility and flexibility regarding time and place of use, as well as mobile TV being an information and entertainment source. These findings were underlined by the quantitative studies. Mobility and permanent access were identified as strong motives for the viewing of mobile TV in general and entertainment and information seeking as well as mood regulation for viewing sport on mobile TV in particular. A high level of fan identification related to certain sports and teams was identified as another driver of the intention to view sport content on mobile devices.

Conclusion

When the studies were conducted the actual usage of mobile TV was rather low due to several restrictions of this new technology. Nevertheless, the data analysis already revealed a certain interest in using (sport) mobile TV in the future. Sport has always attracted consumers to adopt new media developments. Since mobile phones provide a whole range of opportunities to deliver sport contents to fans in new situations, sport will continue to play an important role in consumer decision making when it comes to mobile TV.

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