Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease Of Use, And Attitude Toward E-Learning Among Undergraduate Sport Management Students: The Moderating Effect Of Prior Experience

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Despite increasing numbers of online courses and degree programs in sport management, little research is available to help educators develop successful strategies regarding the course delivery, effectiveness, and acceptance. Understanding how sport management students perceive elements of e-learning and factors that influence students' attitude toward e-learning can help e-learning developers and deliverers create mechanisms for attracting more students to adopt the learning environment (Grandon, Alshare, & Kwan, 2005). The purpose of the study was to test the moderating effect of prior e-learning experience on the relationships between perceived usefulness and attitude and between perceived ease of use and attitude among undergraduate sport management students.

The technology acceptance model predicts user acceptance based on two specific beliefs influenced by external variables: (a) perceived usefulness and (b) perceived ease of use, which determine an individual's behavioral intention to use an information system (Davis, 1986). Students have a favorable attitude toward using e-learning and use it frequently and intensely when they perceive e-learning as one that is easy to use and nearly free of mental effort and that is helpful to their learning. Researchers suggest that the influence of individuals' beliefs on attitude toward system use may be different depending on their experience with the system. Empirical studies provide evidence for the moderating influence of prior experience on the relationship between individuals' beliefs and attitudes toward using the system (Castañeda, Muñoz-Leiva, & Luque, 2007).

The sample included 182 undergraduate students (82.2% male; 44.4% Hispanic; mean age = 23 years) who were majoring in sport management at a large southeastern university in the United States. The sample produced 51.1% juniors and 48.8% seniors. Over half of the participants (55%) reported that they had prior e-learning experience. The participants completed a 10-minute paper-based survey. The survey consisted of four sub-sections: perceived usefulness (4 items), perceived ease of use (4 items), attitude (3 items), and demographic information (i.e., sex, age, school year, and prior e-learning experience). All items were adapted from previous studies: Lee, Cheung, and Chen (2005), Ndubisi (2006). All responses ranged from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7), using a 7-point Likert-type scale.

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients ranged from .88 to .93, supporting the internal consistency of the study's variables. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed to examine the moderating effect of prior e-learning experience on the relationships. Predictor variables (including the moderating variable converted into a dummy variable) were entered in the first model where a criterion variable was attitude, and then an interaction term was added in the second model. Results revealed a significant interaction effect of perceived usefulness × prior experience with an R-squared of .06 ($F_{(3, 176)}$ = 246.781, $p < .016$). A simple slope analysis was further conducted to understand the direction of the interaction effect at no experience and prior experience of the moderator variable. The effect of perceived usefulness on attitude increases with prior e-learning experience. The interaction effect of perceived ease of use × prior experience was significant with an R-squared of .13 ($F_{(3, 176)}$ = 51.831, $p < .040$). The results of simple slope analysis showed that the positive effect of perceived ease of use on attitude is enhanced with prior e-learning experience.

The findings suggest that the perceived usefulness and ease of use on e-learning can result in more favorable attitudes toward e-learning for students with prior experience than for those with no experience. According to Gefen, Karahanna, and Straub (2003), the relationship between beliefs, attitudes, and intentions should be stronger for experienced users because potential users base their perceptions on secondary and relatively superficial information. Moreover, the findings showed that the coefficients of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use were all significantly positive, indicating that the two factors are indeed important in the configuration of students' attitude toward e-learning. Students have a positive attitude toward e-learning because they feel that e-learning education is useful for their coursework and easy to use, leading to their higher intention to use e-learning. This study provides valuable insights for e-learning developers and deliverers in the field of sport management when they develop implementation strategies. To succeed with e-learning adoption, they need to provide students with technical and pedagogical support to develop students' self-directed learning skills. Providing students with a variety of tools

and resources (i.e., additional links, guides, and multimedia) can also be effective in expanding students' interest and increasing their problem solving skills, which is closely linked with their self-confidence in the learning process.

References

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