What's Appening? About The Market Penetration And Motivation Of Using Sport Apps In The Netherlands

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Aim of research project

The market for wearable technology has grown rapidly, especially as a result of the popularity of smartphone applications and wrist-worn wearables. An important share of these products is used in a sports and physical activity context. Gartner (2016) estimates the total size of the wearables industry an annual $28 billion. Market forecasts show a quintuple of the market size in ten years. Wearables and apps might have a potential to tackle societal challenges, for example the promotion of a healthy lifestyle to combat obesity (e.g. European Commission, 2016).

The aim of this research project is to determine the level of use of apps in The Netherlands and to clarify the motivation of (non) users. Research questions are: 1) What percentage of the Dutch population uses apps? 2) What are personal and socio-cultural characteristics of users? 3) What are motives of users and reasons of people for not using apps? This is the first study in The Netherlands which quantifies the national market size of sport apps.

Theoretical background

The promise of apps in a sport context contrasts with the academic research in this area. For example, there is not much known about the positive role of apps in health promotion (Dute, Bemelmans & Breda, 2016). Moreover, the same is true as regards its possible downsides (Vos, 2016).

According to the technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989) the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of technology are predictors of user attitude towards using technology, behavioural intentions and usage.

Methodology, research design and data analysis

Data were collected in October and November 2016 by means of an online questionnaire among a random sample of the Dutch population (15–80 years). 1,530 questionnaires were completed. Respondents who used an app in the past twelve months (n = 274) were asked — by means of a semi-closed question — what their main motives for using an app were. Those who did not use an app in the previous twelve months (n = 168) and respondents who have never used an app (n = 1,088) were asked why, again by means of a semi-closed question. Both bivariate and multivariate analyses were conducted.

Results, discussion and implications

18 per cent of the Dutch population used an app for sports in the past twelve months. Men, young and highly educated respondents use apps more often. Runkeeper is the most popular app. The usage of apps is positively correlated to the frequency of sport participation. The most cited reasons for using apps are respectively insight in one's personal performance (81%), because it motivates to participate in sports (more often; 28%) and as it contributes to the sports fun factor (26%). To stay in touch with other participants (2%) and injury

prevention (3%) were scarcely cited. Young respondents use apps more often because of its sports stimulating effect and for the reason that it offers insight in one's accomplishments.

Respondents with previous, but not recent experience and those without experience indicated that apps did not connect with their personal sports experience (22%) and that using an app during exercise is annoying (21%). Possibly, this disconnection could be the consequence of a desire for a 'digital detox' during sports practice in an 'always on society'. A minority of the respondents who did not use an app in the past twelve months (13%) argue that it is likely that they will use an app for sports in the future. In terms of facilitating social connections apps play a minor role. To a substantial degree market growth is limited for the reason that nonusers do not have the intention to use apps in the time ahead.

The findings not only give empirical evidence for the level of use of apps of Dutch citizens. The results can also be of help to professionals in their objective to market their apps. Lastly, it is crucial to invest in research to get more insight into the factors which play a role in the experienced disconnection of using apps with sports practice.

References

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