Effective digital technologies and new media on increasing the size of the sports audience

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Abstract. New media has emerged as an important communication tool for both sport marketers and fans. Using Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) as its theoretical framework, this paper identifies effective digital technologies and new media on increasing the size of the sports audience. Population in this research consisted of physical education students of Tehran universities. A valid and reliable questionnaire for identifying 'effective technologies on increasing the size of the sport audience' (ETISSA) was developed in 3 phases. The ETISSA questionnaire was distributed among 75 responders and using Freidman test, fifteen first effective media were extracted. The 3 first media were email, digital TV and website. Sport marketers may use the results of this survey in their action plan or do the same research in their region to plan their marketing strategies more effectively.

Keywords: new media, marketing, increase audience

1. Introduction

The integration of new digital media and technologies has altered the way in which sport is produced, marketed, delivered and consumed. The ever expanding volume of sport coverage, coupled with improved and changing media technology, has resulted in many media companies developing new forms of distribution. The delivery of personalized sport news and highlights to Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) mobile phones, in form of video on demand (VOD) or to email-enabled palm-top computers are two very recent examples of different forms of information distribution(James Santomier, 2008**)**.

In a survey of sport marketing that was done among managers, rights holders, property owners, academics and the others in the field, the question was "what do you think will be the biggest challenge facing sport marketers from now till 2011" and their answer was, without exception, changes in technology (Simon Chadwick, 2006).This change is more rapid than ever before, as we are facing evolving new technologies. So, sport marketer's main challenge will be: reading market signals correctly, perceiving innovation and changes in technologies and contriving creative plans for applying the right technology to reach their goals.

The use of multiple new media platforms in sports sponsorship communications, a fundamental dimension of sports marketing communications, enables brands to communicate effectively with consumers, develop brand awareness rapidly in new markets and provide new content opportunities (Roberts, 2006/2007).

2. Concept and definitions

Until the 1980s, media relied primarily upon print and art analog broadcast models, such as those of television and radio. The last twenty-five years have seen the rapid transformation into media which are predicated upon the use of digital computers, such as the Internet and computer games. However, these examples are only a small representation of new media.

The use of digital computers has transformed the remaining 'old' media, as suggested by the advent of digital television and online publications (Wikipedia, 2008). Andrew L. Shapiro (1999) argues that the "emergence of new, digital technologies signals "a potentially radical shift of who is in control of information, experience and resources" (Shapiro cited in Croteau and Hoynes 2003). W. Russell Neuman (1991) suggests that whilst the "new media" have technical capabilities to pull in one direction, economic and social forces pull back in the opposite direction. According to Neuman, "We are witnessing the evolution of a universal interconnected network of audio, video, and electronic text communications that will blur the distinction between interpersonal and mass communication and between public and private communication" (Neuman cited in Croteau and Hoynes 2003). Neuman argues that New Media:

- Will alter the meaning of geographic distance.
- Allow for a huge increase in the volume of communication.
- Provide the possibility of increasing the speed of communication.
- Provide opportunities for interactive communication.
- Allow forms of communication that were previously separate to overlap and interconnect.

3. Theoretical Framework

Research suggests visiting a Web site is self-selecting behavior and only consumers who have an existing interest or attraction toward a particular product or service will spend time visiting that Web site (McQuitty & Peterson, 2000).

According what noted, this paper uses the Psychological Continuum Model, as its theoretical basis for how to study consumer needs and attitudes through new media and technologies. The PCM incorporates research from a variety of disciplines and is founded upon the notion that both individual and social situational factors work together in the development of consumer loyalty (Funk & James, 2006).

The PCM framework has been employed in a variety of different contexts. The afore mentioned has been used to understand sport consumer motivation (Beccarini & Ferrand, 2006; Stewart, Smith & Nicholson, 2003), the mediating role of involvement for leisure and nonleisure populations (Havitz & Mannell, 2005), sport tourism (Kulczycki & Hyatt, 2005), and 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: awareness, attraction, attachment, and allegiance. Each stage represents an upgraded level of psychological connection that the consumer feels toward the object (Funk & James, 2001).

The PCM advances *processes* operating within and among *outcomes* of awareness, attraction, attachment and allegiance. The current investigation focuses on the awareness process to examine whether information, advertisement and etc on new media and technologies may affect on increasing the size of the sport audience, in view point of the universities students.

Consumers deciding on whether to attend an event and using the Internet or other new media to obtain information have clearly established an awareness of the event. The final decision to attend may depend on a variety of social situational and psychological factors communicated via Internet or other media content. In particular, marketing communication (i.e., Web site content) is one resource capable of moving a consumer from awareness to attraction through knowledge acquisition (Funk & James, 2001).

The variety of needs and motives for sport event tourism has been examined through a number of different frameworks. This includes Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs, Iso-Ahola's (1982) escape-seeking model, and the premise of pushpull factors (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977). Iso-Ahola (1982) proposed a model that depicts two motivational forces for tourism: seeking, or the desire to obtain intrinsic rewards through tourism, and escaping, one's desire to remove themselves from their normal environment.

The provision of decent information needs through new media & technologies may serve to pull individuals from awareness to attraction. This in turn may lead to consumer attraction to the sport event, embodied in improved attitudes toward the event, as well as increased attendance.
(Kevin Filo et al 2009).

Figure 1 (Aaron C.T. Smith,
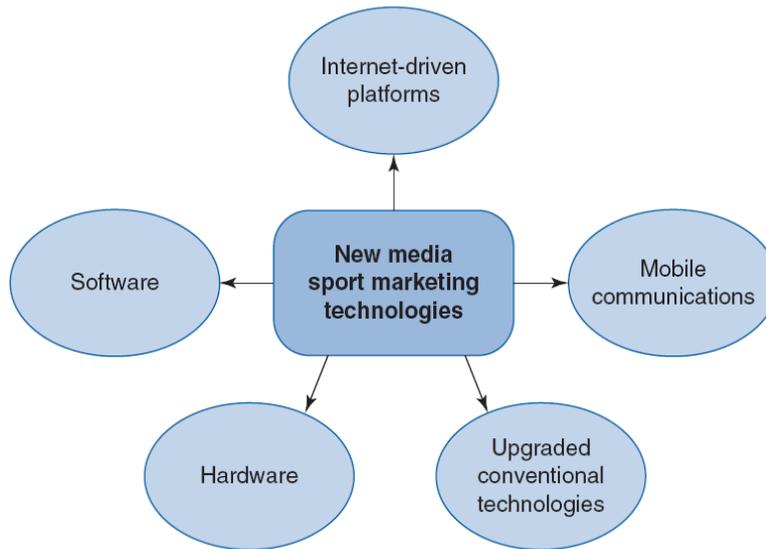
4. Methodology: Instrument development

In this study we developed a valid and reliable instrument to identify the 'effective technologies on increasing the size of the sport audience' (ETISSA). ETISSA was developed in 3 phases. The literature review and searching for latest technologies and new media identified 48 potential items. The items were then classified and refined by a panel of expert judges to eliminate redundancies and enhancing validity.

For example TV category encompasses HDTV, SDTV and for Mobile Phones we included mobile applications, PDAs, and cell phones.

Although, some other items were in the same category, but the strong impact those had on the audience and to fully cover the case, we put them as a separate item.

Selected data were analyzed via exploratory factor-analysis (EFA) method to generate a 5-factor, 26-item scale questionnaire.
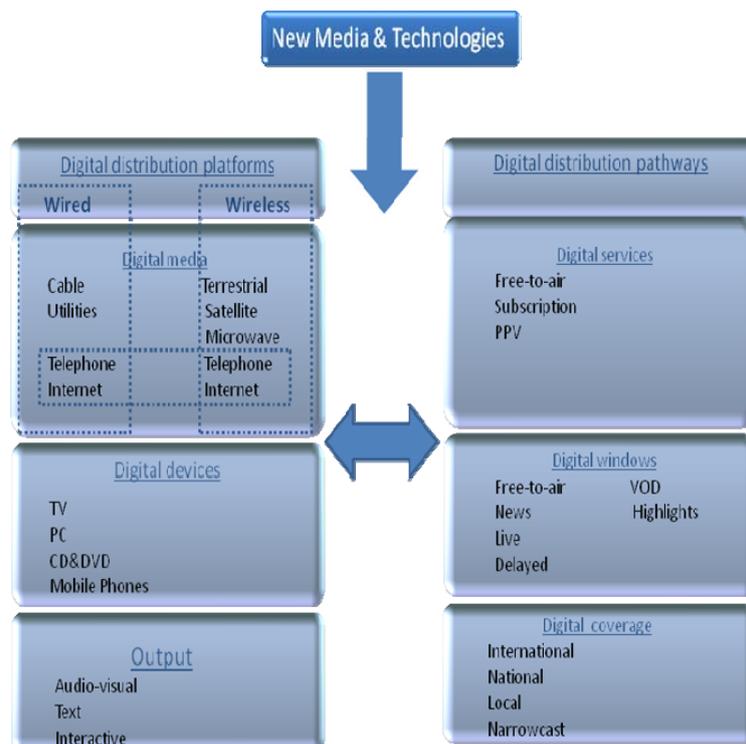

Figure 2, sport broadcasting distribution in digital era, P. Turner 2007

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was examined to provide evidence of the internal consistency of the instrument. The alpha score computed using Split two was α=.895.

The convenience sample consisted of 75 responders who all were using mobile phones for at least 3 years and had experience of using internet for at least 1 year. Three fourth of sample were current university students. Age of responders ranged from 20 to 56 years (*M=29*). 76/4% of sample had 4 years and more experience of using internet, 12/7% had 3 years of experience, 5/5% had 2 years and 5/5 had 1 year of experience.

We defined 4 categories for computer acquaintance as: very good (troubleshooting computer application), good (installing and using different application), newbie (using different application), and weak (poor ability in using applications). 20% of responders were very good, 49/1% were good, and 30/9% were newbie. 40% of responder hold a degree of bachelor or were student, 47/3% Masters students, and 12/7% were PhD students.

Data were collected via paper questionnaire which distributed among Tehran university students, and also were emailed to students, using random sampling.

Responders were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

5. Results and Discussion

The fifteen first effective digital technologies in increasing the size of the sport audience were extracted using Freidman test as below:

Email was the first important media in view point of responders, and it is supported by the findings of Datran Media (January 2008). More than three-quarters of marketers surveyed said

Figure 3

Effective digital technologies on increasing the size of the sport audience
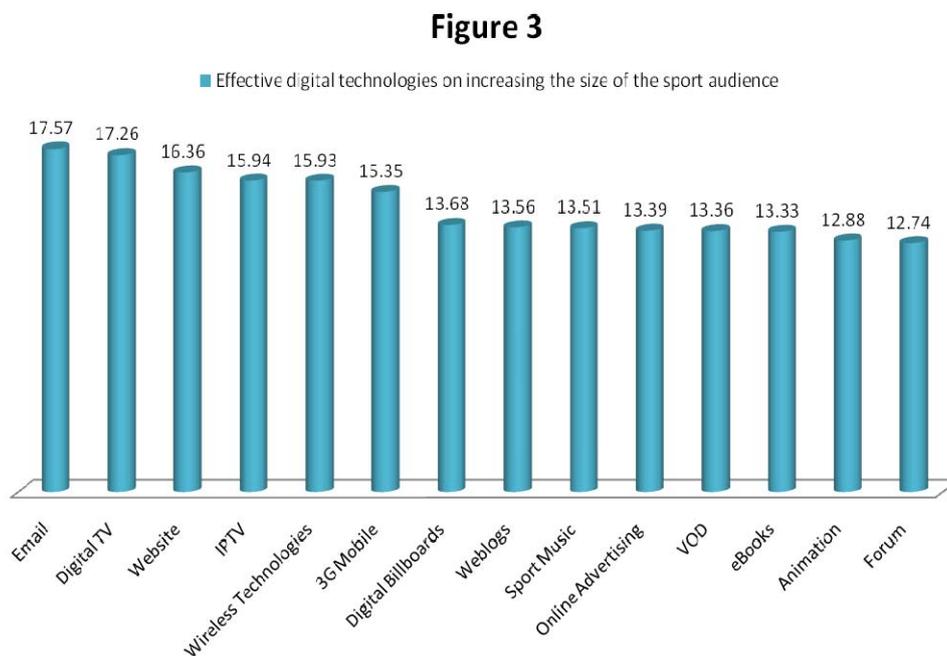
they will increase their social media spending during the next three years (Eloqua's "State of the Marketer" report, 2008). A full 74% said they plan to increase their direct e-mail spending while about two-thirds will spend more on mobile texting and SMS.

Advertising Media Buys That Perform Strongly For Your Company

Figure 4
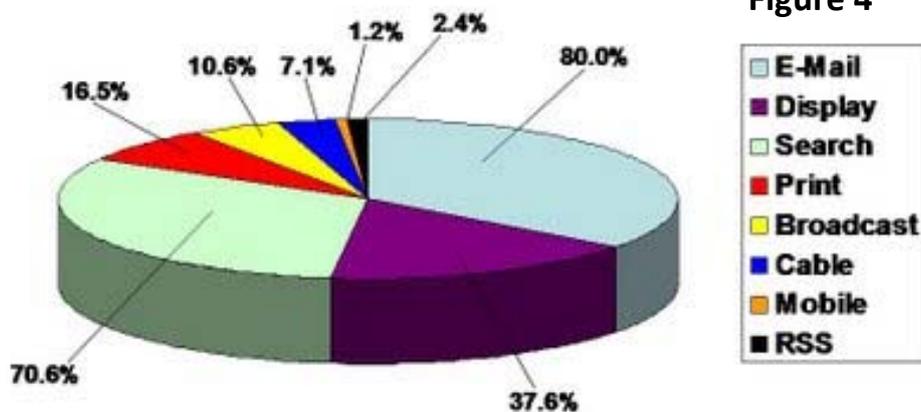
According Datran's Media finding, the strongest performing media for a company is E-mail. The results of a survey which consists of 2,000 online marketers in December 2007 on the best performing medium for their online marketing efforts. E-mail marketing came ahead of search and display. There are some very interesting statistics in this survey that many will find helpful.

- 80% of the marketers surveyed indicated that they plan to increase their use of email marketing in 2008, and 55% of the respondents said they expect return of investment (ROI) from email to be higher than any other channel.
- Email ROI will hit $45.65 for every dollar spent in 2008, more than twice the ROI of other mediums including search and display, said Datran Media, citing data from the Direct Marketing Association.
- Some 67% of respondents stated that email has helped boost sales through other channels. In these scenarios, email is a tool for sales as well as a media channel.
- Search is the favored channel for complementing the email channel.

Although email may seem to be the greatest communication tool through this survey, keep in mind email can be very tricky. Email can provide with you horrible ROI's if you don't do the right research and carefully choose who you use to do your email marketing.

Enough and decent content to keep readers interested, engaged and impacted by email medium, may increase the size of audience.

We must be careful of not to heavily scatter the content with links or fill it with a lot of text while marketing, this may have a confusing mix of information, instead we can use headline, highlights of events in flash (visual) format, so that audience can easily click on it and the links direct them to desired movies, images, or other related material of their favor. This process should be done carefully, as if we send wrong or irrelevant data to audience, we may lose their attention and participation.

Digital TV is the 2nd selected item. Digital Television (DTV) is an advanced broadcasting technology that will transform your television viewing experience. DTV enables broadcasters to offer television with better picture and sound quality. It can also offer multiple programming choices, called multicasting and interactive capabilities (www.dtv.gov, 2009). DTV permits special services such as multiplexing (more than one program on the same channel), electronic program guides and additional languages, spoken or subtitled. The sale of non-television services may provide an additional revenue source.

Almost all big clubs and sport companies deliver some parts or whole of their services, news, and other information to audience through their Web site. Findings highlight the potential strategic use of Web site

communication for sport event organizers to enhance consumer attitudes toward the event and increase audience (Kevin Filo, Daniel C. Funk, 2009). This research provides evidence that Web site marketing communication does activate attitude change within consumers, as well as empirical support for attitude change within the PCM framework. Findings highlight the potential strategic use of Web site communication for sport event organizers to enhance consumer attitudes toward the event and increase attendance. Kevin Filo and Daniel C. Funk suggest that a consumer's Web site experience is more satisfactory when they take part in directed information retrieval. In addition, 15 information themes (refer to article, journal of sport management) for sport event Web sites are identified and developed into an event information template that was found to increase individuals' behavioral intention toward the event as well as create favorable attitudes toward the event among those low in strength of motivation. These findings provide support for how consumer push motives toward sport event attendance can be complemented by information-based pull attributes to lead to consumer attraction to the event (Kevin Filo, Daniel C. Funk, 2009).

6. Future Directions

Each society has its own values, cultures and limitations. Sport marketers should consider technoculture, cyberculture and new situation they may encounter simultaneously with the growth of technology. Although globalization and evolving technologies has converged different cultures, it is important for sport marketers to find out what is the impact of technology on society's culture and vice versa. This impact may lead the society to use a technology more or less comparing other technologies in different societies.

There are also some limitations in developing countries which may impact on choosing and using new technologies. It is suggested to do the same research in other regions, compare the results and find the best media and technologies for each region to increase the size of the sports audience.

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