

## Motivational Factors on the Propensity to Use Sports Events Tourism Websites: The Utilization of UGT

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### ABSTRACT

*Even though extensive Internet research has been conducted around the world, there is still a lack of knowledge about motivational factors and their moderating effects on the inclination to utilize sports event tourism websites. Two theories are being utilized in this study – (i) the Sport Website Acceptance Model (SWAM) and (ii) the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). Customer-perceived values which are derived from the SWAM consist of four components including accessibility, flexibility, interactivity, and reliability, while motivation factors include informativeness gratification and entertainment gratification. This study utilized a self-administered questionnaire. A total of 530 sports tourists (315 males and 215 females) participated in three major sporting events involved in this study. Respondents were selected by using a probability sampling technique. The results of Pearson correlation analyses show that there was a significant relationship between customer-perceived value and the propensity to use the websites. The results indicate only 14.8 per cent of the total variance of the intention to use the websites was explained by customer-perceived value, entertainment gratification, informativeness gratification, the combination of customer-perceived value and entertainment gratification as well as the combination of customer-perceived value and informativeness gratification. The research findings would be practical and useful for sports tourism organizations in developing a distinctive sports tourism website on strategies to market their products and/or services effectively.*

**Keywords:** *Customer-Perceived Value, Intention to Use the Websites, Motivational Factors, Sports Tourism Websites*

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an information-intensive industry that relies on communication with tourists through various channels to market products and builds customer relationships (Poon, 1993), with the Internet being

recognized as the biggest and fastest way to disseminate information. Moreover, the Internet has become particularly important as one of the most effective means for tourists to seek information and purchase tourism-related products. Since the Internet has the potential for high levels of interactivity and can be customized to a great extent, it can provide highly tailored content to users according to their idiosyncratic preferences (Newhagen & Rafaeli, 2006). However, users are often overwhelmed by the huge amount of information available online and thus cannot always locate what they intend to find.

Tourism information websites should provide users with powerful navigation and search capabilities so the desired tourism information or product can be found conveniently and efficiently. Therefore, the managers of tourism websites need to focus on visitors' usage patterns or behaviour as well as understand the visitors' interests better. This can be done by determining the propensity to use these websites, particularly on the customer-perceived value. Regarding the development of websites as a marketing tool, sports tourism also has been experiencing the same phenomenon. Previous studies indicate sports tourism as one of the fastest-growing tourism niche markets (Jago, Chalip, Brown, & Mules, 2003). Within this niche market, sports event tourism plays a significant role, as an increasing number of host destinations incorporate sports events into their marketing mix (Chalip, 2004; Higham & Hinch, 2003), subsequently, encouraging people to travel. Tourism development can be measured based on the number of people travelling, both locally and abroad. According to The Tourism Malaysia Corporate Website (2013), the number of visitors increased from 25.03 million in 2012 to 25.72 million in 2013 and it is believed to rise further in future.

This study adopted the Sport Website Acceptance Model (SWAM) developed by Hur, Ko and Claussen (2011) in determining the attributes of the customer-perceived value of sports events tourism websites. Most studies on customer-perceived value concerning travel and tourism websites focus on the attributes, consequences, and the desired end-states (core value, purposes, and goals) associated with the product (Woodruff, 1997; Lexhagen, 2008). The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) is chosen because it is the most comprehensive paradigm used to study the motivations and behaviours of media consumption in the communication domain (Stafford, Royne & Schkade, 2004; Ruggiero, 2000). Also, it is applied to explore the relationship between Internet usage motivations and the likelihood of online service adoption. The application of this theory would provide a better explanation and understanding of the motivational factors as the moderating effects on the propensity to use sports events tourism websites. The combination of these two theories (SWAM and UGT), would enhance and provide a better understanding of consumer behaviour towards sports events tourism websites.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Sports Events Tourism

Sports events tourism is established from the sports tourism field, with some overlapping between the two. Initially, tourism consisted of members and audience, but nowadays, tourism covers huge groups of participants including the destination residents. According to Getz (2008), special events are grouped as sports events tourism. It contains major elements of tourist demand and can create consciousness as well as improve the icon of the destination. Jago and Shaw (1998) earlier stated that sports event tourism should fulfil certain criteria which include scheduled time frame, rare, extraordinary types of activities and provide some social exposure. Getz (2008) added that the study of event tourism, particularly sports event tourism, has evolved, and this is reflected through the increase in the scale of occasions and their economic implications.

Sports events tourism refers to the tourist behaviour of moving from one place to another to watch sports events. These behaviours are led by some attractions offered at that event. For instance, countries around the world are eager to promote their destination images by conducting numerous sports events at various levels, which include the Olympic Games, World Cup as well as PGA golf tournaments. As

stated by Goeldner and Ritchie (2006), the competition to get the rights to conduct such events continue to become increasingly stiff due to the benefits offered particularly in terms of economic enhancement. Higham and Hinch (2003) added that the success of sports event tourism can be measured by observing the level of the events which include major events (hallmark events and/or mega events) that capture international interest as well as small-scale sports events. The quick development of the sports tourism industry was noticed throughout the world including in Malaysia. The growth in sports tourism can be seen from three different points of view that are related to each other: the participants, sports, and destinations. Furthermore, sports events tourism has been identified as the main factor in sports-related tourism around the globe. The impressive development of sports event tourism has influenced the market to be more challenging. Thus, it requires respective organizations to acquire knowledge and expertise in this industry.

### **Internet and the Website as Marketing Tools**

The Internet influenced various organizations to develop their own websites to offer information to online users, encourage online shopping, as well as provide methods to enlarge market scale and strategies to create awareness among new customers (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Malhotra, 2005). Organizations tend to utilize websites as their marketing tools due to some factors which include the websites' interesting features as well as a considerably lower charge required to develop a website. These researchers added that sports tourism websites should be distinctive from other existing websites if they intend to maintain relationships with their consumers. He added that the needs of the consumers should be considered a major priority. Developing and maintaining a good website is very competitive. Therefore, organizations should be able to provide the latest information about their products as well as offer additional online services.

According to Ioakimidis (2010), the Internet is the most appropriate mechanism for sports organizations to create sports leagues or team followers. Technology advancement has encouraged the number of Internet users to increase. The current website features are no longer relying on texts *per se*, but it contains media and can provide live broadcasts of various sports tournaments worldwide. As the functions of media become more sophisticated, huge interactions between online consumers are promoted and consumers' needs are strengthened. Bandyopadhyay (2001) stated that the Internet has provided opportunities for small businesses to be more competitive in marketing their product and/or service in the most effective ways in terms of budget and reaching target consumers. Many researchers recognized the Internet as an appropriate channel for image creation which changed the consumers' perception of products and retains consumer loyalty with satisfactory information provided (Putrevu & Lord, 2003; Shankar, Smith & Rangaswamy, 2003).

### **Propensity to Use Tourism Websites**

The propensity to use sports events tourism websites is derived from intention behaviour towards the technology adoption. The interaction between technology and tourism in recent times has skyrocketed, which leads to elementary changes in the industry as well as individual perceptions of its nature. The existence and use of technologies through the developments of search engines, carrying capacity and speed of the network have enabled travellers to plan and experience their travel experiences. The development of the Internet has viewed the diversity of its users. For instance, the increased number of Internet users was significant to the increased number of populations in Canada (Kotler et al., 2005). Malaysia also experienced the same situation when dealing with an increased number of Internet users. Customers' preferences will not remain the same. It is expected that future customer behaviour will change due to massive changes in products and service enhancement. The changes are influenced by substantial marketing and promotional strategies. Consumers are assumed to be more demanding, time-driven, and information-driven as well as individualized. Therefore, the involvement of online marketing through interactive digital media would assist organizations to provide concise and precise information to targeted customers.

## **Motivational Factors**

### **The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)**

The UGT is applied when researchers intend to study the behaviour of online users concerning website usage. There are many constructs consisted in this theory, but the most established dimensions are entertainment gratification, informativeness gratification and website irritation (Chen & Wells, 1999; Eighmey & McCord, 1998; Fenech, 1998; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999; Rubin, 1994; Luo, 2002; Ko et al., 2005). However, in the context of the current study, researchers focussed on entertainment gratification and informativeness gratification only since the website irritation seemed to be not suitable for individual tourists' behaviour.

### **Entertainment Gratification (EG)**

According to Luo (2002), entertainment gratification is one of the major determinants consisted in the Uses and Gratification Theory that affects the use of a particular media. Eighmey and McCord (1998) stated that the EG was measured based on how fun and entertaining the website is for the users. The previous researchers stated that the value of media entertainment lies in its ability to fulfil users' needs for escapism, hedonistic pleasure, aesthetic enjoyment and/or emotional release (McQuail, 1983). In the work of Kim and Forsythe (2007), it was found that online shoppers have a desire for these entertainment pleasures when shopping online. Websites which can provide higher entertainment value were established to have a high tendency to lead to an advantage for media users and motivate them to use the media more often (Luo, 2002).

### **Informativeness Gratification (IG)**

Luo (2002) claimed that informativeness gratification should be considered as another significant determinant in relation to web media usage. Based on Chen and Wells (1999), the IG is measured based on the web media's ability in offering important and useful information to online users. Maddox (1998) initially stated that the major motives that encourage people to use the Internet are to obtain as much valuable information as possible. Research conducted by Haq (2009) indicated that the organization's ability in providing good quality information would directly encourage people to access the website. Therefore, it allows an organization to market their products and services through the development website. His research finding was consistent with preliminary studies by Bauer and Greyser (1968) as media users consider the media's ability to provide audience information on the fundamental reason for accepting the media itself. Similarly, Rotzoll, Haefner, and Sandage (1986) held that the media's informational role is its major legitimizing function. Siau and Shen (2003) added that website users often demand qualitative features such as accuracy, timeliness and usefulness of the informational content that is projected on the websites and those which can fulfil the needs of IG will in turn create favourable attitudes among its audiences (Luo, 2002).

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants and Procedure

To achieve the research objectives, the questionnaire was distributed to sports tourists' who travelled to attend three major sporting events conducted in three different venues in Malaysia in 2013. These three major sporting events include The Standard Chartered KL Marathon, Port Dickson International Triathlon, and the Monsoon Cup Terengganu. The study subjects were chosen based on certain circumstances. It includes the sports tourists' decision to travel to a particular destination is primarily driven by involvement with the sport, not the destination (Turco, Riley, & Swart, 2002) and sports tourists are recognized as the main user of the Internet when travel and tourism websites have been reported as one of the top categories of websites visited by Internet users (Lexhagen, 2008). Roscoe in Sekaran and Bougie (2010) has proposed some rules of thumb for determining sample size. He suggested that sample sizes larger than 30 and fewer than 500 are appropriate for most research. Meanwhile, Krejcie and Morgan (1970) stated a sample size of 384 is acceptable to represent 1,000,000 populations. Eventually, the researchers decided to distribute 600 questionnaires to subjects at all three sporting events. A total of 530 valid responses were collected and the fraction number of samples obtained is 186 (35 per cent) from the Standard Chartered KL Marathon, 106 (20 per cent) from the Port Dickson International Triathlon, and 238 (45 per cent) from the Monsoon Cup Terengganu.

### Instruments

The development of the questionnaire was based on a comprehensive review of literature. A self-administered questionnaire is developed to respond to the research objectives. This study adopted "steps in creating a questionnaire" developed by Stehr-Green, Stehr-Green and Nelson (2003) with minor changes. This guideline indicated that the process of developing a questionnaire consists of eight steps which include (1) identifying research leading hypotheses, (2) identifying information required, (3) literature review, (4) pooling of items in the questionnaire, (5) generating of questionnaire items, (6) translating the questionnaire into Bahasa Melayu (7) conducting a pilot survey and (8) revising the questionnaire. However, in this study, the researchers only adopted seven steps, with the exclusion of step six. This is believed to be significant to the subjects' capacities in this study in understanding and leveraging the Internet and website competencies (Yuan et al., 2006). This questionnaire consists of four sections namely Section A, Section B, Section C and Section D.

Section A consists of 10 questions related to gender, age, nationality, race, marital status, academic qualification, employment status, monthly family income, number of dependents and frequency of involvement in sports events in a year. Section B consists of 21 questions. It focuses on the propensity to use the websites, particularly on customer-perceived value. This section is designed by referring to the website attributes. Some scholars indicated that the website attributes as the benefits obtained through Internet marketing which include accessibility, flexibility, interactivity, and reliability (Radzliyana, Khor & Lim, 2013). All items from B1-B21 are rated on a 7-point Likert Scale response format with values ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Section C consists of five items related to the propensity to use sports events tourism websites. The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) is applied in this section due to the significant relationship between intention and behaviour. A 7-point Likert Scale response format with values ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree) is used to measure items C1-C5. Finally, Section D consists of 18 items which were specifically developed to investigate the moderating effects of motivational factors on the propensity to use sports events tourism websites. The items contained in this section are derived from the basic assumption of the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) by Katz et al. (1974). All items from D1-D18 were rated on a 7-point Likert Scale response format with values ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

## Data Analyses

All gathered data are analysed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 19.0. For this study, a descriptive analysis was carried out to provide information on the personal characteristics of the sample (Table 1). Then, factor analysis and reliability testing were carried out to test the validity and reliability of the questions employed (questions were adopted from the previous literature) to measure research variables. To test the availability of multi-collinearity, a correlation analysis was conducted. Since this study utilized an inferential analysis, a multiple regression test was carried out to determine the relationship between the whole set of independent and dependent variables in the research framework. After that, unstandardized residuals from the regression analyses were maintained and tested for normality using the One-Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov Test. Finally, hypotheses testing was carried out to determine whether the hypotheses proposed based on the literature review were significant or not.

## Figures and Tables

**Table 1: Specification of Measurement Scale and Data Analysis Procedures**

Part	Details of Measurement Scale	Number of Item	Statistical Procedure
Section A: Personal characteristics	Closed-ended	A1-A10	Descriptive statistics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequency</li> <li>• Percentage</li> <li>• Mean</li> <li>• Standard deviation</li> </ul>
Section B: The customer-perceived value	Likert-scale	B1-B21	Descriptive statistic Factor analysis Reliability tests Pearson correlation Moderated multiple regression Stepwise Normality test
Section C: The propensity to use sports events tourism websites	Likert-scale	C1-C5	Descriptive statistic Factor analysis Reliability tests Multiple regression Normality test
Section D: Motivational factors	Likert-scale	D1-D18	Descriptive statistic Factor analysis Reliability tests Moderated multiple regression Stepwise Normality test

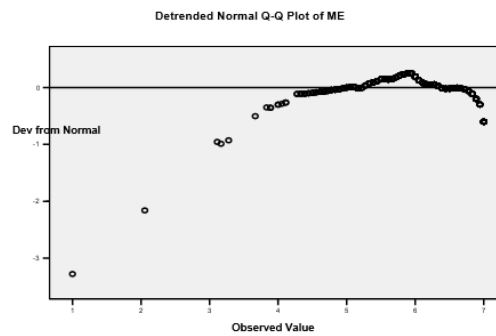
## RESULTS

### Test of Normality

In this study, the results obtained show the data for all customers-perceived value, the propensity to use sports events tourism websites and motivational factors as the moderating effects which influence the relationship between customer-perceived value and the propensity to use sports events tourism websites are normal. The  $r$  values indicate the relationship between the independent and dependent variables with the positive (+) or negative (-) sign demonstrating the direction of the relationship. The significance value was measured by the  $p$ -value. The following sections reveal the results of the variables.

The normality test of Kolmogorov-Shirnov for motivational factors (Figure 1) shows that the value of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistics is .119 while the value for Shapiro-Wilk is .930. These values are normally distributed at the significance level of 0.05. Thus, the researchers conclude that the data for motivational factors were within the normal distribution.

**Figure 1: Normal plots of motivational factors**



## Hypothesis Testing

The research hypothesis predicts that motivational factors moderate the relationship between customer-perceived value and the propensity to use sports events tourism websites. Motivational factors were divided into two which include entertainment gratification and informativeness gratification. As shown in Table 2, the results of regression analysis of motivational factors revealed that the  $F$  statistic of the model is 30.475, the associated probability is .000, the value of  $R^2 = .148$  and the adjusted  $R^2 = .143$ ,  $p < .05$ . Therefore, the findings of this study indicated that 14.8 per cent of the total variance of the propensity to use sports events tourism websites was explained by customer-perceived value, entertainment gratification, informativeness gratification, the combination of customer-perceived value and entertainment gratification and combination of customer-perceived value and informativeness gratification. However, the results of the multiple regression analyses led to a problem with multicollinearity. Thus, the researcher decided to apply the stepwise method as the method of model selection to overcome this problem.

**Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis of Motivational Factors (N=530)**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig.
1	.333 <sup>a</sup>	.111	.109	65.669	.000 <sup>a</sup>
2	.374 <sup>b</sup>	.140	.136	42.739	.000 <sup>b</sup>
3	.385 <sup>c</sup>	.148	.143	30.475	.000 <sup>c</sup>

Predictors: (Constant), EG  
 Predictors: (Constant), EG, Customer-perceived value  
 Predictors: (Constant), EG, Customer-perceived value, MIG  
 Dependent Variable: Propensity to use sports events tourism websites

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	-3.695E-17	.041		.000	1.000		
(Constant)	.333	.041	.333	8.104	.000	1.000	1.000
2	-2.782E-17	.040		.000	1.000		
(Constant)	.17	.049	.213	4.299	.000	.668	1.497
EG	.213	.049	.208	4.211	.000	.668	1.497
Customer-perceived value							
3	.038	.043		.866	.387		
(Constant)	.182	.051	.182	3.569	.000	.622	1.607
EG	.184	.050	.184	3.648	.000	.638	1.567
Customer-perceived value	-.055	.024	-.104	-2.293	.022	.781	1.280
MIG							

a. Dependent Variable: Propensity to use sports events tourism websites

## DISCUSSIONS

The findings of the study indicate that entertainment gratification and informativeness gratification contributes to a strong relationship between perceived value and the propensity to use sports events tourism websites. Sports tourists involved in this study believed that although usability is an important feature for websites due to users' strong motivations for seeking information, an element of entertainment is equally important. This is supported by Eighmey and McCord (1998) when they revealed that the main gratification factors for online users are "personal relevance" (a website's relevance to the user), "entertainment value" and "information involvement". Similar research by Lin (1998) indicates that information websites are the most frequently visited by those who have high surveillance motives and that visits these respective websites are related to consumers' entertainment needs.

Some researchers have tried to assess what implications the Internet users' gratification motives have on the continued use of traditional media, by comparing the Internet gratification motives with various printed media. Numerous researchers investigated the main motives for online media rather than traditional printed newspapers consumption and found a positive relationship between users' need for updated news and online news readership. In contrast, entertainment, habit, and relaxation motives are closely associated with reading printed newspapers (Flavian & Guerra, 2006; Jere & Davis, 2011). Their studies also found that users perceive the two media as different products in terms of information and entertainment value provided. Similarly, Randle (2003) and Jere and Davis (2011) conducted a cross-media study of consumer magazines and the Internet. That study was undertaken to determine the dimensions on which Internet use provides superior gratifications to magazine reading. They discovered that there is a wider range of Internet gratifications than magazine gratifications. In addition, that study found that the Internet provides superior gratification for task-oriented motives (which focus on the usefulness of the media) and that magazines are preferred for affective and diversionary gratifications (which focus on the social and the diversionary value of the media).



The inclusion of motivational variables in the regression model between customer-perceived value and the propensity to use the websites reveals a significant relationship between variables. This is largely due to the influence of websites' usage in Malaysia, particularly on online travel and tourism planning (Vinod, 2011) as well as the fact that all respondents are technology adopters - as such, they use online booking systems to travel and for tourism products and/or services including airlines, hotels, and private car rental (Abd Aziz, Tap, Osman, & Mahmud, 2013). Thus, it is not a surprise that the perceived value of sports tourism websites and the propensity to use sports events tourism websites are influenced and moderated by motivational factors.

## **CONCLUSION**

To provide a better understanding of the relationship, the researchers added some new variables, (also known as the moderating variables), which were the motivational factors. It is hoped that the findings could contribute to the body of knowledge on leisure, travel, and tourism in relation to the propensity to use tourism websites for both theoretical and managerial implications. Future research should consider other motivating factors for the propensity of using sports tourism websites, especially after the pandemic.

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## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION**

Radzliyana, R., Lim, K. C., and Khor, P. H. conceived and planned the experiments. Radzliyana, R. carried out the experiments and data preparation. Azlan, A. A. planned and carried out the simulations. Nadiah Diyana, T. A. contributed to the interpretation of the results. Radzliyana, R. took the lead in writing the manuscript. All authors provided critical feedback and helped shape the research, analysis, and manuscript.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION**

I/We certify that the article is the Authors' and Co-Authors' original work. The article has not received prior publication and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. This research/manuscript has not been submitted for publication nor has it been published in whole or in part elsewhere. We testify to the fact that all Authors have contributed significantly to the work, validity and legitimacy of the data and its interpretation for submission to Jurnal Intelek.

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