

APPRAISING THE PERCEPTION OF ATHLETES ON THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN PARALYMPIC SPORTS

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Abstract

This study appraised the perception of athletes towards the use of technology in Paralympic sports. The study adopted a descriptive survey study. The target population for this study was all the athletes in Kaduna metropolis, Kaduna State. Purposive sampling technique was used to select one hundred (100) athletes to participate in the study. Questionnaire was the instrument used in this study and two research questions and one research hypothesis were used to guide the conduct of the study. The reliability of the instrument after subjecting it to Cronback alpha was 0.78. The results of the findings revealed that, athletes perceived the use of technology to be very useful for Paralympic sports. It was also indicated that, there was no significant difference in the perception of both male and female towards using technology for Paralympic sports. Based on this, it was recommended that, the Paralympic sports administrators and authority should encourage the use of technology in Paralympic sports activities.

Keywords: Technology, Paralympic Sports, Perception, Appraising, Athletes.

Introduction

The importance of applying technology to virtually everything that goes on in any organization or institution cannot be overemphasized. This is because it helps to makes work faster and easier. Technology is part of everyday life, and some of this technology has a place within a sport. Advances in technology have made it possible for sports fans to follow their favorite athletes, teams, and sports 24/7—and in ways that expand and enrich the fan ship experience. Digital technologies provide new means for sports organizations to interact with both its own team members and also other stakeholder groups such as sponsors and fans. In other words, the digitalization of sports consumption product through various online channels renders opportunities for sport organizations, especially the ones with limited resources, to configure and deliver sport content/service/product in customized ways (Hoye. 2015).

Sports consumption products are not limited to only match-day events any more. Instead, they have been extended to the whole organizational process such as training, scouting, and recruitment of player, thanks to various online channels, such as social media sites that allow sport organizations to stay connected with the fans and other stakeholders on a daily (if not hourly) basis across the globe. Further, such distribution of content is also democratized in

the sense that every member of the sport organization as well as fans themselves can be part of the process (DiMoro 2015).

The traditional broadcasting of events and digital technologies provide new means that would allow enhanced accessibility and interactivity. Take extreme skiing for example, a free ride skiing competition taking place on a mountain with a decent of 500-800 meters with its steepest inclination being as far as 60 degrees. It is, therefore, difficult for the sports fans to get to the actual location of the event and watch the competition. So instead, the Free Ride World Tour is broadcasting all events over the web, which overcomes the space and time constraints, provides the audience an opportunity to follow the skiers and their performance, as well as gives the sponsors wider exposure. Moreover, the live web broadcast offers the replay function of the individual runs, often enabled by digital cameras mounted on players' helmets, which further increases the visual experience of the event.

Digitalization has enabled the emergence of e-Sports. Though it is still debatable whether e-sports should be considered sports to introduce more competition to traditional sports, especially considering its different structural and organizational features that are likely to fit with the digital world we live in. For instance, for eSports, power is vested predominantly in game developers (and not governing bodies) because they hold the intellectual property rights for game software. Also, gaming rules are either imposed by game developers (through game mechanics and therefore more universal) or emerged from social consensus (through negotiation and thus more game-specific). Finally, gaming events do not necessarily generate revenue (oftentimes losses are incurred); rather, value creation and capturing stem from the conversion of audience into players(through sales of game software and/or in-game micro-transactions)(Hilvoorde and Pot 2016).

These organizational characteristics of eSports could provide some reference points for traditional sports in better coping with the digital environment the technological component of sports emphasizes "the material equipment, physical skills, and body of knowledge which are necessary for the conduct of competition and technical improvements. To be more specific, technology in sport includes physical equipment (e.g., field, stadium, ball, racket, car engine, boat, training facilities), physical skills (e.g. strengths, ball control ability, endurance and resilience), knowledge possessed by players and the teams (e.g. team spirit, cooperative capability and team play), and skills and knowledge possessed by coaches, team physicians, and other indirect producers to improve the technological components. Many of the organizational activities are organized around the technological component, or around the goal of continuous technical improvement to the physical equipment, the physical skills, and the knowledge.

Commercialization of the technological component of sports (physical skills and knowledge) results in producing new digital products, such as e-Sports and it has the following advantages:

- ✓ Increasing accessibility, traceability, and visibility of the technological component of sports (physical skills and knowledge) driven by the use of data analytics technologies, as well as emerging digital platforms that enable data production and data aggregation.

- ✓ Technological component of sports is increasingly integrated in live broadcasting (consumption) of sports event, which creates new revenue streams.
- ✓ The increasing importance of technological component that is enabled by digital technologies in creating competitive advantages.

Players play a more active role in the production and distribution of their own technological data, and hence democratizing the recruitment process (from top down to bottom-up) (Hilvoorde and Pot 2016).

Paralympic sports are major international multi-sports events developed for athletes with physical disabilities or intellectual impairments. This includes athletes with mobility disabilities, amputations, blindness and cerebral palsy. This is to say that, the participants in the Paralympics are affected by some form of physical or intellectual disabilities. Some common paralympic sports include: wheelchair rugby, sailing, athletics, road cycling and swimming (Wikipedia, 2020). Some of the Paralympic games/sports visual are given below:



Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to establish the perception of athletes' in using technology for Paralympic sports. Specifically, the study examined:

- (i) The perception of athletes' in using technology for Paralympic sports
- (ii) Difference in perception of athletes' in using technology for Paralympic sports based on gender.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study:

- (i) What is the perception of athletes towards using technology for Paralympic sports?
- (ii) Is there any difference in the perception of athletes towards using technology for Paralympic sports based on gender?

Research Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the perception of athletes towards using technology for paralympic sports based on gender.

Methodology

The design adopted in this study is a descriptive survey research. The target population for this study was all the Paralympic athletes in Kaduna Metropolis. Purposive sampling technique was used to select one hundred male and female (50 males and 50 females) athletes

for the study. The instrument used in this study was a researcher designed questionnaire which was validated by the two lecturers at the Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State. One of the lecturers was an expert in measurement and evaluation while the other one was from the Human Kinetic and Health Education field. Two research questions and hypothesis were raised to guide the conduct of this study. The reliability of the instrument was established using Croabach Alpha and 0.78 was the value arrived at. The administration of the questionnaire was done by the researcher. After collating the collected data, it was analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, mean and t-test inferential statistics.

Results

Research Question One

What is the perception of athletes towards using technology for Paralympic sports?

Table 1: Analysis of frequency and percentages of the perception of athletes towards using technology for Paralympic sports

S/N	Items	SA		A		D		SD	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1	Technology influences athletes' interest in Paralympic sports	44	44	39	39	07	07	10	10
2	Technology encourages creative thinking in athletes during Paralympic sports	25	25	65	65	03	03	07	07
3	Technology is a trending news in Paralympic sports	15	15	65	65	15	15	05	05
4	Using technology in Paralympic sports activities take a long time to implement.	15	15	05	05	15	15	65	65
5	Technology system is easier than practicing Paralympic sports under traditional method	35	35	56	56	04	04	05	05
6	Technology encourages communication between athletes and other administrators during Paralympic sports	44	44	39	39	07	07	10	10
7	Technology allows collaboration between athletes and other sport administrators efficiently during Paralympic sports.	13	13	67	67	12	12	08	08

8	Technology can promote mutual assistance among athletes during Paralympic sports	50	50	35 35	10 10	05 05
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Table 1 above indicated that the athletes perceived the use of technology to be very useful for Paralympic sports except that they disagreed that integrating technology into paralympic sports will not take longer time.

Research Question Two

Is there any difference in the perception of athletes towards using technology for paralympic sports based on gender?

Hypothesis One

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the perception of athletes towards using technology for paralympic sports based on gender.

Table 2: Analysis of t-test of the difference in the perception of athletes towards using technology for Paralympic sports based on gender.

Item	N	Mean	STD	T	Df	Sig (2-tailed)
Male	50	54.34	7.855			
				0.602	98	5.47
Female	50	55.38	7.855			

There is no significant difference in the mean scores of the perception of athletes towards using technology in Paralympic sports, this is because $t(98) = 0.602$, $p > 0.5$ significant level. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted and this implies that, there is no significant difference in the perception of athletes towards using technology in Paralympic sports based on gender.

Discussion

The results of this study revealed that the perception of athletes towards using technology in Paralympic sports is good. This implies that the athletes perceived the use of technology to be useful and crucial for Paralympic sports. This finding supported the work Toyo (2017) which reported respondents (Undergraduate Nursing Students) perceived the use of electronic resources to be useful for their education and the carrier development.

The finding of this study also showed that, there was no significant difference in the perception of athletes towards using technology in Paralympic sports based on gender. This finding is contrary to the work of Sudha (2011) which revealed a significant difference in the readiness for e-learning on the basis of gender.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that, the athletes perceived the use of technology to be very useful in Paralympic sports.

Recommendations

The following are recommended based on the findings of this study:

1. The Paralympic sports administrators and authority should encourage the use of technology in Paralympic sports activities.
2. The athletes should be trained in the use of various technologies for Paralympic sports activities.
3. The Paralympic sports administrators should purchase varieties of hardware and software for Paralympic sports and allow access to its frequent usage.

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