THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

The Internet in the Service of University Sports at Szent István University, Hungary

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Abstract:
This paper reviews the development of sport and the dissemination of related information in light of current tendencies of declining activity levels and health indicators in Hungary. This review forms part of a larger project developing an online intervention, designed to increase student awareness of, and participation in, organised physical activity and exercise sessions. This study examines some of the parameters for the proposed intervention including the history of sport and dissemination of related information at the Gödöllő University of Agricultural Sciences, (later Szent István University), the development of the University webpages as well as the webpages of 23 Hungarian Universities. Findings of this study may provide relevant information for sport development officers to support their efforts in increasing participation and distributing information.

Keywords: *university sport, internet, information, exploratory investigation*

1. Introduction
Hungary is currently displaying unfavourable health indicators; the early occurrence of physical and mental illnesses are warning signs to the fact that major improvements are needed in this area (Piko & Fitzpatrick, 2006). One such improvement focusing on young people may be supported by the circulation of health related activity information, which is based on the Internet as the main information tool for young people (Nigg, 2003). Today's university life is unimaginable without smart phones, IPods, tablets with which, via the Internet, information can be shared continuously (Selwyn, 2007). This is discussed in Tari's (2011) "Generation Z" where she emphasizes that in order to keep up with their peers young people need to maintain a constant flow of information, which requires a continuous online presence. It is possible that technology could be used to lead young people towards more healthy options. This study discusses a project that examined the status quo at a Hungarian University and developed an intervention in an effort to increase student participation in physical activity.

2. Objectives of Study
1. To review the history of sport and communication at the university.
2. To review how sport related information is communicated to students through the internet.
3. To recommend strategies through which the internet could better serve to support sport at university.

3. Methodology
The research is based on first-hand knowledge and experiences of the primary researcher, the researcher being a member of staff at Szent István University (SZIE) at the time of data collection. Secondary sources including various government documents, reports, books, journal articles, have been consulted for the present study. The authors also reviewed 23 Hungarian universities' webpages for content and structure following usability criteria based on Nielsen and Loranger (2006) and Krug (2006, 2008).

3.1. Historical Overview of Sport at the University
The predecessor of Szent István University, the Hungarian Agricultural University moved to Gödöllő gradually from the 1950's. By 1957 the Gödöllő University of Agricultural Sciences was the country's largest agricultural educational institution.
Sport development at the university dates back to the same time as well, with the introduction of compulsory physical education for first and second year students giving sport a boost (Walleshausen, 1995). At the time, students learned about sporting opportunities

from the University's bulletin board or individual course timetables. Information about new and fashionable sports would spread via word of mouth among the cohorts. It could be said that the flow of information during this period was entirely accidental. Provision was then en masse, and later specialized in sports disciplines. A sports hall, clay sport courts, 2 tennis courts, basketball and volleyball courts were built. Changing rooms and public areas accompanying the facilities served as additional sources of information, via bulletin boards and by the sports club's performance bulletin board. The establishment of the Gödöllő University Athletic Club (GEAC) was the first major step towards organised information dissemination. The university bulletin board regularly reported club athlete's achievements.

In 1960 the football pitch was turfed. From 1965, with the arrival of two-time Olympic champion shot putter Zsigmond Nagy to Gödöllő, the athletics division received a boost. In those days the existence of good quality facilities and the presence of well-known athlete created a strong attraction. In the case of the athletics department the appearance of a top athlete resulted in a sudden increase in the number of participating students. The Physical Education Department adapted to changing student needs in 1972, when it introduced specialized physical education classes, thus students had football, basketball, weightlifting and swimming at their disposal. For improved performance from 1977, teaching happened in small-groups; this was made possible by an increase in the teaching staff of the department (staffing increased from 6 to 12).

In 1982 the PE Department was attached to the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering. This made university-level flow of information difficult, as a previously central unit now became faculty bound. The new sports hall, which opened 1 September 1983, further improved teaching and training conditions, but did not alter the way information was circulated. The next major change came with the increase in the number of compulsory physical education lessons. In 1986 the period of mandatory physical education was increased from 4 to 6 semesters and in response to student needs the hall was open until midnight on weekdays for interested students (Lehota and Takácsné, 2007).In 1987 as a result of university restructuring, the Department was transferred to the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, which in essence did not change the functioning of the department, nor the established flow of information. Since 1989, after the political changes in Hungary, the university network has undergone a substantial transformation. The previous structure of higher education, often based on single disciplines or training profile, was replaced by Western European organisational model, with several disciplines formed into campuses. This was not a grassroots initiative, but a legal regulation requirement (Act LII of 1999 The transformation of tertiary education). As a result, on January 1 2000, the present-day Szent István University was formed, through the integration of several higher education institutions[1]. This time period also brought changes in the publishing and sharing of information with the creation and expansion of the World Wide Web.

3.2. Review of University websites in Hungary

One of the world's first websites was developed by Tim Berners Lee in 1991. This very simple, slow site was suitable for text and image content to be displayed. Shortly afterwards, in 1993 the first Hungarian website of the Budapest University of Technology was published. The www.fsz.bme.hu contained the most important departmental information as well as general information about academic subjects including physical education.

This was soon followed by other institutions including Szent István University thus in addition to paper based information the Internet also appeared in higher education, with more and more universities creating their own website. These websites included information about the structure and faculties of universities and education-related information. In the late 1990s, there was a University in almost every Hungarian county seat, with its own simple web 1.0 website, which contained basic information. As a result of the integration of universities, multi faculty institutions were created, decreasing the total number of sites, but changing their structure to adapt to the new institutional infrastructure.

Traffic on these websites was greatly influenced by the fact that compared to Europe Hungary was lagging behind in digital literacy. Young adults, who are the main visitors of the university websites, stand out among the population in terms of use and knowledge of ICT tools, but the same cannot be said of university staff. In 2000, a quarter of the population aged between 15-29 years (Ifjúság, 2000), in 2007 about half the population over 14 years (WIP 2007), in 2010, 90% of students (Kokovay & Bútor, 2010), in 2012 all students (Bútor, Zsiros, Kokovay, Galloway, 2016) had their own computer with Internet access and accessed information via the internet, while teaching staff are still learning and trying to catch up (Duga, 2013).

3.3 Websites of Szent István University

We studied the development of the university's website, from its first publication to the present form. Significant changes in structure or content are presented below.

The then Gödöllő University of Agricultural Sciences was among the first in the country to publish its website. It is interesting to mention that during the political transitional period the Council of Hungarian Internet Providers did not authorise the use of the acronym of the initials of the university's name(Gödöllői Agrár Tudományi Egyetem) because of its meaning ("gate") The university's leadership ultimately voted for the abbreviation "GAU" (Gödöllő Agriculture University). Very little information has been preserved about that website by the University's ICT Institute. Among the information available there is only indirect reference to sport. Because the individual faculties' and departments' timetable was found in the system, the dates and times of physical education sessions were also available on the website.

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[1]Gödöllő University of Agricultural Sciences, Jászberény Teacher Training College, University of Veterinary Sciences, University of Horticultural and Food Sciences, Ybl Miklós Polytechnic

Information relating to student life was available from the beginning, thus various intramural competitions were advertised – if irregularly – on the website. These were limited to the identification of the sport and location. Surprisingly, results of competitions were only occasionally available – if a keen student reported on them. Regular dissemination of information was hindered by the fact that there was no structure developed for content that appears on Web sites or who was responsible for updating the site.

With the formation of Szent István University (SZIE) in January 2000 a new website was created, which operated until 2003 with minor changes. This was a primitive, static web 1.0 website, which contained only limited information. The left hand menu listed the University's faculties, clicking on which visitors could find important information for those departments, including those for physical education. The right vertical bar contained the main navigational links to useful and current information, policies, offices and contact information. The university's logo was placed in the middle of the page.

With regards to the presentation of information the navigation on this website is very fragmented, making it difficult for the user to identify where information could be found. Perhaps the greatest advantage was that the white text contrasted well in the blue background (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Szent István University homepage, 2000

The second SZIE Website, created in 2003, differed from its predecessor both in its content and appearance (Figure 2). This site contained much more useful information and was easier to navigate. The university logo was in the upper left-hand corner, beside it appeared the university's faculties. This website had a quick search option that allowed users to instantly find what they were looking for. The presentation of information also changed. The menu bar on the left contained important information for visitors. Nielsen and Loranger's (2006) eye-tracking studies have identified that visitors view the contents of the websites starting at the top and progressing horizontally, then vertically and horizontally again, following an F pattern. As most readers start reading from left, a result of this new design was that access to important information was quicker, could be found close to one another, required less mouse movement, making clicking through content easier for users(Krug, 2006, 2008).

Figure 2: Szent István University homepage 2003

There was substantial progress between 2000-2010, with the appearance of WEB 2.0, which allows sharing and access to large amounts of information and contains other items in addition to text (Cserhátiné, 2010).In 2009 SZIE published its branding manual, which determined the appearance of the website as well. This new website is much more modern than its static predecessors (Figure 3).
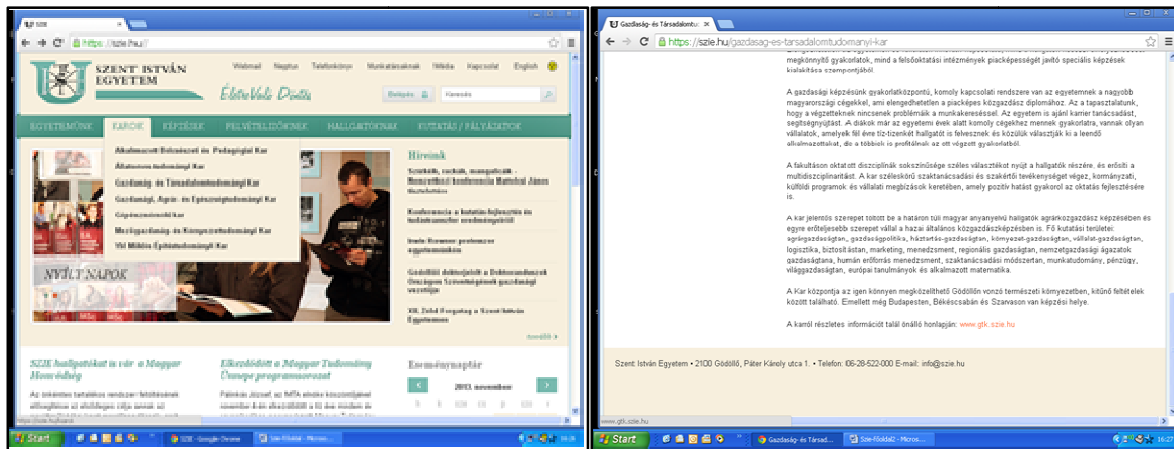
Figure 3: Szent István University homepage 2009

In terms of content it has evolved significantly. It contains a lot of useful and interesting information in the form of both text and images. Horizontally, left to right at the top there were the menu items, which clearly represented the content accessible through it. The university logo was located in the upper left-hand corner. Below the menu bar and logo a promotional strip appeared with scrolling images of important events. Further below important events were highlighted and in the news column beside it additional updates were presented. A calendar of events appeared at the bottom of the page. A search box was placed in the upper right corner to further simplify obtaining information. The presentation of information was also modified. Navigation on page was easier, using the F patter arrangement. For easier transparency, menu titles were in capital letters and differed in colour from the background. The page was also had an accessible version for the visually impaired.

Information relating to sport could only be reached in a particular way, in five steps. The pages of the Department of Physical Education (later Sports Centre) could be accessed via the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences pages. The biggest problem was that students from other faculties didn't know this, and could not find information onsport. In addition to the location of sporting information there were also major shortcomings regarding content. There was a lot of unnecessary, out-of-date information (old timetables, requirements, and teachers), text was presented in long sentences, when we know that the young generation of today prefers easily accessible, up to date information presented in short, interesting and relevant format. It was previously mentioned that it's wasn't clear who should update the page, so it was scarcely refreshed. Long sentences worded text contains a lot of redundant, outdated information (old schedule, requirements, teachers) received by the reader, despite the fact that today's youth in a concise, interesting, and important content for fast, accurate communication of information they prefer. As previously mentioned, the task of managing departmental information on the site was not really resolved, so the content was rarely updated.

Students could find more information on the bulletin board in the sports hall, but since only a few have visited here only a small fraction of students learned about the opportunities and events. These problems are exacerbated by the digital divide between students and teachers. As many of the instructors are from generations who did not receive training in information technology, the Internet is not their primary source of information, and are finding it hard to meet the needs and expectations of today's generation Y and Z, the "net generation".

3.3 Recommendations

Based on preliminary evidence from studies completed since 2010and the findings of thisstudy, it is suggested that

- content and structure of the website should be updated in line with web usability guidelines
- priorities for the redesign should be fast and easy navigation, a simplified, usable web page content is made with the following principles: short, easy phrasing, up to date, accurate and interesting information.
- there is a need for a dedicated web administrator who would be responsible to update and manage the sport section of the web pages, so that students would know about all sporting possibilities and events in time.
- a link to the page of the Hungarian University Sports Federation should be included in every university web page, so those interested would be even more informed about competitions. It would also boost the number of participants in these events.
- the web page feeds to and from social networking sites further enhancing flow of information
- updating the website and making information about sport and physical education more easily accessible, the number of visitors to the page can be increased.
- increased number of visitors receiving up to date and engaging information could result in the number of students playing sports at SZIE being increased.
- by updating the website and making information about sport and physical education more easily accessible students will spend more time involved in sport.
- appropriate short, straightforward, accurate information helps create awareness of opportunities and increases involvement in sports activities.

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