

THE EFFECTS OF TRUST AND ENJOYMENT ON INTENTION TO PLAY ONLINE GAMES

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ABSTRACT

As online games grow in importance as an electronic commerce application, researchers and practitioners increasingly believe that understanding online game player behavior is critical to the success of online game vendors. In an attempt to gain new insights into the determinants of behavioral intention to play online games, we propose a theoretical model that augments the theory of reasoned action (TRA) with two new constructs, trust and enjoyment. Within the model framework, we investigate the impact of trust and enjoyment on behavioral intention as well as on behavioral attitude. Our proposed model is tested by using questionnaire responses of 253 online game players. As hypothesized, attitude, enjoyment, and subjective norms predict intention, and enjoyment significantly affects attitude. The results also show that trust affects intention only indirectly through attitude. The paper contributes by highlighting the roles of trust and enjoyment in the online gaming context.

Keywords: enjoyment, online games, TRA, trust

1. Introduction

In the past decade, the business of online games has grown rapidly due to advances in personal computing and the remarkable penetration of the high-speed Internet. *DFC Intelligence* (2006) estimates that the total revenue of the online game industry will grow from \$3.4 billion in 2005 to over \$13 billion in 2011. The market research firm also estimates that the number of global online game players will increase from 124 million in 2005 to 376 million by 2009. The rapid growth of online gaming businesses calls for an investigation to discover what key factors motivate players to play games online. Little empirical study, however, has been conducted on the determinants of player behavior.

Online games are played through the Internet (Hilton 2006). Unlike traditional PC or console games where one or two players play a game on a personal computer, online games allow many players around the world to play together on a game server via the Internet. With a monthly subscription fee of about \$15, players can now play online almost all popular PC titles such as *Battlefield*, *Counter-Strike*, *World of Warcraft*, and *Call of Duty*. Meanwhile, a new breed of online game titles such as *Star Wars Galaxies*, *EverQuest*, and *Dark Age of Camelot*, known as massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs), are available through the Internet only. MMOGs allow hundreds of thousands of players to simultaneously interact in a virtual game world. Online gaming websites, such as *Yahoo! Games*, *MSN Zone*, and *Pogo*, attract tens of millions of registered players and have 150,000 to 200,000 simultaneous users at any given time (*DFC Intelligence* 2004).

Players' intention to play online games is of considerable interest because creators, sponsors, and operators of online games can benefit greatly from improved understandings of the driving factors behind players' intention. Understanding player intention is also an important first step for industry vendors in their quest to motivate players to visit online game websites more often and to develop customer loyalty. Moreover, other segments of the online entertainment industry, such as *IPTV* (Internet Protocol Television) and *Podcast*, may also benefit from improved understandings of player intention in online gaming settings.

The purpose of this study is to develop and empirically test a theoretical model of the determinants of intention to play online games. The proposed theoretical model integrates trust and enjoyment into the theory of reasoned