Why do People Continue to Play Social Network Game (SNG)?
An Empirical Study by Social and Emotional Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This study proposes a model constructed by affection perspective (PA theory) and social perspective to examine the determining factors of social network game (SNG) players’ intentions on word-of-mouth and continue. Total 276 subjects were conducted to test this model. The results demonstrate that interstate of arousal leads people to a higher level of continuing to use on SNG. Moreover, word-of-mouth had significant impact on continue to use, which showed that the impact of the dimension of continue to use on the word-of-mouth. It was found that sharing was a key factor on determining a player’s intentions to word-of-mouth and continuous use on social network game. Through the increasing stickiness and word-of-mouth for SNG, the games providers could create the higher value from loyal customers. This paper contributes to an insight of the effects of players’ intentions on word-of-mouth and continuance to use on SNG.

Keywords: PA Theory, Perceived Sharing, Social Influence, Social Interaction, Social Network Game (SNG)

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with over millions and millions people registered on social networking sites, social networking has become an integral part of daily life (Wang & Lin, 2011). Millions of users have integrated these sites into their daily activities. The social networking sites are not specific to any one place or demographic, but globally. Social network game (SNG) that uses social connections has multiplied like wildfire on social networking sites. SNG is a type of online game that is distributed primarily through social networks. People are playing SNG as a way to socialize with others they have added to their social network. The SNG is becoming a large part of how people make interaction in social networking circumstances. SNGs are typically multi-dimension, and relate to elements of fantasy, or escapism. Further, SNG has the potential to trigger strong emotions and lead to high levels of enjoyment. In other words, choosing and playing a digital game involves consuming a hedonic product. Within marketing, hedonic consumption has already been widely studied. Research has shown that, for hedonic products, emotional responses during product trials have a significant influence on both subsequent product attitude formation and future consumption duration. The growth of SNG such as Farmville, Bejewelled, & Mafia Wars has ensured that the social network gaming industry will thrive for many years to come. SNG have helped to create the interactions that people now use on a regular basis and some social network games are actually the basis of a social network. Nearly 62 million US internet users played at least one SNG in 2011, up from 53 millions in 2010. Social network gaming revenue reached $2.18 Billions by 2012. There is a need, therefore, to understand what factors affect players’ usage intention of social network games. The results can help SNG vendors make adjustments to their marketing strategies.

Previous studies have used behavioral intention to measure an IS acceptance or usage intention (Hong & Tam, 2006; Lee & Kim, 2007; Petter, S., Delone, W., & McLean, E. 2008; Petter & McLean, 2009). Social network game can be regarded as a kind of information system (IS) people is easy to get engaged in to create interactions with others (Rossi, 2009). Ha, I., Yoon, Y., and Choi, M. (2007) suggested that SNG have intended to provide entertainment, enjoyment, and relaxation. Previous researches have focused narrowly on the emotional context, such as flow and enjoyment, to explain why people play SNG (Hsu & Lu, 2004; Sweetser & Wyeth, 2005; Song & Lee, 2007). However, emotional context of SNG may not be enough to motivate customers to continue to play games (Song & Lee, 2007). In addition SGNs enable users to fantasies and be entertained. Social context is an important feature of SNG which allows friends to have interaction. This feature may also play an important role in the attraction of players to SNG. Research in loyalty perspective suggested that the evolution of social network applications should be seen as a process of emotional and social interaction. However, relatively little researches have addressed the emotional and social issues of the SNG. Although the above two contexts might have varying influences on player usage intention of SNG, little is known about how they influence the players’ behavioral intention to play SNG. Hence, there is a need to integrate them into a new theoretical model to examine how these concepts affect players’ behavioral intention to play SNG. Word-of-mouth and continue to use represent a loyal behavior and are important for shaping consumers’ attitude and behaviors. Therefore, while SNGs have received wide attention, it is extremely important to understand the factors that influence members’ perceptions for word-of-mouth and continue to use. Accordingly, social and emotional perspectives are likely to be helpful for understanding the SNG players’ world-of-mouth and continue to use.

The purpose of this study is to examine the determining factors of word-of-mouth (WOM) and continue to use (CTU) on SNG by emotional and social perspectives. Specifically, this work proposed to use emotional factors (such as Pleasure, Arousal) and social factors (such as Social
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