Chapter II

User Acceptance of Online Computer Games: Comparing Two Models in a Field Study

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Abstract

User interface design makes an important contribution to the effective presentation of online entertainment products. In this chapter, we examine two models in predicting user acceptance of online computer games. The first is the technology acceptance model (TAM) from the information systems field, while the second is a consumer behavior model based on marketing and advertising research. A field study was conducted to empirically test the two models. Results indicate that both models explain a significant amount of variance in our dependent variables: attitude toward the game and intention to return to the game, with TAM a more consistent predictor of both result variables. This study sheds light on research of Web-based product presentation in general and that of entertainment products such as online computer games in particular.
Introduction

Firms engage the Web in a wide range of activities from pure marketing and promotion, customer service, to direct sales and generation of advertising revenue (Berthon et al., 1996; Singh & Dalal, 1999). They have embraced Internet and Web technologies in various ways to reap the potential benefits brought by this relatively new medium (Berthon et al., 1996; Liu et al., 1997). Through this special medium, firms can disseminate more information inexpensively, market, promote, and sell products and services, and enhance customer support at a lower cost (Palmer & Griffith, 1998). One of the uses of the Web is the delivery of online entertainment, including online computer games. In such products, attributes like the navigational structure, the interactive media, online help functions, and search mechanism are significant factors contributing to visitor and player retention.

The relationship between such features and the effectiveness of the presentation of online computer games has not been widely explored in the literature. This chapter explores the application of two distinct streams of research, the consumer behavior theories in marketing research, and the technology acceptance model (TAM) in information systems. It compares the predictive powers of the two models in user attitude toward a computer game, and their intentions to return to the game.

Attitude Toward the Game (Ag)

To evaluate the attractiveness of an online computer game, attitude toward the game (Ag) is defined here in a similar way to that of a measure called attitude toward the site (Ast), developed in response to a need to evaluate Web site effectiveness. Attitude toward the site is considered a useful indicator of Web users’ predispositions to respond favorably or unfavorably to Web content in natural exposure situations (Chen & Wells, 1999).

The theory of reasoned actions (TRA) has been a widely studied model in social psychology that demonstrates the relationship between attitude and behavioral intentions (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). According to TRA, a person’s behavior is determined by his/her behavioral intentions, which in turn is determined by a person’s attitude concerning such a behavior.
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