

Genre as a Moderator of the Effects of Determinants Associated with eSports Playing Intention

Jang, Wooyoung {William}; Byon, Kevin K. and Zhang, Jingxian {Cecilia}

Organisation(s): Indiana University, United States of America
jangwoo@indiana.edu

Aim

The purpose of this study is to examine the moderating effect of eSports game genre on the relationship between the six antecedents and intention of playing eSports games.

Background

As eSports has become increasingly accepted as a form of sport, efforts have been made to understand the governance (Funk, Pizzo, & Baker, 2018), management (Hallman & Giel, 2018), marketing (Jang & Byon, 2018; Pizzo, et al., in press) of eSports. One effective way to create a more sustainable eSports industry is to identify, segment, nurture, and solidify the fan base. To this end, understanding consumer behavior as it relates to this industry is imperative. Recently, Jang and Byon (2018) developed a model explicating what drives eSports consumers to form an intention to play eSports games, which was found to be a critical determinant of eSports game-playing behavior and media consumption. The model includes six predictors (i.e., hedonic motivation (HM), habit (HB), price value (PV), effort expectancy (EE), social influence (SI), and flow (FL)) of playing intention as it relates to eSports game, and the consequences (i.e., eSports playing behavior and media consumption associated with eSports events). These preliminary yet important findings shed light on our understanding of eSports consumption behaviors. Given the various genres of eSports games, the following research question arises: Can eSports genre moderate eSports consumers' motivations to play eSports games? As preferences for different video game genres and different levels or types of skill development could exist according to video game genre (Scharkow et al., 2015), the current study was designed to address the above question. To categorize eSports games, we adopted Lucas and Sherry's (2004) typology: (a) Imagination (IM), (b) Physical Enactment (PE), and (c) Sport Simulation Video Games (SSVG).

Methodology

We used an online survey to test three between-subject groups' formations of eSports game-playing intentions. Data ($N = 498$) were collected via M-Turk. We recruited participants who had experience playing eSports games. The seven constructs (i.e., HM, HB, PV, EE, SI, FL, and playing intention of eSports games) with 21 items were measured (Venkatesh, Thong, & Xu, 2012) using a 7-point Likert scale. A list of 22 eSports games was provided in the questionnaire with the question of most frequently playing eSports game. We then categorized respondents into three groups: IM ($n = 211$), PE ($n = 181$), and SSVG ($n = 106$). We assess playing frequency to control for respondents' experiences playing multiple eSports games. Data were analyzed via SPSS and AMOS.

Results

Via SPSS, all assumption tests for CFA were found to be acceptable (i.e., kurtosis and skewness, variables correlations variance inflation factor, and boxplot). Through AMOS, the CFA results showed that the measurement model had a reasonable but marginal model fit ($\chi^2/df = 3.84$; CFI = .91; RMSEA = .07; SRMR = .051). The convergent validity and discriminant validity were evident via the evaluation of factor loadings and the comparison of

AVE and the squared correlation. Cronbach's alpha values were above the threshold of .60, ranging from .62 to .84.

The model fit of the structural model was reasonable yet marginal ($\chi^2/df = 4.4$; CFI = .91; RMSEA = .08; SRMR = .065). The SEM was examined separately across the three groups, showing that genre played a moderating role in explaining eSports playing intention. More specifically, the IM and PE groups were similar in that they indicated that five specific predictors (i.e., HM, HB, PV, EE, and FL) were significantly related to eSports playing intention. Interestingly, the SSVG group showed different patterns in which only three determinants (i.e., HM, HB, and PV) were related to eSports playing intention. Results for SSVG were clearly different from the results for IM and PE, confirming Pizzo et al.'s (in press) and Kim and Ross' (2006) findings. Per Kim and Ross (2006), SSVG players are avid sport fans. This may explain why HB – and not EE or FL – was important for the SSVG group; the SSVG group may have already formed a commitment to play SSVG due to their loyalty to the sport. In addition, the IM group considered FL to be more important than the PE and SSVG groups did; this supports Huang et al., (2017) and Shin and Shin's (2011) findings.

Contribution

Theoretically, the findings that the moderating role of genre plays an important role of influencing playing intentions further expand our understanding of eSports consumers' consumption behaviors and serve as an important extension of Jang and Byon (2018) and Pizzo et al.'s (in press) studies concerning eSports consumption behavior. Practically, the findings help eSports marketers to design tailored marketing strategies for eSports consumers based on consumers' preferred eSports game genres, which is important given that eSports is an umbrella term and includes various genres. The findings also can provide the boundary conditions associated with the eSports game genres. Nonetheless, this study is limited as the model fit cut-off criteria used was liberal. More stringent fit indexes should be used in future study. In fact, the proposed model is a preliminary yet theoretically grounded model. Thus, more validation via various samples would enhance the model's overall psychometric properties.

References

- Jang, W. W., & Byon, K. K. (2018). Antecedents and consequences of playing eSports games. Paper presented at the 2018 North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM).
- Kim, Y., & Ross, S. D. (2006). An exploration of motives in sport video gaming. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 8, 28-40.
- Lucas, K., & Sherry, J. L. (2004). Sex differences in video game play: A communication-based explanation. *Communication Research*, 31, 499-523.
- Pizzo, A. D., Baker, B. J., Na, S., Lee, M., Kim, K., & Funk, D. C. (in press). eSport vs Sport: A Comparison of Spectator Motives. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*.
- Shin, D. H., & Shin, Y. J. (2011). Why do people play social network games? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27, 852-861.
- Venkatesh, V., Thong, J. Y., & Xu, X. (2012). Consumer acceptance and use of information technology: extending the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 36, 157-178.