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A Study of the Antecedents of Game Engagement and the Moderating Effect of the Self-Identity of Collaboration

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationships between motivation factors and game engagement and explore the moderating effect of self-identity on those relationships. For this, the present study collected data from 228 college students in South Korean through a survey method and used hierarchical multiple regression analyses. In the results, first, the more competition, challenge, or social interaction participants pursue in gameplay, the more they are engaged in a game. Second, a positive relationship between social interaction and game engagement is stronger for participants in high rather than low in interdependent self-view. However, interdependent self-view was found to have no significance in the relationship between other motivators and game engagement. This study is the first one to examine the integral model of motivation factors of game engagement by including the moderating effect of self-identity.

KEYWORDS

Challenge, Competition, Game Engagement, Interdependent Self-View, Self-Identity, Social Interaction

1. INTRODUCTION

Video games are a multi-billion-dollar industry worldwide. Gamers provide endless entertainment and escape through a series of game types, ever-increasing graphics, and the ability to compete and collaborate with players around the world through online consoles and advanced computer games. However, the World Health Organization (WHO) recently asserted that the increasing time people spend gaming should be monitored and evaluated as it may constitute a risk factor for developing internet game disorder (WHO, 2018).

Recently, psychological research to review video games has undergone significant changes. Until very recently, the dominance of research on video games has focused its attention on research to identify the potential negative impacts of the game. The specific focus of these research programs includes the relationship between games and increased aggression, social isolation and overuse (Grüsser, Thalemann, & Griffiths, 2007). Recently, however, many researchers have focused on mediation to tailor games or relieve pain for educational or health-related interventions, taking advantage of the exciting appeal of video games (Sardia, Idria, & Fernández-Alemán, 2017). Increasingly, mediation-centered researchers have shown that games can have a positive impact on

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psychological and physical well-being. Both focused and interventional intensive studies share a different but exploratory approach. The methods and theories used will assess the degree to which a video game does not have a positive, negative, or affective effect on a given outcome in a given set of circumstances. Less well-known and less widely researched is the mechanism underlying these positive and negative connections.

Especially, massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) are the virtual successor of the tabletop games that saw their rise in the 20th century with Dungeons and Dragons. Modern MMORPGs are adventures through fantasy worlds and blends advanced graphics, endless achievements and options of collaboration and competitive gameplay. This game allows players to create and fancy virtual identities in the online fantasy world. Here, outside of the realistic social structure, you can play a new role that you choose. MMORPG also allows players to communicate with other players in a virtual environment through an online identity that allows them to share quests, talk with themselves or characters, and build online relationships and social capital (Trepte, Reinecke, & Juechems, 2012; Naidoo, Coleman, & Guyo, 2019). Gamers spend countless hours in this game, and many games require commissions and subscriptions, and time and spirited energy gamers occasionally make significant financial investments, not when they contribute to MMORPG games on a weekly basis (Jang, & Byon, 2019). Each game has specific mechanisms, ideas, and roles that players can take. As these games become more popular and expanding in functionality, more and more gamers are testing their skills in MMORPGs (Proffitt, Glegg, Levac, & Lange, 2019).

Despite a growing practical importance, there is a lack of quantitative studies on motivational factors that affect participants' engagement in MMORPGs. This article explores people's motivations to participate in MMORPG. For this, the article is structured as follows. The next section presents the theoretical framework and background for the hypotheses. This study adopts the lens of psychological motivation in engagement in MMORPGs (Lindenberg, 2001; Lee, Ko, & Lee, 2019). And, theories on the development of the self-identity as well as the relationship between the self and objects of consumption suggest that the sharing of an object will be associated with closer perceived social distances (Belk, 1988). Belk's (1988) work on the extended-self established the idea that people expand their concept of who they are to include their possessions and objects they consume. This study applies ideas on the extended self to MMORPG. And, the subsequent section then outlines data and methods, followed by the results. The article concludes with a discussion on implications and directions for future research.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Game Engagement

The term "engagement" was investigated in a number of different disciplines, such as sociology, political science, psychology, and organizational behavior. In the marketing discipline, fewer studies were devoted to the terms "consumer engagement," and "customer engagement" before 2005 (Bordie et al., 2011). Customer engagement is defined as "a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal/ object (e.g., video game) in focal service relationships" (Bordie et al., 2011). Adults and children across demographic levels play games in their leisure time. They use different types of technologies to achieve the optimal entertainment experience. Many scholars emphasize the importance of engagement in the virtual environment (Wasko & Faraj, 2005).

Game engagement was proposed as a topic that is worthy of further study (Brockmyer et al., 2009). This study is answering that call by examining gamer's engagement in a different genre and how that impacts games purchase intention. The ultimate goal of marketers and game developers is to engage gamers in the game. For example, Warcraft III designs the game in a way to encourage gamers to co-create meaningful story (Buchanan-Oliver & Seo, 2012). However, game developers

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