

What Makes Online Gamers Dissatisfied with Online Games?

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INTRODUCTION

With the advancement of computer technology and the prevalence of the Internet, various applications have emerged that changed our daily lives, such as online shopping (Tseng, 2010), online auction (Tseng & Teng, 2014), and online gaming (Tseng, 2011). In the case of online gaming, the global market was worth USD 70.5 billion in 2011 and is expected to reach USD 117.9 billion in 2015, growing at a compound annual growth rate of 13.7% from 2011 to 2015 (Transparency Market Research, 2012).

As a new form of recreation and entertainment, online games differ from traditional video games or PC games in two distinctive ways. First, online games are not only products but also services (NCsoft, 2001). Once gamers log into the game server, the game service provider must maintain their systems to prevent server crash or network latency so that gamers can play without interruption. Besides, the game service provider must protect gamers' accounts and ensure gamers follow the rules of the game when playing online games. Console games and PC games, in contrast, are products that are usually played alone without the need for instantaneous and continuing support from their manufacturers. Second, there are intensive, real-time and anonymous interactions among a large number of gamers in online games. Although the amusement and attractiveness of online games come from the intensive interactions among online gamers themselves, the anonymity in online games, has led to certain problematic or irritating behaviours, misconducts, or even crimes among online gamers (Chen et al., 2005), which can also be sources of frustration or dissatisfaction for gamers.

Online game service providers should understand the sources of gamers' dissatisfaction thoroughly, because the behavioral responses of unsatisfied customers may be unfavorable to the firms. However, because online games are an emerging industry, existing knowledge about the sources of dissatisfaction with online games is rather limited. Although previous studies have examined satisfaction and dissatisfaction with online games from either an engineering perspective (Chen, et al., 2006; Claypool & Claypool, 2006) or from a functional perspective (Choi & Kim, 2004), a thorough understanding of customer dissatisfaction with online games is still in urgent demand. In addition, compared with traditional service industries, customers of online games have exceptionally massive communication among themselves. This can induce interpersonal conflict and unhappiness, which in turn may reduce customer loyalty (Teng et al., 2012). However, little research has explored these issues.

To fill in the knowledge, gap this research aims to have a more comprehensive exploration of the sources of customer dissatisfaction (dissatisfiers) with online games.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature has explored sources of satisfiers and dissatisfiers and recognized that they are typically different. Dissatisfiers refer to the necessary but not sufficient antecedents for service performance (Cadotte & Turgeon, 1988). That is, the absence of such performance results in dissatisfaction. Contrarily, satisfiers refer to unusual performance that triggers strong satisfaction (Cadotte & Turgeon, 1988). For example, attribution of service failure to the firm determines reduced quality perception and reduces satisfaction (Iglesias, 2009).

Online games grow in market sizes and have become a popular topic of research. Among the literature, the flow theory has been one of the most frequently used theories for explaining online gamer behavior (e.g., Teng, 2013; Teng, Lo, & Li, 2012; Voiskounsky, Mitina, & Avetisova, 2004). Moreover, social aspects and team participation have been frequently used for explaining why gamers repeatedly play a certain game (Teng & Chen, 2014; Teng, Huang, & Chen, 2015). Specifically, team participation contributes to compliance to team norms and satisfaction with social needs that eventually fuel gamer loyalty (Teng & Chen, 2014). Moreover, social need and social ability should boost the formation of interdependence and network convergence that further contribute to establishment of game loyalty (Teng, Huang, & Chen, 2015).

However, there is only limited studies examining why online gamers become dissatisfied with online games. Two exceptions are found. First, poor network quality reduced playing time of gamers (Claypool & Claypool, 2006). Second, interaction between gamer and the system and the interaction among gamers contribute to the flow experience of gamers and subsequently fuel gamer loyalty (Choi & Kim, 2004). Related, online games switched to other games become of three reasons: lack of network effects, dissatisfaction with poor gaming administration by game providers, and new games are more attractive (Lo, Wang, & Fang, 2005). Overall, the literature has not sufficiently answered the question, why can online gamers become dissatisfied with online games? The lack of research on answering this question warrants the present study to answer it.

METHOD

Since the present study initiates to explore the sources of online gamer dissatisfaction with online games, hands-on measurements are not available. Consequently, this study constructed the measurement from the following sources:

1. The terms of use and codes of conduct of online games,
2. The discussion in popular bulletin boards for online gamers in Taiwan, and
3. Interviews with online gamers.

A questionnaire with 38 items about the sources of dissatisfaction with online games was then developed. Response options ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Another five gamers were invited to verify the design and description of the questionnaire for necessary corrections. The questionnaire was then posted on Youthwant, a popular website for students and young adults in Taiwan.

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