

Chapter 81

Consumer Attitudes toward Online Video Game Purchases

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ABSTRACT

Much research has been carried out on online shopping and the implications of such a purchasing format for consumers and retailers. The majority of these studies have focused on consumer attitudes toward online shopping and how these can be useful predictors of online shopping adoption. Despite these insights from adoption theory, extant research has not yet distilled the most effective means of understanding consumers' attitudes toward online video game purchases. This chapter aims to shed light on this issue by developing an integrative framework to examine how the advent of Internet technologies affects consumers' attitudes toward video games.

INTRODUCTION

There are considerable debates on how the advent of Internet technologies along with its prototypical subsets impacts video games. Some scholars have recently outlined that Internet technologies broaden the massification of video games, thereby increasing the level of revenue generation (Marchand & Hennig-Thurau, 2013; Williams, 2002; Teach, 2013). As a primary source of revenue, attracting and retaining consumers remain the principal objectives of both online and offline video game retailers; however, a few retailers directly compete against each other for market

share by operating purely through one channel (online or offline), and other retailers have sought to integrate their offline and online operations (Stuart, 2012). These actions have spread confusion among industry practitioners and interested parties regarding the impact that online shopping has had on the video game retail industry as a whole (Krohn, 2012; Warman, 2012; Euromonitor, 2010). This confusion combined with limited research within the video game retail industry has left industry leaders and scholars unclear as to consumer purchasing decisions in regard to online and offline shopping, and more specifically, it has spawned a debate among scholars as to the

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motivations driving consumers' online video game purchases (Williams, 2002; Morgan Stanley, 2013; Zhu & Zhang, 2010; Conley et al., 2004; Alba et al., 1997; Biyalogorsky & Naik, 2003; Lovell, 2011; Kain, 2013; Warman, 2013; Flew, 2012).

Researchers suggest that online shopping facilitates easier transactions and leverages lucrative marketing opportunities within the growing online marketplace, but existing research is vague in terms of how online shopping motivates consumer purchases (Ha & Stoel, 2009; Nemat, 2011; Ling et al., 2010; Grewal et al., 2010; Enders & Jelassi, 2000; Eroglu et al., 2001). Existing research exploring online shopping and how it relates to consumer purchasing behaviour is primarily based on the theory of reasoned action (TRA), the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), and the technology acceptance model (TAM). All three models have been used to predict online shopping purchases based on behavioural intentions (Ajzen, 1991; Davis et al., 1989; Su & Huang, 2011). It is argued that the credibility of research based on intentions is undermined because intentions do not represent conclusive actions (Pahnila & Warsta, 2010).

Similarly, controversy exists within the literature as to which research model possesses the relevant variables to accurately predict consumer purchasing behaviour (Crespo et al., 2009; Pavlou & Fygenon, 2006). Furthermore, the applicability of these deterministic models is criticised considering that the predictions simplify a complex process and risk ignoring influential subjective variables (Werner, 2004).

There is an acknowledgement among scholars in the academic community that existing research has focused on behavioural determinants of intention across generic broad categories, while neglecting which exact variables induce online shopping for specific products (Hernandez et al., 2009; Pahnila & Warsta, 2010; Wang et al., 2007). This is compounded by the fact that online shopping intention and purchase behaviour vary for individual products because of their different product characteristics and attributes (Malik

& Gupta, 2013; Keisidou et al., 2011). For example, Crespo et al. (2009) found that the impact of perceived risk on online shopping purchases varies depending on the tangibility of the product.

A number of studies have set out to predict online shopping intention and purchase behaviour using broad product categories and generic examples as a basis for their predictions (Huang et al., 2009; Hu et al., 2008; Verhagen & Van Dolen, 2009; Chu & Li, 2008). From this perspective, predicting online shopping intention and purchase behaviour for niche products (such as video games) is difficult because although certain products exhibit similar qualities (music CDs), consumer purchasing behaviour is likely to be unique for every product (Levin et al., 2005). The work of Chiu et al. (2009) can be used to illustrate this point because they acknowledge that a gap in the literature exists regarding the identification of hedonic and utilitarian values related to preference toward specific products and how they drive and enhance consumer satisfaction.

A leading academic research journal focuses explicitly on how online shopping has induced video game sales, specifically the impact of online game reviews on sales of particular video game titles (Zhu & Zhang, 2010). This represents an acknowledgement from within the academic community that there is a need to research video games (software) as separate entities from consoles (hardware) and to identify how online shopping has influenced consumer purchasing decisions for video games (Clements & Ohashi, 2005; Phau & Liang, 2012). The beliefs of experts regarding the strategic benefits of online shopping in relation to consumer purchasing decisions for video games complement the data found in recent reports (PWC, 2013; GTAI, 2013; Orsini et al., 2013). These reports suggest that consumers prefer to purchase video games online because they derive value from researching and buying products in online environments (PWC, 2013; GTAI, 2013). However, the reports do not offer an examination of why consumers dislike offline shopping channels

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