Grounded Theory of Consumer Loyalty, a Perspective through Video Game Addiction

Bassam Shaikh, R. S. A. Jumain

Abstract—Game addiction has become an extremely important topic in psychology researchers, particularly in understanding and explaining why individuals become addicted (to video games). In previous studies, effect of online game addiction on social responsibilities, health problems, government action, and the behaviors of individuals to purchase and the causes of making individuals addicted on the video games has been discussed. Extending these concepts in marketing, it could be argued than the phenomenon could enlighten and extending our understanding on consumer loyalty. This study took the Grounded Theory approach, and found that motivation, satisfaction, fulfillments, exploration and achievements to be part of the important elements that builds consumer loyalty.

Keywords—Consumer Loyalty, Video Games Addiction, Video Games, Grounded Theory.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE concept of consumer loyalty [1], [2] can be defined as the attitude and behavior that lead a consumer to favor a particular brand and this results in repetitious buying behavior. Literature that deals with the video game industry indicated that development of consumer loyalty requires specific phenomenon consideration that will propel one to the state of video game addiction. A researcher has also view this phenomenon from different perspective that range from a serious psychological disorder, to a source of new profit, which needs to be studied in detail. This research is based on the combination of these two approaches in order to identify the peculiarities of the application of the theory of consumer loyalty in video game industry due to specific psychological features of addicted consumer.

II. VIDEO GAME ADDICTION AND CONSUMER LOYALTY

Some prior research on video game addiction viewed the phenomenon as a psychological the disorder, which is parallel to gambling in its features [3] for example, identified 6 main criteria that cause video game addiction. These are salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, conflict and relapse. He also found that consumers treat video games as the most outstanding activity in their life. To a certain extent, he observed, an "addict" is ready to protect this interest by all possible means. Moreover, restrictions or no

S. Bassam is with the Department of Marketing Management, Multimedia University, 75450 Melaka, Malaysia (phone: +447624815417; e-mail: besso321@hotmail.com).

R.S.A. Jumain is with the Department of Marketing Management, Multimedia University, 75450 Melaka, Malaysia (e-mail: rudaini.jumain@mmu.edu.my).

opportunity to play make the person feel miserable. The addictive nature of video games, he explained, also alter the mood of the users, enthralling enjoyment, satisfaction and excitement to one extent, sadness, anxiety and anger to the other. To most though, video games attract and retain many long term consumers as they are the most accessible sources of pleasure and relaxation.

The fact that loyal consumers bring more profit than new ones is not new; all companies concentrate their forces on the development of effective strategies of developing consumer loyalty. This is especially true in view that loyalty can be classified into attitudinal and behavioral components [2]. Past research also suggest that attitudinal component can be considered to be more effective in predicting consumer loyalty.

Consequently, consumer loyalty in relation to video games has been studied extensively by various researchers [3]-[6]. Generally, these studies found that loyalty is caused by the emotions as well as pleasure one experience and obtain as the result of the interactive playing process. In a research, viewed video games are viewed as a complex phenomenon that creates and regulates the way of life of the involved gaming communities, virtually and literally [4]. Consequently, flow state, positive interactions with other players as well as new experiences encounter were also found to drives people to repetitious buying [7]. Other factors that include social, immersion components and achievement were also found to leads to gamers' motivation [8].

To a larger extent, it could be seen that video games can become the essential part of the consumers' life, and this resulting in loyalty.

III. THE STUDY

Grounded Theory [9], [10] was employed in the study. Informants for this study comprising of 17 people aged 21-33. According to gender, the group included 7 women and 10 men. In many cases, participants did not identify their qualifications, but all of them were employed. Students represented essential part of the participants. Other people had different profession not connected with each other (office worker, musician, designer, model, IT-expert). The respondents included people, who lived in different countries: Japan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Spain.

IV. ASSESSMENTS

The assessment of the attitude towards video games during the interviews was done on lingual and extra lingual factors.

Lingual factors included the analysis of the recorded interviews and coded based on direct and indirect expressions related to video games. After the selection, they were generalized and encoded. Extra lingual factors included facial expressions, gestures, exclamation, which appeared at the moment of the interview, were also noted.

Assessment on attitude towards video games was set based on four categories: positive, negative, indifferent, and not identified. Concurrently, the assessment of the reaction on game play process was done based on the following criteria: satisfaction, enjoyment, and excitement.

Other data was extracted directly from the recorded interviews. This information included the attitude towards addiction and kinds of video games respondents preferred. Also, the list of question consisted of a section regarding classical demographic variables, where respondents had to mark their age, sex, occupation, and country of residence.

TABLE I
SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENTS

№	Identifier	Age	Gender	Occupation	Nationality
1	Miki	31	Female	Not specified (employed)	Japan
2	Miki's husband	33	Male	Not specified (employed)	Japan
3	Heyja	31	Female	Not specified (employed)	Japan
4	Martin	27	Male	Designer	Japan
5	Saayeed	22	Male	Student	Saudi Arabia
6	Omar	24	Male	Student	Saudi Arabia
7	Bander	26	Male	Upcoming musician	Saudi Arabia
8	Faisal	29	Male	Not specified (employed)	Saudi Arabia
9	Omar	24	Male	Not specified (employed)	Saudi Arabia
10	Berna	23	Female	Student	Turkey
11	Derya	21	Female	Model	Turkey
12	Elmira	31	Female	Not specified (employed)	Spain
13	Liliana	33	Female	Not specified (employed)	Spain
14	Taha	32	Male	Student	Malaysia
15	Rozi	22	Male	IT-expert	Malaysia
16	Eman	28	Male	Not specified (employed)	Malaysia
17	Asmida	29	Female	Not specified (employed)	Malaysia

V. RESULTS

The results of the application of Ground Theory approach were comprehensive. They proved the result of the previous research in the field conducted by and confirmed that men are more interested in video games than women. 14% of them expressed a positive attitude, 14% treated video games indifferently, and the rest did not express any opinion. 30% of male respondents were positively thinking about video games, 40% were indifferent and 30% did not express their opinion. Also, MMORPG's were considered to be the most addictive according to the level of engagement of consumers.

Based on the data obtained, four main factors, which lead to consumer loyalty, were identified: these are motivation,

satisfaction and fulfillment, achievement, exploration (Fig. 1). Motivation is a psychological reaction of an individual, which appears and grows once he or she faces the challenge in the process of playing [11].
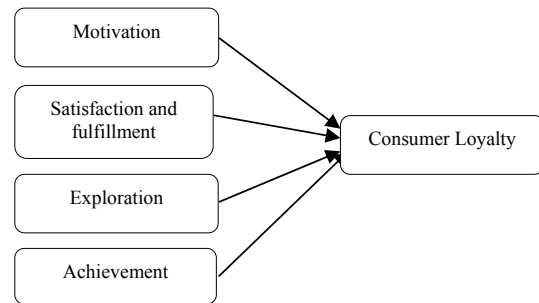

Fig. 1 Factors that influence consumer loyalty

These include the aspect of competition, danger and adventure, creation, competence and acquisition of certain skills. Motivation to play video games is influenced by the competition, emotional explosions, the ability to create, need to be competent and desire to master ones game-play skills. Satisfaction & fulfillment is an addictive factor too as gamers get a specific feeling of fulfillment as the result of playing. Game is the only source of this feeling that is why gamers tend to play repetitiously. Achievement is created by the dynamics of the game process. The ability to master one's skills is the essential part of game-play, which presupposes the duration of the process. Exploration is the next aspect of the game as every game creates a unique world. These aspects are basic in explanation of the theory of consumer loyalty to video games; at the same time, they develop users' addiction.

VI. DISCUSSION

The research of consumer loyalty to video games was based on the application of the Consumer loyalty theory to the video game industry. The scheme (Fig. 1) shows that there are four basic aspects, which influence consumer loyalty. All respondents confirmed the fact that they consider motivation, achievement, exploration and satisfaction to be the main aspect, which make them loyal to video games. These aspects are universal, because they can be produced by every video game regardless of its complexity. Motivation comes first; playing video games, consumer face different challenges, which they need to accept and overcome. The desire to experience certain feelings, win the game or state one's authority may motivate people to play again. The same scheme is applicable to any product or service. Buying behavior is motivated, especially a repetitious one, and it is determined by the feature of the product or the brand. The satisfaction and the fulfillment are extremely crucial in the process of establishing consumer loyalty.

Consumer buys again if the product or service meets their needs on the one hand; on the other hand, it fully coincides with their expectations concerning the outcomes of using or possessing. Consumers of video games are satisfied, when

they can entertain, cope with the stress or just kill time by the means of playing. Achievement, the next component, directly means the ability of the user to achieve something by the use of the product. In video game industry, this aspect is fully developed, as the person can prove the superiority of their personality or even nation by their victory in the contest. Other examples can be the achievement of new social status, positive experience or some specific skills of usage of the product. Exploration is the last factor, which leads to consumer loyalty. For instance, video games introduce new world to consumers and they have an opportunity to explore it. Other products can be explored due to their functions or updates. As it is seen, all these components are interconnected, but it does not mean that all of them are necessary in order to develop consumer loyalty. Still, the presence of all four aspects in the product is the most effective way to attract more loyal consumers.

Consumer loyalty towards games is a subject that is yet to be known by most individuals. Satisfaction is one of the major factors that assist in building loyalty towards a product. This has, however, to be complemented by other factors. To achieve profit (which is essentially why most businesses are run) corporations have to work on having loyal customers.

The way people play these games, the prices and also the graphics are among the many factors that individuals will consider before they decide to play a certain game. As such, video game companies should strive to ensure that they conduct a research on what the market needs. By doing this, they should be sure that video game players would be as loyal as they can to the said video game.

Having loyal customers is also beneficial in the sense that they do not have to incur marketing costs. They are at liberty to involve them on matters regarding what the market requires. Using the feedback from the video game addicts, these companies are in a better position to fine-tune their products to meet the needs of the wider market.

Globalization is among the many factors that have stirred international competition in the video gaming industry. There is a constant struggle among companies to emerge as the best and they will stop at nothing to achieve the same. With loyalty, any company is sure to rise over competition. This is hence one of the major reasons why customer loyalty is that important.

VII. Conclusion

Suggested findings can be applied in different industries. Still, this model needs to be adjusted to each specific industry and requires a market research in order to identify some peculiar. This research revealed psychological peculiarities of addicted consumers and their impact on the marketing strategies. The further research in required adding details to suggested model of consumer loyalty.

Conclusively, the gaming industry is one that depends a lot on customer loyalty to make profits. As such, they have to keep their customers' interests first. Constant upgrade of graphics is necessary and it is something these companies have to embrace if they hope to maintain and add to their customer list. This very dynamic industry requires players

who are willing to go all the way to achieve loyalty; by making their customers addicted to their products.

REFERENCES

[1] C. B. Bhattacharaya, "Is your brand's loyalty too much, too little, or just fight? Explaining deviations in loyalty from the Dirichlet norm." *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, Vol. 14, 1997, pp. 421–435.
[2] A. Chaudhuri, A. and M. B. Holbrook, "The Chain of Effects from Brand Trust and Brand Affect to Brand Performance: The Role of Brand Loyalty." *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 65, April 2001, pp. 81-93.
[3] M. Griffiths, "Online video gaming: what should educational psychologists know?" *Educational Psychology in Practice*, Vol.26 No. 1, 2010, pp. 35-40.
[4] S. Rigby, and R. Ryan. *Glued to games: How video games draw us in and hold us spellbound.* Praeger, 2011
[5] C.L. Hsu,and H.P Lu, "Consumer behavior in online game communities: A Motivational factor perspective". *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol.23 No.3, 2007, pp. 1642–1659.
[6] N. Yee, N. "Motivations for play in online games. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, Vol.9*, No*.6, 2006, pp. 772-775
[7] D. Choi and J. Kim." Why people continue to play online games: In search of critical design factors to increase customer loyalty to online contents." *Cyber Psychology & Behavior*, Vol. 7, No.1, 2004, pp. 11–24.
[8] N. Yee, "Motivations for play in online games." *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, Vol. 9*, No*.6, 2006, pp. 772-775
[9] B.G. Glaser and A.L. Strauss, *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research*, New York: Aldine de Gruyter. 1999
[10] A.L. Strauss and J. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques.* Newbury Park, CA. Sage Publications. 1994.
[11] B.K. Saville, S. Gisbert,, J.Kopp, and C. Telesco, "Internet Addition and Delay Discounting in College Students." *The Psychologucal Record.* Vol. 60, 2010, pp. 273-286.