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Winter 12-6-2015

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SOCIAL NETWORKS AND ONLINE GAMER LOYALTY

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ABSTRACT

Online social networks are popular issues in electronic commerce and information systems areas. However, the social network issues have received relatively little attention from scholars in online gaming contexts. Online games experience a strong growth in revenue and popularity. Therefore, this study chose to focus on social networks in online games. In online gaming studies, online gamer loyalty has been one of the recent issues. Therefore, this study consulted classic psychological theories to construct a theoretical model which contains specific hypotheses to explain how social networks impact the formulation of online gamer loyalty.

This study collected the responses from more than one thousand online gamers. The demographic and gaming behavior distributions resemble those of the online gamer populations, indicating the representativeness of the study sample. This study used measurement items from the literature and slightly modified them according to the research contexts. This study used confirmatory factor analysis and various indices to verify the measurement psychometric properties, including reliability, validity, and model fit. The analytical results supported adequate psychometric properties of the measurement used in this study.

Moreover, this study used the structural equation modeling technique to examine the study hypotheses. The analytical results indicated that the hypothesized aspects of social networks impact online gamer loyalty, as predicted. Furthermore, this study examined the mechanism underlying such impact.

This study is the first one examining how the hypothesized aspects of social networks contribute to the development of online gamer loyalty. Findings of this study provide insights for managers of electronic business (i.e., e-business) managers to retain loyal gamers, sustain stable revenues, and build competitive advantages, demonstrating the relevance of this study to e-business managers.

Keywords: Electronic business, online game, social network, loyalty, structural equation modeling