How New Updates Influence eSports Gamer's Emotions

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Unlike traditional sport, eSports periodically changes their rules with updates. Regardless of their involvement level to Multiplayer Online Battle Area (MOBA), all consumers forced to adapt new environments, such as changes in character, skill, and topography. For gaming companies to maintain and increase the number of concurrent users, it is important to keep their gamers satisfied to continuously join the game, despite the frequent updates. In this regard, researchers need to pay attention to the eSports factors affecting gamer's emotions.

Based on adoption theory, asserting behavior change results from interactions between cognitive, contextual, and affective factors (Rogers, 1995), we advanced three hypotheses regarding the relations among involvement, emotions, brand authenticity, and passive innovation resistance (PIR). Involvement is associated with resistance to innovation. Bagozzi and Lee (1999) found that innovation causes resistance to a person who has repeatedly used something. Loyal fans are reluctant to change their habitual behaviors (Funk & James, 2001). Compared to the past (e.g., industrial revolution), technological innovations are happening more frequently but subtly. In response, customers' innovation resistance has also changed to become more passive than before (Heidenreich & Handrich, 2014). Therefore, people's involvement in eSports will be negatively related to PIR (H1). Current customers of products are likely to compare the differences when new products are released. In this process, consumers perceiving adoption to innovative features as barriers will negatively evaluate the change than those who feel comfortable using it (Wood & Moreau, 2006). Hence, relationship between involvement and PIR will be moderated by gamer’s emotions (H2).

Consumers develop an emotional connection with an authentic brand (Morhart et al., 2015). In particular, customers’ perception of brand authenticity is an important evaluation factor in choosing a game as each game is developed, managed, and updated by brands with distinctive characteristics and features (Napoli et al., 2014). In the case of eSports, frequent rule changes can cause confusion to consumers if it is not monitored carefully. If the updated version is perceived negatively, brand perception may also worsen (Wood & Moreau, 2006). Furthermore, the brand's value can be damaged when negative perceptions of the update are shared with people through online communities. However, when consumers are highly attached with a brand, they may mitigate their negative perspectives about the brand (Ahluwalia et al. 2000, 2001; Hegner et al. 2014). Guèvremont and Grohmann (2018) demonstrated that brand authenticity can reduce these negative perceptions. Thus, brand authenticity will moderate the conditional influence of the gamer's emotions in the relationship between involvement and PIR (H3).

A quantitative study is in progress. Gamers with previous experience in participating in MOBA eSports, such as League of Legends competitions, will be recruited from online communities. To test the three hypotheses, a conditional process analysis of moderated moderation (Hayes, 2013) will be examined with eSports involvement as the independent variable, gamer’s emotions to innovation and brand authenticity as the moderator, and PIR as the dependent variable. Research findings related to the theoretical and practical implications will be presented at the time of the presentation.