The Theory of Planned Behavior and the Intention to Play Sport Video Games

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As video games are becoming more widespread and popular, young people spend a large amount of time playing video games (Egelsz et al., 2005). According to the Entertainment Software Association (2005), sport was the second best-selling video game genre and eight sport video games such as Madden NFL 2005 were in the top 20 selling video games of 2004 by units sold. Also, sport games are played by various age groups of people and both sexes (Egelsz et al., 2005). Despite the huge increase in the industry and the interests in sport video gaming, there is lack of study on sport video gaming. The purpose of the present study is to predict intention and behavior to play sport video games using the theory of planned behavior.

The theory of planned behavior is an extension of the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). According to Ajzen (1991), the central factor to predict as individual’s behavior is the individual’s intention to perform a given behavior. Intentions are indicators of how hard individuals are willing to try and how much of an effort they are putting to participate in a given behavior. The theory of planned behavior postulates three conceptually independent determinants of intention: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991).

The study hypothesized that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, and previous behavior should be positively influence the intentions to play sport video games. Also, it was hypothesized that attitudes and subjective norms will hold stronger relationships with intentions than will perceived behavioral control.

Data were gathered from 260 university students (Men=211, Women=49). The vast majority of respondents were Caucasian (68.8%) and the mean age was 20.97 (SD=2.09). The average number of hours they play sport video games a week was 3.38. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine the factorial structure of three latent constructs of attitude, subjective norms, and intention. The fit indices indicated that the model fit the data fairly well (¥2 (24) = 108.96, GFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.97, NFI = 0.96, PNFI = 0.64, Standardized RMR = 0.04).

The preliminary analysis tests were carried out to determine if there is gender or racial differences in the variables. Results from a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) indicated significant gender difference (Wilks’= N = 0.92, F (4, 253) = 5.36, p < 0.01) but not racial difference nor significant interaction effect. Follow-up univariate analyses indicated gender differences for intention, F (1, 258) = 5.73, p < 0.05; attitude, F (1, 258) = 5.46, p < 0.05, and previous behavior, F (1, 258) = 7.42, p < 0.01. Therefore, the gender of the respondents was controlled when testing the hypotheses using multiple regression analyses.

Hierarchical regression analysis was performed. Gender was entered in Step 1 and served as the control variable. The five independent variables were then entered in Step 2, while intentions to play sport video games were served as the dependent variable. Gender accounted for 2.2% of variance in the model. After controlling for this variable, attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control-time, perceived behavioral control-money, and previous behavior accounted for an additional 58% of variance in intention to play sport video games. Attitude (r = 0.38, p< .001) and subjective norms (r = 0.48, p< .001) held significant, positive relationships with intentions to play sport video games. While perceived behavioral control-V money was significantly related to intentions (r = -0.06, p< .05), perceived behavioral control-time was not (r = 0.04, n.s.), thus perceived behavioral control was partially related to intentions to play sport video games. Previous behavior was not significantly related to intentions to play sport video games. The squared semipartial correlations were examined to determine which variables accounted for most variance. The results indicated that perceived behavioral control-time accounted for 0.1% (r =0.001), perceived behavioral control-money accounted for 1% (r =0.01), attitude accounted for 9% (r =0.09), and subjective norms accounted for 14% (r =0.14) of variance in intentions to play sport video games. These results indicated that attitude and subjective norms were more salient predictors of intentions to play sport video games than was perceived behavioral control.

General support was received for the predictions that attitude and subjective norms would be positively related to intentions to play sport video games. Perceived behavioral control-V time was expected to be the important factor to influence sport video gaming but it was not supported. The results of the study should be valuable to sport marketers and sport video game manufacturers in that it identified important factors to play sport video games. Given the influence of subjective norms, it is clear that the sociability of sport video gaming is important in attracting sport video gamers. Thus, it seems to be important to have multi-player function and online networking in order to interact with others. Although the data were collected from the
respondents who were known to be the major target market of video games, the results had limited generalizability. Future research should replicate the findings of current study and develop theories specific to the sport domain including sport video gaming.