

Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Research Background & Motivation

The research motivation for this thesis lies from the undeniable truth that online gaming, especially its most popular genre- the MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games), is a multi-billion dollar industry (Armstrong & Hagel, 1996). In a statistics revealed by marketingstats.com, in the year 2009, worldwide online game industry generates approximately US\$8.3 billion in revenue, and the figure is forecasted to reach US\$11.9 billion in two years (Figure 1-1). In a study on “examining the leisure activities of online surfers”, result shows that approximately 64% of them use online gaming as their primary method of leisure. And out of them, the MMORPG are their favourite to pass time and get connected with the mass online communities.

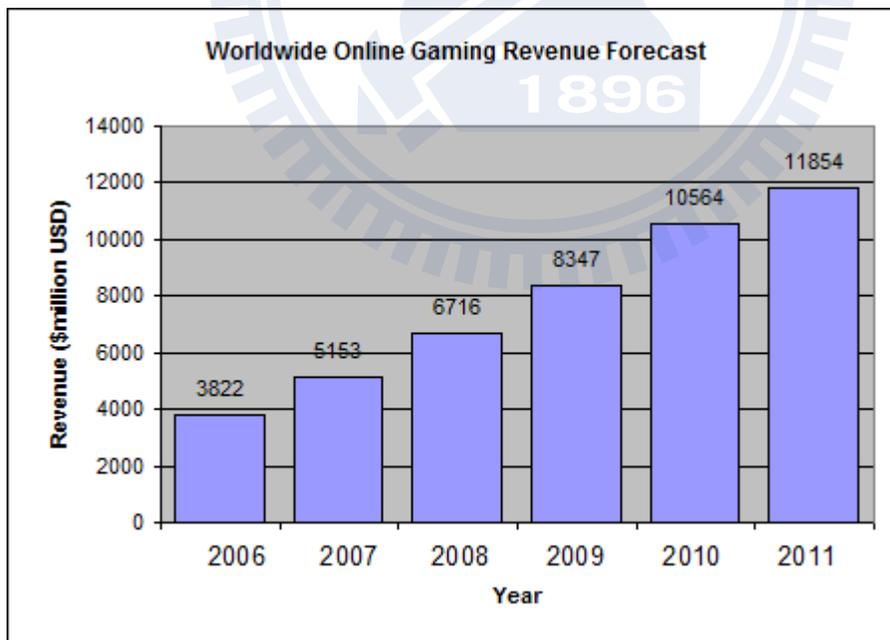


Figure 1-1 Worldwide Online Gaming Revenue Forecast

Source: www.marketingstats.com

3.2.3 Gamer (Customer) Satisfaction

As proposed by Engel and his colleagues (1986) and several other scholars later, this study will define customer satisfaction as the difference between expected and actual gaming experience based solely upon the design elements of the game. In other words, we are trying to compare to pre-game experience and post-game experience of the gamers, pre-game being the expected experience while post-game being the actual experience. If the actual experience is above the expected experience, then player satisfaction will be positive, and vice versa. Therefore, scoring high on perceived quality on certain aspects of game design element means the subject is attracted by that particular game design element. This study will examine and interpret the post game (actual) experience and draw results from this analysis.

3.2.4 Gamer (Customer) Loyalty

From the vast amount of past literatures studying on the matter of customer loyalty, this study will use this term as: The replay (continuous playing) intention, acts of primary and secondary behaviors from the gamers. Borrowing the concepts of the literatures of customer loyalty and applying on gamer loyalty, and in the field or game genre of Massively Multiplayer Role Playing Game (literatures from chapter 2) as: a gamer is defined here as loyal when s/he is willing to play the F2P MMORPG continuously, tempted to invite friends to join the gaming experience, feels a sense of belonging towards the game, and/or feels a certain level of uneasiness when s/he stopped engaging the game.

Bringing the concepts of the scholars suggested above and considering the nature of profit generation for free-to-play MMORPGs also mentioned prior in this chapter to the field of online gaming, and in this particular study, on F2P MMORPGs, we see that it is very fitting to consider testing satisfaction effects on loyalty under this case scenario. Thus, this research not only considers gamer satisfaction generated by various game design and services elements, but also how well those aspects can keep a gamer from defecting away from the game, in other words, generating gamer loyalty. Since F2P MMORPGs make money not from gamer satisfaction, but gamer loyalty for the players to willingly spend money on virtual items (they will only spend money when they value the virtual item is worth it, and with the longer gaming time intentions, this

value increases), this model of testing both satisfaction and loyalty best suits the needs of the study to examine the true effects of the various design elements on satisfaction which leads to loyalty.

3.3 Research Hypotheses

Base on the purpose of the study and the designed research framework, the following hypotheses are generated to be tested:

1). Test whether there are differences between gamers with different “demographic variables” and attractiveness of different game design elements:

Hypothesis 1-1 H₀: Gamers with different “gender” and attractiveness of different game design elements have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-1-1 H₀: Gamers with different “gender” and attractiveness of game design element -“story” have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-1-2 H₀: Gamers with different “gender” and attractiveness of game design element -“ visual presentation” have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-1-3 H₀: Gamers with different “gender” and attractiveness of game design element -“sound & music” have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-1-4 H₀: Gamers with different “gender” and attractiveness of game design element -“character settings” have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-1-5 H₀: Gamers with different “gender” and attractiveness of game design element -“control” have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-1-6 H₀: Gamers with different “gender” and attractiveness of game design element -“interaction” have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-2 H₀: Gamers with different “age” and attractiveness of different game design elements have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-2-1 H₀: Gamers with different “age” and attractiveness of game design element -“story” have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-2-2 H₀: Gamers with different “age” and attractiveness of game design element -“visual presentation” have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-2-3 H₀: Gamers with different “age” and attractiveness of game design element -“sound & music” have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-2-4 H₀: Gamers with different “age” and attractiveness of game design element -“character settings” have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-2-5 H₀: Gamers with different “age” and attractiveness of game design element -“control” have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-2-6 H₀: Gamers with different “age” and attractiveness of game design element -“interaction” have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-3 H₀: Gamers with different “monthly income” and attractiveness of different game design elements have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-3-1 H₀: Gamers with different “monthly income” and attractiveness of game design element -“story” have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-3-2 H₀: Gamers with different “monthly income” and attractiveness of game design element -“visual presentation” have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-3-3 H₀: Gamers with different “monthly income” and attractiveness of game design element -“sound & music” have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-3-4 H₀: Gamers with different “monthly income” and attractiveness of game design element -“character settings” have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-3-5 H₀: Gamers with different “monthly income” and attractiveness of game design element -“control” have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 1-3-6 H₀: Gamers with different “monthly income” and attractiveness of game design element -“interaction” have no significant relationship.

2). Test whether there are differences between gamers with different “demographic variables” and gamer satisfaction towards the game:

Hypothesis 2 H_0 : Gamers with different “demographic variables” and the gamer satisfaction towards the game have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 2-1 H_0 : Gamers with different “gender” and the gamer satisfaction towards the game have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 2-2 H_0 : Gamers with different “age” and the gamer satisfaction towards the game have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 2-3 H_0 : Gamers with different “monthly income” and the gamer satisfaction towards the game have no significant relationship.

3). Test whether there are differences between gamers with different “demographic variables” and the gamer loyalty:

Hypothesis 3 H_0 : Gamers with different “demographic variables” and gamer loyalty towards the game have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 3-1 H_0 : Gamers with different “gender” and gamer loyalty towards the game have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 3-2 H_0 : Gamers with different “age” and gamer loyalty towards the game have no significant relationship.

Hypothesis 3-3 H_0 : Gamers with different “monthly income” and gamer loyalty towards the game have no significant relationship.

4). Test whether there are differences between attractiveness of different game design elements and gamer satisfaction towards the game:

Hypothesis 4 H_0 : Attractiveness of different game design elements and gamer satisfaction towards the game have no significant relationship.

