Players’ Attitudes Toward Preorders and Adoption Intention of New Videogames: a Qualitative Approach

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Consumers can preorder videogames months ahead of their launch to the market and receive them once they become available. Our study explores the motives of videogame players in purchasing via preorders, and highlights the unique patterns in the early adoption of new videogames. Adopting a qualitative approach, we identified and classified common emerging themes: (1) Purchase oriented themes: securing the purchase, risk absence, and multiple sources of information based on the type of innovation; and (2) Adoption oriented themes: trialability versus discovery, desire for status versus desire for process, and curiosity versus defined expectations.

[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/15002/volumes/v37/NA-37

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reviews ($V=2.19$, Leven’s test $F(1, 91)=3.53, p=.06$). This suggests that as a result of cognitive reflection, initial attitudes in the review condition were more well-formed and less subject to fluctuation over time.

Overall, these results provide initial evidence that the act of writing a review can influence consumers’ attitude persistence. In subsequent research, we plan to explore the robustness of this finding to consumption experiences that differ in product category, valence, or intensity, and also to analyze the content of reviews themselves for differences that may affect long-term memory and retrieval of the consumption experience.

**Selected References**


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Launching of new products connotes high costs and high probability of risk for manufacturers. Marketers of video games, books, music CD, DVD movies, and telecommunication gadgets usually promote new products months ahead of introducing them to the market. Consumers can preorder these products and receive them as soon as they become available. Despite the economic importance of worldwide videogame sales (Magiera 2009), the motives of players relying on preorders have not been explored. Why are consumers willing to pay in advance when they have other readily available alternatives? Why do some consumers buy products when they do not know about their features? How do they choose between a promised superior functionality versus a trialable alternative? We seek to bring insights into these issues. The contribution of this research is threefold: (1) explore the motives of videogame players in preordering, (2) highlight the unique pattern of the phenomenon in the early adoption of new videogames, and (3) adopt a qualitative approach to explore preorder decisions rather than an experimental approach to provide richer and broader coverage of the likely factors associated with the topic of interest.

In the case of videogames, preorders display two patterns: (1) Continuous innovation or an updated and enhanced version of a pre-existing game (e.g. Guitar Hero III, Rock Band), (2) discontinuous innovation or a totally new product including new features and qualities (consider the game Guitar Hero introduced for the very first time). In the former situation, consumers preorder video games when they have had certain experience with an earlier version of the game or at least with the game developer. For instance, players who have been satisfied with the videogame FIFA 2008 are potential buyers of FIFA 2009. We can extend this situation when new video game consoles are introduced. The second situation occurs when some videogames—similar to new telecommunication devices—usually come with totally new features that the consumer has never experienced before.

We conducted focus group interviews with videogame players to obtain insights about preordering behavior. Each session was videotaped and lasted about 70 minutes. We followed a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967) to formulate a theory about the phenomenon of interest. The interviewees were asked to describe their thoughts and experiences regarding the preorder and gaming process. We identified common emerging themes and discussed the implications of these themes on preorder intentions. We classified emerging themes into two groups: purchase and adoption (psychological and product related elements).

**Purchase:** (1) *Securing the purchase.* Players expressed their concern about the risk of the unavailability of the videogame. Hui et al. (2008) concluded that the highest point of sales of new products occurs in the preorder stage. After launching the product, sales decline. A plausible explanation is that players rush to preorder a game to secure its acquisition rather than waiting and find it unavailable due to high demand and/or low supply. This situation is akin to Belk et al.’s (2003) description of desire: players’ intent on acquiring the symbolic benefits of a desired game rather than the game itself is fulfilled through preordering. True thrill is kept alive through preordering until the actual game is acquired. Once acquired, players undergo exploration of new features stage. Subsequently, players’ thrill ends if they no longer have anything to discover or learn about the game, and if perceived challenge or competition is over. (2) *Risk absence:* New technologies derive new tasks for consumers and generate uncertainty (Ziamou 2002). Despite the absence of trialability, consumers expressed no functional (performance) risk involved in the preorder, confirming the claim that a continuous innovation has lower levels of perceived risks. Similarly, they do not perceive any risk of making a poor purchase decision. Players expressed that they never
“regretted” a preorder. They also feel confident, as they have the option to opt-out of preorder. For continuous innovations, familiarity with game increases the desire for preordering. For discontinuous innovations, advertising and early reviews increase expectations. High involvement players desire to acquire both discontinuous and continuous innovations.

Adoption: (1) Trialability versus discovery: Rogers (1983) viewed trialability as a dimension of adoption of new products, which relates to the opportunity to be exposed to the innovation. However, this opportunity is nonexistent in the case of preorders. Accordingly, lack of trialability may have a negative impact on perceived risk. We found that discovery stage substitutes the lack of trialability. (2) Desire for status versus desire for process: High involvement players have a high desire for status (“to win”), focusing on the “outcome.” In contrast, low involvement players have a desire for fun and focus on the “process” (“to play”). (3) Curiosity versus defined expectations: Players reported their defined expectations from a new videogame to include advanced features that make it more realistic (little discrepancy between the videogame and its actual manifestations in real life) and interactive, and increase sensation. Curiosity or interest in novelty also emerged as a common category. Players perceive new products as providing continuity of a known story, yet with novel features and challenges that create excitement and room for discovery. They seem to be curious about the features to accomplish this goal. Although familiarity with the game increases the desire to preorder, consumers still seek room for discovery (discover added features), which also creates allure and increases the desire to preorder.

References

Choice Behavior of Maximizers and Satisficers When Alternatives Are Priced Using Non-monetary Points

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Abstract
Schwartz et al. (2002) suggested that Herbert Simon’s concept of satisficing could be considered an individual difference and developed a scale to measure maximizing-satisficing tendencies. Satisficers settle for non-optimal choices by restricting their information seeking and analysis, whereas maximizers persist and evaluate all or most options. Although clearly relevant to consumer decision-making, little consumer research using this concept has been reported.

A potential application is found in Hsee et al.’s (2003) research demonstrating how making an optimal choice among alternatives varying in effort and reward is complicated when the decision involves a medium such as airline mileage or reward points. Consumers sometimes choose a higher effort alternative to acquire more points even though these points cannot be used to acquire anything of additional value. This phenomenon is explained by the decision being determined by whether the ratio of the relevant medium levels is greater than the ratio of the resultant outcomes. Thus, in their first study, 50% of the subjects selected the option to work for 7 minutes to earn 100 points that could be exchanged for a gallon of pistachio ice cream compared to only 22% when the choice did not involve points (i.e., work for 7 minutes to earn a gallon of pistachio ice cream).

Although many consumers exhibited a myopic reliance on medium differences in making choices, others did not. A possible reason is found in Schwartz et al.’s (2002) suggestion that some individuals accept non-optimal choices rather than exert the extra effort required to identify the best alternative. We propose that Maximizers are more likely than Satisficers to use only the ratios of effort and medium and ignore the exchange rates and the resulting outcome ratios when making their decision.

Research Study
We conducted an experiment based on Hsee et al. (2003) Study 1, with several changes, such as adding a 30/35 minutes effort condition to the original 6/7 minutes effort (equal ratios but increasing the incremental time from 1 to 5 minutes), having individuals rank five ice cream flavors and then presenting them with choices between either their 1st and 2nd most preferred flavors or their 1st and 5th most preferred. Also, to better quantify the effect of the medium on decision making, individuals were asked to state their strength of preference as well as make a discrete choice.

The experimental design was thus a 2 (effort levels: 6/7 or 30/35 minutes) by 2 (outcome equivalence: 1st versus 2nd or 1st versus 5th most preferred flavors) by 2 (medium: no points or 60/100 points) full factorial design. After making a choice (e.g., 6 minutes-60 points-1st preferred or 7 minutes-100 points-2nd most preferred), 203 undergraduate student subjects indicated their strength of preference by dragging a pointer on an on-screen line with end points labeled 1 (strongly preferred Task 1) and 100 (strongly preferred Task 2). Next,