Exploring the effect of experiential marketing on movie-watching intention - The example of mobile movie theme games

Chun-Hua Hsiao  
Kainan University  
maehsiao@gmail.com  

Chao-Chi Yang  
Kainan University  
raysmsglove1223@hotmail.com

Abstract
The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of experiential marketing factors on satisfaction and movie-watching intention with the case of Mobile Theme Movie Games (MTMGs). The influential effects of users' satisfaction of Mobile Movie Theme Games on movie-watching intention are also investigated. Online survey method with structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to examine the proposed model. As a result, a total of 268 valid respondents were collected for subsequent analysis. The results showed that perceived enjoyment of Mobile Movie Theme Game had a significant effect on satisfaction toward the game. Flow experience failed to impact both satisfaction and movie-watching intention. Finally, visual attractiveness of Mobile Movie Theme Game had significant effects on satisfaction toward the game and on movie-watching intention. Implications for both movie industries and mobile game industries are discussed.

1. Introduction
Movies are popular entertainment for many people worldwide, and so are online/mobile games. Recently, mobile games combined with movie themes, i.e., Mobile Movie-Theme Game (MMTG), have received great popularity among players and considered as a means of experiential marketing for movie promotion. The fascinating part about movie-themed games is the player’s self-integration into the game so he/she can have a vivid sense of virtually immersion. For example, in the movie game “Spider-Man: Friend or Foe”, a player is able to master Spiderman or one of his enemies, and inherits the character’s unique power. This study, therefore, combines literature from both marketing and IS theories to examine the impacts of experiential marketing elements of movie-theme games on satisfaction and movie-watching intentions.

Experiential marketing refers to the marketing of a product or service through consumer’ experience, so that consumers’ emotion can be linked with the product or service from their experiences [1]. In contrast to traditional marketing which focuses on gaining customer satisfaction and repurchase intention, experiential marketing aims to create emotional attachment and exciting sense so that consumers feel as being part of that experience [2] [3]. In the Internet situation, virtual experiential marketing relies on interfaces that served as proxies for real-world experiences, which can create a plentifully experiential environment through visual and audio stimulations to create an immersive experience [4].

While most attention has been paid in the online gaming research, relatively little attention has been given to mobile game research. The mobile game setting is quite different from the traditional online game in certain ways. Gamers can play mobile games on portable media players (e.g., smartphone or tablet) anytime and anyplace, no need to use controller nor keyboard. Mobile games tend to be small in scope and are built around a particular theme. Since the experience of game players has direct influence on their post-adoption intention, the main issue for game developers is to create satisfactory experience for the players. In addition, this study contributes to propose a conceptual framework to fill research gaps in mobile movie games and try to identify the potential effects of experiential marketing factors on users’ satisfaction and afterward movie-watching intention. The research framework is seen in Figure 1.

2. Theoretical background
Mobile Movie-Theme Game (MMTG) is one kind of mobile games, but the difference is that it is integrated with upcoming movie themes. In spite of abundant research on online games, little was known about mobile games and of the key determinants of mobile gamers’ behavioral intention, especially in
movie-theme games. The present study proposes experiential motives as predictors of satisfaction and further intention to watch movies. Specifically, this study is to explore the effects of experiential marketing on movie-watching intention with the case of Mobile Movie-Theme Game from both marketing and IS sides.

![Experiential Marketing Diagram]

**Figure 1. Research framework**

### 2.1. Users’ satisfaction and behavioral intention

Marketing studies have constantly proposed that satisfaction has a significant influence on purchase behavior and decision-making. It is widely accepted that user satisfaction is a key motif for continuance intention, user loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and purchase intention [5] [6]. Even though some researcher pointed out that consumer satisfaction had little to do with consumer loyalty, because even some highly satisfied consumers still switch brands and suppliers [7]. Nevertheless, studies of Information system (IS) have supported the relations between user satisfaction and IS continuance behavioral intention. Bhattacherjee [5] proposed a “post-acceptance model of IS continuance,” which proposed that users’ IS continuance intention is mainly determined by their satisfaction with previous IS use. That is, users with higher levels of satisfaction are most likely to have stronger intentions to reuse the systems in the context of an online environment.

Note that IS users’ continuance decisions are similar to consumers’ repurchase decisions because they both follow an initial (acceptance or purchase) decision. Past IS studies of mobile services support the positive relationship between customer satisfaction and post-purchase intention [8] [9]. In this study, we defined satisfaction as users’ satisfaction as the total consumption perception when gamers use mobile movie-theme games. In addition, continuance intention in this study is defined as gamers’ movie-watching intention after playing the mobile game with the same movie theme and characters in the game. We assumed that gamers’ purchase decisions towards movies are activated by the experience of playing the movie-theme games. This study adopted behavioral intention which is well justified because the use of behavioral intention is approximated or projected actual behavior from both research and managerial perspectives for their strong correlation [10] [11]. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

**Hypothesis 1:** Satisfaction with movie-theme games positively influences movie-watching intention.

### 2.2 Experiential marketing

Schmitt [12] proposed that the strategic experiential module is the assessment elements of customer experience. He classified customer experience into five modules: sense, feel, think, act, and relate experiential elements. In the online game environment, sense refers to image design (characters or image design), and sound design (e.g., 3D sound effect). Feel related to emotional delight in which players feel delight and satisfaction during the game process. The features of think experiential module reflect the challenge, interest, or difficulty during the games process. Act refers to the quality or security-related services (e.g., customer service). Finally, relate experiential module points to personal interaction with other players or sense of fulfillment.

The goal of experiential marketing is to establish users’ connection with the offering product based on both emotional and rational responses. To achieve the object, the created experience should include personal relevance, novelty, surprise, learning, and engagement [13]. In reviewing the literature on online gaming and experiential marketing, along with the features of mobile movie-theme games, this study selected three experiential factors (i.e., flow, enjoyment, and visual attraction) and investigated their impacts on satisfaction of movie-theme games and movie-watching intention.

#### 2.2.1. Flow


Previous online game research had identified flow as one of experiential motives to play online games [14] [15]. Csikszentmihalyi [16] refers the concept of flow as a state in which someone focuses on an enjoyable activity completely and perceived balance between skills and challenges. Thus, flow experience is related to the perceived levels of challenges and skills. Novak et al. [17] conceptualized online flow as a cognitive state experienced while surfing websites. Whether an individual becomes so deeply immersed in the Web and evokes flow experience depend on his/her levels of skill, challenge, attention, and interactive. Thus, we postulated the concept of flow resembling to the main features of “think” experiential component [12].

Online games have many features to encourage flow states through inducing player concentration and sense of control, for example, immediate feedback to player actions and self-integration with the game [18] [19]. Specifically, an appropriate level of challenge makes online gamer continuously motivated and engaged in the game [20] [21]. If an individual is continuously immersed in the state of flow while playing online games, he/she has more desire to retain that flow state [22]. Previous studies indicated a strong relationship between online flow and subsequent online behaviors [23] [24]. O’Cass and Carlson [24] confirmed that flow experience will enhance positive perceptions towards the website, and lead to consumer satisfaction. In addition, Choi and Kim [14] found that gamers will continue to play online games if they have an optimal experience; thus, flow state tends to influence online gamers’ continuance intention. As in the case of mobile movie-theme games, we posit that gamers’ flow state will lead to their satisfaction toward that game, and subsequent online behaviors [23] [24], i.e., inducing their desire to watch the movie which they have integrated and immersed in while playing games. Thus, we have the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a: Flow positively influences satisfaction towards movie-theme games.

Hypothesis 3b: Flow positively influences movie-watching intention.

2.2.2 Perceived enjoyment

The second experiential motive, perceived enjoyment, appears like the notion of “feel” (i.e., delight or satisfaction) in Schmitt’s [12] strategic experiential modules. Perceived enjoyment is defined as the extent to which user participates in an online game and perceives pleasurable, exciting, enjoyable, and fun [25] [26]. This intrinsic motive is a key driver to play online game, and is an influential factor of online consumer behavior [27] [28].

Online gaming needs an individual’s investment of time. In the meantime his/her enjoyable experiences can be induced [27], which in turn produces favorable attitudes toward future behavior. Some studies indicate that perceived enjoyment serves as a kind of hedonic value which affects an individual’s attitude and intention toward using information technology [29] [30]. From the extended ECM (expectation confirmation model), the expectation of a pleasurable experience through the use of information systems (IS) plays a pivotal role in determining user satisfaction and continuance intention toward the target IS [31] [32] [33] [34].

Prior studies have indicated that hedonic experience significantly influences attitude and intention toward playing an online game [35] [36]. Theoretically, when the experience of playing a game is pleasurable and fun, users will anticipate the same pleasure and enjoyable experience when participating similar behavior [36]. A player’s achievement or fulfillment of a hedonic experience will influence afterward desire to return to that game. In the other hand, when a player’s experience does not meet his/her expectation, this individual may switch to another game. Hence, we predict that perceived enjoyment is a key motive for playing mobile movie-theme games, and enhance players’ satisfaction towards adopting movie-theme games and desire for related activities, such as watching the movie. Thus, we postulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4a: Perceived enjoyment positively influences satisfaction towards movie-theme games.

Hypothesis 4b: Perceived enjoyment positively influences movie-watching intention.

2.2.3 Thematic attractiveness

In contrast to traditional marketing which focuses on gaining customer satisfaction, experiential marketing creates customers’ emotional attachment [37]. Zaltman [38] explains the sensory/emotional elements as total experiences which have a greater impact on shaping consumer preferences than the features of products or service. In the online game environment, “sense” refers to the quality of game-related designs, such as image design, sound design, characters design, and animation design [39] [12]. It can stimulates gamers’ motivation and add value to games through aesthetics or excitement [12]. Aesthetics is the visual appearance of the interface as it is consistent with the theme designs, and thus can
intrinsically attract gamers’ attention, stimulate curiosity, and cause interest or pleasure [40].

Prior studies have emphasized that the importance of visual and aural attractiveness can provide an impression and fun on the gaming activity. Consequently, such visual and acoustic attractiveness leads to favorable attitude and stimulate further game-playing [41]. As in the case of mobile movie-theme games, player’s self-integration with the layout design of movie themes can produce gamers’ emotional effects and arouse their responding to the game playing through cues. This thematic attractiveness (e.g., layout designs, sounds, and animations) which accompanies movie game playing experience will enhance the stickiness of the game [42], and thus will influence a player’s attitude and behavioral intention towards that movie theme-game or that movie itself [43]. The attractive movie themes help to produce a rich sensory environment, making a memorable experience. Thus, two more hypotheses were made:

Hypothesis 5a: Visual attractiveness positively influences satisfaction towards movie-theme games.

Hypothesis 5b: Visual attractiveness positively influences movie-watching intention.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data collection and sample

The present study employed online survey method to collect data from two major universities in Taiwan. Taiwan excelled in the areas of mobile network coverage and Internet and telephony, ranking tenth in Networked Readiness Index (NRI) among 144 economies, and second among Asian Pacific countries in 2013; therefore, Taiwan is appropriate to the study of mobile games. In addition, student subjects from universities can be viewed as one of the major target markets in mobile services [44]. According to a survey on mobile usage conducted by Institute for Information Industry, an authentic organization in Taiwan, more than half of heavy users on mobile devices and services are young adults with a maximum of 30 years of age [45]. This would suggest that university students as well-educated consumers place considerably higher demands on mobile services in their daily life.

Participants were recruited over the Internet through two major universities in Taiwan. Internet recruitment involved posting an invitation to participate on several online communities of university departments (e.g., Facebook, online message boards) and through email invitations. Participants were directed to the survey website to complete the online survey questionnaire. Specifically, the respondents must have experiences on playing mobile movie-theme games.

The questionnaire consists of three parts. First, after a short brief greeting and research purpose statement, students were directed to recall a certain mobile movie-theme games and target on one which they have played with the highly frequency recently. The second part comprises of survey items related to research purpose. The final part was demographic information such as age, sex, and so on. Respondents were given the option to decline and could select to withdraw from the survey at any time.

Two months after the online questionnaire was posted, a total of 268 valid respondents were collected. Male and female students made up 60% and 40% of the sample, respectively. Most of the respondents ranged in age from 18 to 24 years old; and about 70% of respondents used Android operation systems. Note that most of respondents (73.1%) spent at least 30 minutes on movie-theme games daily.

3.2 Measurement

Following previous literature and validated instruments, research items based on a 7-point Likert scale were drawn up and modified to measure the constructs. All measures with anchors ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” A backward translation technique (with items translated from the original English scale into Chinese, and then back into English) was used. During the translation process, any discrepancies between the two language versions were compared and resolved. To address face validity, three business professors were asked to refine the questionnaire. Based on their feedbacks, some items were reworded to fit the research purpose. The result of pretest provides a first assurance of validity of the scale items.

Consistent with previous research addressing technology acceptance, 4 items of flow (FL) were drawn from Lee and Tsai [46]. Three items of perceived enjoyment (PE) were drawn from Koo [47]. Three questions for thematic attractiveness (TA) were adopted from Van der Heijden [48]. Four indicators for measuring satisfaction (SA) with the use of movie theme games were modified from Park and Lee [49]. Finally, three items of movie-watching intention (MW) were adapted from Park and Lee [49].

4. Empirical results

4.1 Measurement assessment
To assess the reliability and validity of the measures, a two-step approach structural equation modeling (SEM) was adopted. First, the measurement model was evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) accompanied by LISREL 8.54. All the fit statistics demonstrate that the measurement model has a satisfactory fit to the data with a chi square ($\chi^2$) of 283.33 (df = 125, $p < 0.001$) and other goodness of fit indices as follows: NFI = 0.98; NNFI = 0.98; CFI = 0.99; IFI = 0.99; GFI = 0.89; AGFI = 0.86; RMR = 0.056; RMSEA = 0.069. Additionally, the composite reliability (CR), measuring how consistently individuals respond to the items within a scale, provides evidence for the existence of internal reliability (ranging from 0.85 to 0.94). All the variables also demonstrated significant positive inter-correlations from 0.50 to 0.80. It also shows the means, standard deviation, and the square root of the AVE on the diagonal values.

Convergent validity was statistically achieved in two ways. First, CR and AVE (average variance extracted) for each construct exceeded 0.7, indicating that the items explained more variance in the underlying construct than the measurement error did [50]. Discriminant validity is completed if the square root of the average variance extracted for each construct is greater than the correlations between it and other constructs. The square roots of AVE were all greater than the off-diagonal elements in the corresponding rows and columns. Therefore, it can be concluded that the instrument had proper convergent and discriminant validity.

All the measures were self-reported by the same respondents; therefore, there is a potential problem of the occurrence of common method variance (CMV). Recently, some researchers have used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) as a test of CMV. If the fit of one-dimensional model is worse than that of the measurement model, this suggests that the common method variance does not appear a serious threat [51]. The results show that the fit of one-dimensional model is considerably worse than those of measurement model; therefore, the issue of CMV is less concerned in this study.

4.2 Results of the structure model

A structural equation model was adopted to test hypotheses proposed. All fit measures in the structural model had a satisfactory fit to the data ( = 283.33; NFI = 0.98; NNFI = 0.98; CFI = 0.98; IFI = 0.98; GFI = 0.89; AGFI = 0.86; RMR = 0.056; RMSEA = 0.069). Next, by examining the standardized path coefficients, we found that three out of eight paths are significant: paths from perceived enjoyment to satisfaction, and from thematic attractiveness to both satisfaction and movie-watching intention (Hypotheses 3a, 4a, and 4b were supported).

To our surprise, the results failed to support other hypotheses. First, the effect of satisfaction toward movie-theme games on movie-watching intention was not supported ($\beta = 0.12, p > 0.05$). The result suggests that player satisfaction toward movie-theme games does not increase his/her desire to watch that movie. Next, users’ flow experience toward playing movie games was not significantly influenced his/her satisfaction toward movie games and movie-watching intention ($\beta = 0.06, p > 0.05; \beta = 0.11, p > 0.05$, respectively). Notably, hypotheses 1, 2a, and 2b were not supported. Finally, contrary to our hypothesis (H3b), perceived enjoyment had no significant effect on movie-watching intention ($\beta = 0.03, p > 0.05$).

Consistent with our expectations, the confirmation of H3a ($\beta = 0.46, p < 0.001$) suggests that players are more likely to feel satisfaction toward the mobile movie game if they perceive enjoyable while playing the game. The results of testing H4a and H4b demonstrate that both hypotheses are fully supported ($\beta = 0.43, p < 0.001; \beta = 0.40, p < 0.001$, respectively). The findings identified thematic attractiveness as an important antecedent of satisfaction toward movie game, and as the only influential factor affecting user intention to watch that movie. Therefore, hypotheses 3a, 4a, and 4b were supported at the 0.001 level of significance.

Furthermore, the paths from perceived enjoyment and thematic attractiveness explained 79% of the observed variance in satisfaction toward movie games. More importantly, the sole path from thematic attractiveness explained 36% in movie-watching intention.

5. Discussion

This study revealed that the satisfaction of mobile movie games can be predicted by experiential factors ($R^2 = 0.79$). Perceived enjoyment and thematic attractiveness of mobile movie games significantly affected users’ satisfaction to play the movie games. To keep players’ satisfaction, the design of movie games must make players feel pleasurable and enjoyable. Besides, the animation and layout of mobile games must be relevant to movies, so as to attractive players’ attention and interest. Notably, contradicting to our expectation, the results of this study indicated that flow experience of movie games does not enhance users’ satisfaction. That is, flow experience is not an important predictor of satisfaction toward playing mobile movie games.
Without the use of controller or keyboard, the design of mobile games is simpler than that of online games used on computers. One problem is that users get bored easily with a certain mobile game over time. Especially, most mobile games are free to play, but with limited times of free playing. A player may feel upset if he/her is so absorbed in the mobile game but is forced to stop playing unless he/her makes in-game purchases to progress in the game.

Thematic attractiveness was the only determinant of movie-watching intention. Neither other experiential factors of move games nor satisfaction significantly influenced users’ intention to watch that movie. Indeed, there are limitations of time and space. Usually, the release of movie-themed games is earlier than that of movie does. Satisfied gamers may make in-game purchase for in progress game, but the impetuous desire to watch that movie may decline after some time on the release of movie. After all, playing mobile games at hand is quite different from going out to buy a movie ticket. However, if a player becomes obsessed with a certain movie game and would like to continue playing it, he or she may not mind to wait and watch that movie after it is released.

6. Implications

6.1 Theoretical implications

For academic researchers, this study contributes to a theoretical understanding of the factors influencing users’ satisfaction toward movie-themed games. Mobile movie-theme games are different from computer-based online games. However, little is known about the influential factors of satisfaction toward movie games. The framework in this research is based on experiential marketing factors (i.e., flow experience, perceived enjoyment, and thematic attractiveness) which were derived from past studies. The result stressed the importance of perceived enjoyment and thematic attractiveness as key determinants. Furthermore, these two factors explained most of the variance in the satisfaction of playing mobile games.

Next, this study also found that the relationship between playing movie games and intention to watch movies is rather weak. There are many other factors influencing consumers’ intention to watch movies. Nevertheless, the study validated a sole but important experiential factor of movie games on movie-watching intention, namely thematic attractiveness. These findings may be used as guideline for further developing mobile movie games and movie promotion strategies.

6.2 Managerial implications

The findings from this study will be beneficial to the mobile game industry, especially mobile movie-theme games. The outcomes will clarify on the factors which affect the satisfaction of mobile games. Mobile game developers may consider enjoyment and thematic attractive as two main determinants when designing their mobile games or upgrading their products and in-game purchases. On the other hand, another important experiential factor namely flow experience failed to play an influence in mobile movie games. Designers should carefully sustain users’ flow state without interrupting the gaming flow, so that users’ satisfaction toward the game may be induced. After all, in addition to in-game purchases, game developers can make profits from advertisement.

Next, movie producers should pay attention to the thematic attractiveness of movie-theme games. Compared with traditional ways of movie campaigns with expensive costs, such as trailer, premiere, print advertisement in newspapers or magazines, or promotional tours and interviews, the free-to-play themed-movie game is a relative low cost and effective way to attract certain target consumers initiative. The more attractive theme design and relevant to the upcoming movies, the more knowledge and curiosity about the movie it will be for the users. Thus, mobile game developers should strive to build highly entertaining and thematic games, so that while players immerse themselves in the movie games, their sense of curiosity toward movie can be aroused. Developing a fantasy and attractive movie-theme game can be an effective win-win strategy for both mobile game and movie developers.

7. References


