For every “game over” there is a “play again”: Analysis of user preferences regarding 7th- and 8th-generation video games consoles

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a qualitative analysis of data obtained via semi-structured interviews on the preferences of users regarding 7th- and 8th-generation video games. The study evaluates the factors that influence consumption choices regarding these video games, with a focus on the Xbox 360, Nintendo Wii, PlayStation 3, Xbox One, PlayStation 4 and Wii U platforms. Nine profiles of consumption are identified, measured according user values and consumption preferences from the participants analyzed. The results of the analysis are arranged according to defined categories that describe the phenomena studied. The study concludes that factors such as love for the brand, technological convergence, social positioning, perceived risk, and attraction to the design of the equipment influence the process of use and consumption with respect to the technological devices studied.

1. Introduction

In 2012, a survey on the consumption behavior of iPad users in five Latin American countries was published by de Gammarano, Arruda-Filho, and Farias Filho (2012). This research aimed to explain consumer preferences in each of the five countries analyzed, using theories to describe the motivations for consumers to use technological devices in order to obtain social status (Katz & Sugiyama, 2006), justify their hedonic use through the utilitarian features of the devices (Okada, 2005), and the users’ interest in similar products (Gill, 2008; Harris & Blair, 2006; Nunes, 2000).

Since 2014, some of the phenomena that were identified in the above research have also been noted in relation to devices developed by the video games industry (Cabras et al., 2017; Greenhill et al., 2016; Sjöblom & Hamari, 2016; Teijen, 2017). In an exploratory phase of this research, studies concerning users of current video games identified several aspects pertaining to their justification and preference for using integrated devices, such as: “I bought a PlayStation 3 and now I can watch movies whenever I want!”, “When I finally buy an Xbox 360 with Kinect, I will finally be able to lose weight and have fun at the same time,” and “My Ps3 makes me [a] better [person].”

Such considerations are not related to the game itself, but to convergent factors within the devices that are not in line with the fundamental concept of video games, which is to develop an environment of diversion and game connectivity. In light of this, the current study seeks to answer the following question: What characteristics embedded in 7th-/8th-generation video game consoles motivate users to adopt one console over others?

The objective of this study is to enhance understanding in the field in order to assist retail companies to understand the use and

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consumption preferences and trends of their customers, with the aim of providing consumers in the games industry with products that meet their expectations and desires. In addition, this study is relevant to literature pertaining to the consumption behavior of users of entertainment technology, since such research is still relatively rare, even if there is an interesting relation with the studies of the digital self (Belk, 2013; Parkinson, Millard, O’Hara, & Giordano, 2017), social status (Eisenman, 2013), and emotional values versus rational consumption (Lee, Lee, & Garrett, 2013). In general, a practical implication of the research is related to the comprehension of tendencies to high technology management concerning aspects that enhance consumers’ perceived value and usage, embedded in new multifunctional products to the market (Chayko, 2014; Ozcan & Sheinin, 2015).

During the last decade, several concepts have been considered as responsible for choices and usage changes with respect to new technologies, with a focus on understanding the relationship between the discussed theories and the symbolic or real meanings for users of latest technologies, which are constantly evolving in the market. These concepts include technological convergence (Gill, 2008; Kim, Lee, & Koh, 2005; Lee et al., 2013; Nunes, 2000; Sawng, Lee, & Mottomaui, 2015), social positioning (Arruda-Filho, Cabusas, & Dholakia, 2010; Belk, 2016; Katz & Sugiyama, 2006; Watkins & Molesworth, 2012), devotion to brands (Ahuvia, 2005; Albert, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2013; Batra, Ahuvia, & Bagozzi, 2012; Mohammadian & Karimpour, 2014), interest in the design of products (Nichols, 2013; Cotroneo, 2005), and risk perception (Lin, 2008; Weber, 2001).

This study used semi-structured interviews as the data-collection method (Manzini, 2003, 2004). Original qualitative data from this type of research strengthens predicting the phenomena described, in such a way that the meanings and preferences can be interpreted in detail according to the perceptions and values indicated by users of the researched objects. In this qualitative scenario, we seek to understand the reason behind users’ decisions or changes related to symbols, status, prestige, and concepts involved in the scenario of the video game.

The present study is organized as follows. The next section details theories relevant to the phenomena under study, which pertain to predicting users’ use and explaining their post-purchase experiences related to their emotional characteristics (social values) and risk perceptions with regard to the product, in addition to theories of devotion, convergence, and design. Following this, we present the method employed in collection and analysis of the data, describing the procedure, codification, and categorization. Consequently, our analysis is detailed, along with a description of the categories of users identified, with each category given a title that reflects the users’ consumption profile. Finally, the conclusions are presented, along with the contribution of this study to the marketing field.

2. Theoretical background

Within the context of technological consumption, users often describe feelings of love, passion, and identification (a relationship) with respect to certain brands. These individuals present a deep emotional connection with the companies through self-identification with the values and characteristics that these organizations have, and the groups to which the individuals belong (sometimes known as tribes) have deep interactions with the brand (Ahuvia, 2005; Kunchamboo, Lee, & Brace-Govan, 2017; Mohammadian & Karimpour, 2014).

Users who connect emotionally with brands relate them with excellence in terms of the quality of the brands’ products, and defend the image and reputation of the idolized companies at all costs (Albert et al., 2013; Batra et al., 2012; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004). The passion that these users feel causes them to perceive products of other brands as inferior, and leads to an exaggerated sense of trust and loyalty in the preferred brand (Mohammadian & Karimpour, 2014). This group of users seeks to interact with individuals that share the same ideologies, and disagrees with the views of users who are not linked to their acclaimed brands (Okada, 2005). In addition, these brand devotees seek to pass on their ideas to the maximum number of people possible, with the aim of attracting more “followers” to their “cause” (Arruda-Filho, Cabusas, & Dholakia, 2008). These users feel that only devotees deserve to have the products of the elected brand, and embark on a journey to acquire all of the products that have already been launched by the brand, with the aim of demonstrating to other users that only those who love the brand can be fully aware of all the details linked to the worshipped company (Mohammadian & Karimpour, 2014).

While devotees seek aspects linked to self-identification within the values of the brands, there is a group of users that seeks to possess the products in order to stand out socially (Belk, 1988). These individuals seek to purchase both physical and (in the case of video games) dematerialized goods – intangible – (Belk, 2013, 2014, 2017), with the aim of standing out and projecting a certain image. Obtaining social status is the ultimate purpose for these users (Arruda-Filho et al., 2008).

With respect to games consoles, owning those with high-value integrated aspects, that present unique characteristics (Katz & Sugiyama, 2006), or that allow users to convey to other people aspects connected to their social identities, are also factors that motivate them to possess certain games consoles. In the virtual social environment, users seek to position themselves socially, using avatars to express themselves and to interact with other users in the online environment (Chayko, 2014). These avatars provide a visual representation of the players in the virtual context (Belk, 2013; Seo, Kim, Jung, & Lee, 2017), and can be modified so they are in line with the image the players wish to portray of themselves in cyberspace (Bennett, 2017; Peña, Khan, & Alexopoulos, 2016; Seo et al., 2017; Yee, 2014).

In this way, the interaction performed in virtual communities (Zhou, Zuo, Yu, & Chai, 2014) between avatars allows users to obtain items in the online environment that indicate to other individuals their status within the game. In addition, dematerialized goods (Belk, 2013, 2017) allow players to indicate the social groups to which they are connected by positioning them socially and influencing users’ preference for devices that can provide them with such aspects of social differentiation (Katz & Sugiyama, 2006). Thus, it is clear that social positioning is achieved through social interaction, and is of primary importance in analyzing the consumption behavior of this niche of users (Arruda-Filho, Lima, & Lennon, 2014).

Another element that should be taken into consideration when looking at the use and consumption preferences of video games
users (Junger, Marin, Facó, & Araújo, 2017) is technological convergence (Arruda-Filho et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2013; Nunes, 2000). The 7th and 8th generations broke paradigms in relation to how video games consoles are used (Nascimento, 2013). Previous generations were defined primarily by the titles and plots of the games; in addition, the consoles themselves were dedicated devices (with only one specific function) and did not diversify from their native form of interaction with users (Nascimento, 2013). However, the beginning of the 7th generation marked a new phase for the games industry and its users (Kozinets, 2008), where options emerged for a range of products and services that are integrated within a single device (Harris & Blair, 2006; Sawng et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2013), and thereby expanded the focus beyond the games themselves.

Thus, video games consoles have come to be recognized as multifunctional terminals (Gill, 2008), considering that services such as Netflix, internet access with specific browsers, and features that allow vast capacities for storage and media recognition (such as USB technology) have come to be integrated within them. This technological convergence is perceived by users as highly innovative, and provides them with a variety of usage options within a single device (Lee et al., 2013; Nunes, 2000; Sawng et al., 2015), meaning that the adoption of converged products is perceived as less risky compared to that of dedicated products (Harris & Blair, 2006).

In addition to the extended usage options provided by the new generations of games consoles, their designs have changed (Nichols, 2013). In the context of current consumption, technological devices are influenced directly by fashion trends (Katz & Sugiyama, 2006). This fact increases user satisfaction, given that it allows users to position themselves socially through their possessions (Belk, 1988) and obtain status in the context of specific groups (Arruda-Filho et al., 2008). These new generations of video games have also enabled users to harmonize the technology with the appearance of their living space (Nichols, 2013); designs that combine efficiency and elegance (Cotroneo, 2005) to draw users’ attention and act as a factor that complements the use of these devices.

In addition to the above factors that influence predictions of the usage and adoption of technologies by enthusiasts within the video games industry, we observe that risk perception is also considered in the literature as a variable that influences users’ choices with respect to certain technological options (Weber, 2001). For example, some users assign risk to investing large amounts in products that do not have a reputation for safety, despite their efficient operation and the satisfaction professed by their owners (Lin, 2008; Sweeney, Soutar, & Johnson, 1999; Weber, 2001). Brands have a great responsibility to ensure product safety for users (Lin, 2008), and users tend to feel more inclined to choose products from brands that have an established reputation and no history of problems in the consumer market (Sweeney et al., 1999). Otherwise, the perception of risk can influence consumers to purchase products that are perceived as less risky in relation to the investment made.

3. Semi-structured interviews

We initially sought to use netnography to identify the values and interests of video game users and consumers; however, due to the low expressiveness of Brazilian users of technologies in blogs and discussion forums, semi-structured interviews were considered a more suitable means of data collection (Manzini, 2003, 2004). Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews is of great value to investigations of consumption, since it is possible to identify in-depth meanings and relations that users perceive on the basis of their choices and values (Boni & Quaresma, 2005; Flick, 2004).

We created a semi-structured interview guide comprising 25 questions, which were based on the theoretical constructs and literature detailed above. We conducted a pre-test with two participants in order to identify any difficulties in terms of, for example, ill-defined concepts or an excess number of questions in the interview (Manzini, 2003). Several changes were implemented on this basis, including the order of questions, in order to make the interview more dynamic and effective; the number of questions, which was reduced; and the composition of questions, which was modified for clarity. The main interview was thereby streamlined in terms of the quality and number of questions. The final interview comprised 22 questions: five related to player’s preferences with respect to their video game console(s); 12 pertained to the self, based on the above-described theories regarding devotion, risk perception, design preference, social positioning, and technological convergence; and five related to the user’s profile.

The interviewees were contacted through the social media platform Facebook (Netnographic Technique) (Kozinets, 2002, 2010). They were all members of specific groups that have experience with the intense use of video games. Notifications were posted about the present research on 12 Facebook pages (see Table 1) that focus on video games as a key theme of discussion. The posts contained a brief summary of the research plan, the institutional affiliation of the researchers, and a request/invitation for the group members’ participation. Those interested in participating were asked to respond to the post and express their agreement to be contacted, and we then scheduled the interview (date, time, and place).

The requisite number of interviewees had not been defined prior to conducting the study. The aim was to identify a large quantity of essential details related to consumers’ preferences and use of video games. Therefore, the scheduling of new interviews was only halted when saturation was reached in terms of the collected data; that is, when the answers provided by the interviewees became repetitive.

3.1. Criteria for selecting interview participants

Users with different levels of experience with video games were selected, from casual players (light users) who played from three to five hours per week, to high-performance users (extensive users) who played for more than 15 h per week.

The objective was to select users that interacted constantly with other users via online social media. These players had to have some kind of virtual avatar or virtual profile on networks such as PlayStation Network, Nintendo Network/MiiVerse or Microsoft LIVE in order to be selected for the study. The interviewees also needed to have extensive experience with the equipment; that is, be fully
Table 1
Primary data related to the semi-structured interviews.
Source: Authors’ own elaboration (2016).

| Digitalgames Brasil | https://www.facebook.com/AdrianoC25 |
| Nintendo Wii U Manaus | https://www.facebook.com/groups/wiumanaus/ |
| Wii U Brasil | https://www.facebook.com/groups/wiiicial/ |
| Wii U Pai Déspua—Belém Pará | https://www.facebook.com/groups/141862252690192/ |
| Wii e Wii U Novos e Usados (BELEM/PA – City in Brazil) | https://www.facebook.com/groups/165092145132441/ |
| Wii U Belém | https://www.facebook.com/groups/149918575166294/ |
| [Pan Games] Compartilhamento (Sharing) | https://www.facebook.com/groups/295145037282560/ |
| PS3 e XBOX—Belém (Vendas e Trocas*) | https://www.facebook.com/groups/387663141326221/?ref=ts&fref=ts |
| PS4 e XBOX ONE—Belém (Vendas e Trocas*) | https://www.facebook.com/groups/190033054519648/?ref=ts&fref=ts |
| Games PS4 XBOX ONE Wii-U PC (VENDA E TROCA*) | https://www.facebook.com/groups/697116473692794/?ref=ts&fref=ts |
| Xbox Belém | https://www.facebook.com/groups/482106151819946/?ref=ts&fref=ts |
| Classificados dos games**—ps3-ps4-xbox one- xbox360-psvita-wiiu-3ds | https://www.facebook.com/groups/ClassificadosdosGames/?ref=ts&fref=ts |

Notes: Translations: ‘New and used; **‘Sales and trading; ***‘Classified ads for games.

knowledgeable with respect to the features within the devices. Finally, the individuals had to use video games for pleasure, fun, and utilitarian purposes, among others, as this ensured heterogeneity in terms of usability and the groups’ perceived values.

3.2. Interviews

A total of 11 interviews were conducted (Table 2), five of which were carried out in person, and recorded with a video camera, and six of which were administered electronically, via internet, in real time, using Skype. Using this latter tool enabled people from different regions to be contacted, and thereby overcome barriers linked to geographical distance, in addition to increasing diversification of the interviews as it allowed people from different geographical market segments (e.g., São Paulo and Manaus) to participate.

The interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees, and each recording was analyzed at least five times. We considered the behavior of the participants during the dialogs, such as vocal tone and facial expressions (Saunders, 2011). Any areas that highlighted the users’ specific behaviors with respect to their positions and experiences were transcribed, interpreted, and inserted into our analysis of the categories, with the aim of deepening our understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The selected fragments in this initial analysis were displayed in a file containing 36 pages that formed a database of the semi-structured interviews. This data was again evaluated and categorized into a document of four pages (reduced analysis), with the aim of selecting only the comments that were considered to be the most relevant to the topic at hand. Lastly, the passages from the interviews were integrated into the analysis of categories, thereby deepening our understanding of user preferences within the video games industry.

4. Prediction of use and value perception of video games

The interviews are analyzed below with the objective of clarifying the consumption profiles constructed and further elucidating

Table 2
Primary data regarding interview participants.
Source: Authors’ own elaboration (2016).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Codename</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Video game console owned</th>
<th>Time of use</th>
<th>Duration of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>IW</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Xbox 360</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>0:37:48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>JS</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>University(attendng)</td>
<td>Xbox 360</td>
<td>2 years and 3 months</td>
<td>0:26:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>University(attendng)</td>
<td>PlayStation 3</td>
<td>1 year and 5 months</td>
<td>1:01:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>DF</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>PlayStation 4</td>
<td>1 year and 1 month</td>
<td>0:33:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>ES</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>PlayStation 3</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>0:48:36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>SM</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>PlayStation 3</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>0:52:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>FM</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>PlayStation 3</td>
<td>Bought at launch</td>
<td>0:58:51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>RC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Post-graduate</td>
<td>PlayStation 4</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>0:28:56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>LA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>University(attendng)</td>
<td>PlayStation 4</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>0:28:47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>AC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Xbox One</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>0:25:57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>FL</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Wii U</td>
<td>1 year, 1 month</td>
<td>0:30:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of minutes per interview</td>
<td>0:50:18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total time registered</td>
<td>9:13:13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the users’ preferences. Nine categories were established, and these are described in the analysis containing the order of the participants according to the interviews occurred, and each participants’ code name, age, and time in the recorded interview at which the quoted passage was mentioned (start and end).

The categories are defined by means of titles that reflect the identified profiles. All interviewees were male, Brazilian, and aged between 16 and 34. Their occupations varied from freelancers and students, to having jobs directly in the games industry. The categories are presented along with an explanation of the profile indicated, relating the theories that confirm with the performed evaluation. It is presented at the end of the user comment the order of the interview, as example P4 to describe participant 4 (Table 2), after this the console the user has, the codename, age and the time which the phrase was cited by each respondent.

4.1. Fiery passion: brand lovers

Users that are passionate about a certain brand are characterized as maintaining a sense of identification with the company worshipped (Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry, 1989). Therefore, these individuals seek to obtain a deep understanding of the history, values, and especially the product portfolio of the brand (including current releases and previous versions) in order to purchase multiple items and thereby demonstrate to other users that their intense affective relationship with the brand (Albert et al., 2013; Pimentel & Reynolds, 2004) is based on trust and a sense of self-identification with it (Albert et al., 2013). This fact is noted in the commentary below, in which the user demonstrates a previous long-term knowledge of the device.

I have the PlayStation 2, the PlayStation 1 (…) dude, I am a fan of Sony! I am a fan of Nintendo because of the nostalgia, but Sony for me is top notch. Their video games never gave me a problem (…).

(P5, PlayStation 3 user, ES, 18 years old, 04:26 to 05:44)

I (…) identified a lot with the Xbox 360 and, therefore, I thought that spending money to acquire another platform would not be viable at this moment. So, I decided to stick with the Xbox 360 and defend the 360.

(P1, Xbox 360 user, IE, 34 years old, 10:33 to 11:14)

This ends up being a phenomenon that happens. There are people who choose the “team” and people are influenced by the company. There are people who like Sony and will not come out of there, there are people who like Microsoft, and also [will] not come out of there, so there are those fights and discussions, “this is better! No, this is better! But this is better” (…) people create a love for the company.

(P3, PlayStation 3 user, DE, 22 years old, 18:02 to 19:29)

The people call me Sonysta, I only talk about liking Sony. If I could choose, I would choose PlayStation 4, no matter how much it costs. And if Sony continues releasing other video games, I’ll follow it, always Sony. So everyone calls me Sonysta, I do not give myself the title, I let them speak for me.

(P5, PlayStation 3 user, ES, 18 years old, 12:03 to 12:27)

These individuals seek to exalt the positive aspects of the products and to defend their beloved brand, remaining loyal even if the services or products have unsatisfactory aspects (Lu & Wang, 2008). In some cases, these people prove to be uncompromising when faced with different positions promoted by other users, due to the deep emotional connection that they have with their devices (Pichler & Hemetsberger, 2007).

These individuals dedicate a considerable amount of time and money to preserving their relationship with the brands, since they seek to consume all of the products launched by their beloved company. This involvement can also occur in the offline environment through the adoption of products/services and responses to the brand’s advertising, or through the online environment, in which its distributed memory (items, games, photos, videos, status, among other permanent elements the gamers leave in the web even when they are out of game) is preserved and/or expanded (Belk, 2013).

The possession of devices brought out by the venerated company assists in constructing the individual identities of users who show love for the brand (Anggraeni, 2015), giving meaning to their lives through a feeling of passion along with idolized goods (Ahuvia, 2005; Belk, 2013; Kunchamboo et al., 2017; Pichler & Hemetsberger, 2007). In addition, these individuals believe that the love they have for the brand makes them differentiated consumers. Therefore, they feel they have a status that defines them as loyal users, and as a result, know all the characteristics of the products linked to the idolized brand (Arruda-Filho et al., 2008).

Elements such as self-identification, behavior motivated by passion, long-term involvement, feelings of positivity, and increased confidence can be used as a way to recognize users who demonstrate having an exaggerated love for the brand (Albert et al., 2013; Batra et al., 2012; Mohammadian & Karimpour, 2014). Some even call themselves “Sonystas” to demonstrate their being part of a particular “tribe”.

4.2. Best 1: the search for social status

The intrinsic social factor pertaining to technological products is seen as an element that influences the decision process of consumers of 7th- and 8th-generation video games. This fact can be seen in the emotional bonds that users establish, not only with the brands and the devices, but also with the goods that these individuals own in the virtual atmosphere of games (Watkins & Molesworth, 2012).

I buy items to identify myself and be better than the next person (…) in terms of everything. Get in front, eliminate[e] more
players, be everything. You want to be “the guy,” because in a group of 10 people you want to be the first always (...) I want people to recognize me, a self-affirmation, let’s say. (P1, Xbox 360 user, IE, 34 years old, 36:02 to 36:25)

Like it or not, this is a form of status, “Hey, that guy there has so many trophies.” (...) The guy is respected in the group, respected in the sense of saying: “Look, this guy is very good, you know how many trophies he has? I am still not there yet.”

(P3, PlayStation 3 user, 22 years old, 42:24 to 43:00)

I want to stand out and not be like everyone else. People are going to look at you and will respect you by the things that you are using, they will remember who you are.

(P6, PlayStation 3 user, SM, 16 years old, 45:02 to 47:49)

Like, since I have an Xbox 360, I am already part of the crew that has [an] Xbox, understand? For example, I won't mix with the crowd that has [a] PlayStation 3, because I don't know how it works.

(P2, Xbox 360 user, JS, 23 years old, 7:18 to 7:29)

Dematerialized elements present in the virtual environment of games, such as costumes, vehicles, accessories, weapons, trophies, and achievements, are used by avatars with the aim of transmitting aspects related to the user’s “self” within cyberspace (Belk, 2013; Seo et al., 2017). These characteristics can be confirmed by analyzing the comment above by a user who indicated that he strives to obtain status in the game environment, as it motivates him to expand aspects linked to his identity through the use of the brand (Belk, 2016) and through his dematerialized possessions (Belk, 2013).

The social identity of users can be constructed from elements that their avatar has in the game context. The expansion of the self through achievements and purchased items can differentiate users, highlighting them as powerful players who can be recognized by the visual characteristics that they present (Huang, 2012). Here, the users’ main goal is to obtain recognition and admiration in the online gaming environment and in the offline universe (in person) (Belk, 2013), as indicated by the comments provided by the above interviewees.

Users' social identities will also influence their choice with respect to which groups they integrate themselves into (Katz & Sugiyama, 2006). Users will defend their groups and will stereotype themselves as being part of heterogeneous groups that represent the values to which they are linked, as demonstrated by the comment above made by the user who indicated that he does not relate to individuals who do not own the same equipment as him.

4.3. The Swiss army knife e ect: users motivated by all-in-one products

Multi-function devices (Lee et al., 2013; Sawng et al., 2015) affect users' value perceptions as they consider their future use of the technological alternatives available on these devices. Thus, 7th- and 8th-generation video games are perceived as devices that provide several integrated features and decrease the cost of research and analysis/testing of functions present in dedicated products (with only one specific function). Therefore, these games consoles require little cognitive effort in terms of information processing in order for users to adopt them (Harris & Blair, 2006; Sawng et al., 2015).

Technological advancement has allowed companies in the gaming industry to break paradigms and offer various attractive features to users. Online social networking (e.g., Xbox LIVE, PlayStation Network, and MiiVerse), access to virtual content, video streaming services (e.g., Netflix), and the integration of video games into smartphones, tablets, and smartTVs are examples of software that has expanded the features of video games and enabled more expectations and desires of users to be met.

In terms of hardware, powerful processors capable of reproducing new formats of optical media, such as DVD (Nintendo), HD DVD (Microsoft), and Blu-Ray (Sony and Nintendo), combined with other devices such as HDMI, USB, SD card, hard drives with high storage capacity, WiFi controls, and so on, have changed users' perceptions in relation to the consoles' use.

The Blu-ray [player] counts a lot, because for you to have a Blu-ray device, it is cheap, for 300 reals you can have one. [And] I had the opportunity to have a Blu-ray on the launch of PlayStation 3, that is, it instantly offered me this at an affordable price, which at the time was US$600. And it was very cheap, because at that time a Blu-ray [player] cost more than 2000 reals.

(P7, PlayStation 3 user, FM, 31 years old, 02:14 to 04:16)

Way back, a video game [console] was only for games. Nowadays you can use it as a multimedia powerhouse in your living room. You can use Netflix, NBA TV, American TV sports apps that you can watch with.

(P9, PlayStation 4 user, LA, 21 years old, 03:20 to 03:39)

The Xbox One, because of its software, has more striking things than the PS4. Since it is interconnected with Microsoft, it has more apps, something that PS4 from Sony does not have. There is Skype that you can download straight onto Xbox One, it has the video editor, it has Twitch, all of this you can download straight to the console, something that PS4 does not allow.

(P10, Xbox One user, AD, 27 years old, 02:24 to 03:03)

The new technology that is integrated into 7th- and 8th-generation video games consoles has led them to be characterized by the users themselves as “central multimedia” and “entertainment stations.” This technology grants access to services such as YouTube, Spotify, Twitch, and Skype, as well as various other functions that are integrated into a single technological device (Nunes, 2008), like a Swiss Army Knife that offers its users tools and resources for various purposes, which might be utilitarian, social, or even hedonic.

Because of the diverse usage possibilities that 7th- and 8th-generation video games offer to users, these individuals feel more
motivated to embrace these devices instead of using dedicated products (Han, Chung, & Sohn, 2009). This is because these converged devices have the features that most attract these consumers (Lee et al., 2013), as opposed to devices that do not have such characteristics (Sawng et al., 2015).

4.4. Bug risk: user security issues

It is notable from the interviewees’ statements that feelings pertaining to risk (Lin, 2008; Sweeney et al., 1999; Weber, 2001) inherent in acquiring certain devices relate mainly to concerns regarding poor performance or technical defects in these devices.

The Xbox [had] the three red lights. My cousin had the Xbox, not only him but a couple of people bought the Xbox at that time. Of the people that I knew, until the time I changed my PlayStation 3 because of its burnout, they had already exchanged [their Xbox] two, three times because of the three red lights. And that is why I decided to go back to a PlayStation 3.

(P7, PlayStation 3 user, FM, 31 years old, 07:32 to 07:51)

It was a fact that at the time that I bought the PlayStation 3, the Xbox had the problem of the three red lights still. I had already lost two XBOXes, so I [did not want] to lose another one, I [decided to] buy the PlayStation 3. Until today it has not shown any problems! We did not know for a fact how long we could play (…) [a certain] video game [with an Xbox], because [the Xbox might] overheat and [show] the three red lights—like this [gesturing an explosion]—in the blink of an eye. So I think the PlayStation 3 gives me this security.

(P5, PlayStation 3 user, ES, 18 years old, 02:59 to 03:45)

Not only do the hardware defects represent a point of uncertainty for users who wish to adopt 7th- and 8th-generation video games, but awkwardness in the use of devices can cause aversion in relation to their acquisition. An example we observed was one in which users of Sony’s PSMove, which involves a motion sensor that is similar to a television control and is attached to the wrist by a thin cord, feared that the intense movements executed during the game might cause the equipment to loosen, thereby giving rise to accidents and damage (Lin, 2008). This caused many individuals to prefer devices that offer more security during gaming sessions.

It brings benefits and is a differential; for example, compared to the other [consoles, the PlayStation 3 offers] Imotion [PSMove] which a person has to hold. Pow, what if I drop it and break it? So, with the Xbox, my own body is the control.

(P2, Xbox 360 user, JS, 23 years old, 4:32 to 5:58)

As shown above, some users perceived a very specific risk in relation to the Xbox 360. This is due to the first Xbox 360 not having been developed to support environments with high temperatures and also not supporting several continuous hours of use, which caused the temperature of the electronic components to rise and therefore broke the welds, causing irreparable damage to these devices.

Due to this problem, many users ended up adopting other video games consoles, because they believed that it is safer to adopt devices that do not have the possibility of presenting such a “feared” defect as seen in the Xbox 360. Although the problem has been solved in updated versions of the Xbox, several users in our study were still reluctant to embrace the console from Microsoft due to this problem, which incites feelings of insecurity in the user (Lin, 2008; Sweeney et al., 1999; Weber, 2001).

4.5. It is not enough to be good, it has to look pretty: how design attracts users

Video games are also used as elements of decoration (Nichols, 2013), such that users select the equipment that best harmonizes with their home environment. Thus, such selection is based on the device’s design, because displaying equipment with sophisticated features attracts the attention of people who are unfamiliar with the device, and ensures user preference through its external appearance. This can be seen in the below statements from users who see the beauty of the console as a differential.

Usually people do not live alone, whether it is the teen with the family or the husband with the wife, and this detail is taken into consideration at the time of purchase, because nobody wants something ugly in their living room, in fact, nobody wants “clutter” in a living room, next to the TV, occupying space (…) and a good design [complements] the room, matching the room environment, the color of the TV, the cabinet, [and so on]. Either way, people are attracted by the design of the product.

(P3, PlayStation 3 user, DE, 22 years old, 27:33 to 28:32)

When we look at a product and look at the design, we end up focusing our attention on it, sometimes it is not the best cost–benefit, but we want it on the living room shelf. I remember the first image that came out of the PlayStation 3 (…) Sony introduced it as a technological monster, an imposing thing, it was all in the color “black piano”, it stood up (…) but of course, [now] it’s a beautiful console, everyone wants it.

(P3, PlayStation 3 user, DE, 22 years old, 25:05 to 27:20)

The PS4 is beautiful. (…) It is more beautiful than the PS3, it is easier now to incorporate into the living room. It is pretty, serves as a small decoration. It does not look like a video games [console]. It looks more like a “small” computer. Video games [consoles] were once more colorful, [but] not this one. Both are black, square, it is almost [like] a VCR. When people go in your house a VCR is already common, now it is the same thing with the video games [console].

(P8, PlayStation 4 user, RC, 26 years old, 12:10 to 13:09)
Thus, in the technologies industry, as in other industries, such as fashion, it is not enough for the device to be good—it also has to be pretty (Arruda-Filho et al., 2008) and generate pleasure to its possessor via displaying the equipment (Cotroneo, 2005). The 7th- and 8th-generation video games consoles have also managed to make the multi-function devices attractive. For this reason, many users characterize these products not as simple video games consoles (once defined as equipment for children) (Nichols, 2013), but now as “multimedia platforms,” leading users to prefer video games that have a more futuristic, modern, and serious archetype, and with the aim of also offering various functions in a single functional device.

4.6. Virtual relationships: interacting in digital pairs

The social interaction that occurs via this integration is directly linked to the way in which individuals relate within certain groups or social circles initiated within the virtual environment (Thibes & Mancini, 2013). In fact, such relationships can be intensified to the point of crossing the boundaries of virtual space, reaching the offline environment. Social relations established by players can occur through chat, which occurs in real time through text chat systems and voice messaging available through online networks, and/or through users’ avatars, which serve as an extension of the players’ selves within the virtual environment of the games (Belk, 2013; Seo et al., 2017).

My avatar only serves to represent me, he is a graphical representation for those who don’t know me personally (…). If I have a beard, I will put a beard on the avatar, for example (…). It is a graphical representation, more or less similar to me in real life (…). It is as if I was there, a part of me transferred to the video game, to the network. This motivates me to interact with people.

(P2, Xbox 360 user, JS, 23 years old, 23:30 to 24:49)

If there are five people with a PlayStation 3 and nobody has the Xbox, it is clear that we will use the PlayStation 3, because that is where everyone is! It is there that it will be the center of entertainment and fun at that moment. The community will lead us to the equipment and it does not matter which device [we use].

(P3, PlayStation 3 user, DE, 22 years old, 22:57 to 25:02)

I bought the Xbox One, but nobody [else] bought it. Everyone bought the PS4, so I was playing alone, that is why I bought the PS4. It was almost crucial. If [reasons for buying a console are] put in order of importance, I think that this fact of having friends [who use it] is in first place.

(P8, Xbox One user, RC, 26 years old, 07:15 to 07:48)

It can thus be noted that the number of friends who have the same equipment is a decisive factor with respect to the interaction in networks during gaming sessions; for example, in Miiverse, on PSN or LIVE. Thus, users prefer to adopt the console that the most members of their social circle has (Kozinets, 2008).

According to Chayko (2014), people use technological equipment to form social relations that allow them to establish a strong sense of community within the game. Peña and Hancock (2006) comment that the affective bond, rather than the (virtual or real) environment itself, is the motivating force that stimulates this category of users.

4.7. Technological simplicity

It was noted that the easy handling of controls (joypads/gamepads) is a relevant factor that influences the usage and adoption patterns of consumers of video games, since such ease of use in terms of players interacting with the games (in terms of controls, sensors, etc.) has been shown to be key in making these games more fun, interactive, and attractive (Jung, Kim, & Lee, 2014). The familiarity that these individuals have from prior experience with video game controls belonging to previous generations influences the process of adoption. This can be understood in relation to the line of PlayStation (1, 2, 3 and 4) gamepads titled Dual Shock, which achieved significant innovations in relation to integrated technological attributes (such as batteries rechargeable via USB cable; touch pad; Share button; input for headphones; mono speakers; and WiFi technology). Although minor modifications have been made to the original archetype, the same basic design has been retained, and this impacts the decisions made by consumers who have become accustomed to the pattern of controls developed by Sony.

Oh man, the control attracts me a lot because like I told you, the PlayStation 1 control was very good to use. It fits perfectly in the hand and the Dual Shock 2, which was from PlayStation 2, kept the same design [as the] Dual Shock 3 (…) Now the Xbox, dude, they never had a good control and when they had the chance to fix it, they were unable to and continue with the same control.

(P5, PlayStation 3 user, ES, 18 years old, 19:56 to 20:23)

The Wii U, I don’t like it, because I don’t like to play so differently (…) I am more classic. I do not like to move a lot, it’s too much for me, I prefer the [PlayStation] control.

(P8, PlayStation 4 user, RC, 26 years old, 06:08 to 06:19)

The control is important because it is what we use to handle the device (…) there are certain types of people who do not like certain types of control and will not buy because of that.

(P3, PlayStation 3 user, DE, 22 years old, 32:24 to 32:34)

Some users demonstrated a resistance to models of controls that they are not familiar with. They prefer to acquire video games with a control that is closest to the archetype to which they have already become accustomed. Factors such as the layout of buttons
and triggers, in addition to the size, weight, and control shape, influence users' adaptation to the controls, which can impact their performance during games.

It was also noted that several consumers preferred the Xbox 360 due to its controls, since it has characteristics that make it easy to handle as its size and shape fit the hands, while the layout of the buttons allows users to perform precise movements, making it ergonomic and easy to adapt to (Rupp, Oppold, & McConnell, 2013).

4.8. Justifying purchase

In terms of justification, some users stated that the interaction provided by the Xbox 360 allows them to schedule meetings to study, find friends, and even find a girlfriend. In the case of the PlayStation 3, it was stated that the console is useful for movie lovers, since the platform has the capacity to play movies in very high quality due to its compatibility with Blu-ray media, as well as several other formats of media files.

This accepted approval ratio due to the feelings of guilt that arise from expensive and/or hedonic consumption leads consumers to rationalize their expenses, and this is often based on the product's features (utilitarian values), instead of exalting its emotional reality (hedonic value) (Arruda-Filho & Biffignandi, 2016; Okada, 2005).

Today, you can have a group of friends playing, unlike before, where you had a video game and you did not interact. So you closed yourself to the world. Nowadays, you can very well be playing a video game and schedule to go out, to study, who knows you might start dating, you never know.

(P1, Xbox 360 user, IW, 34 years old, 16:25 to 17:07)

The console has Blu-ray, the control is lighter, and the battery works. The PS3 is lighter than the Xbox 360, [and] when I travel, I take it with me because it is smaller and lighter.

(P6, PlayStation 3 user, SM, 16 years old, 02:22 to 03:48)

Several users justified the use of certain games consoles due to the network-building capabilities offered by the interaction functions. The statement that new possibilities to make contacts or even find job opportunities may arise in moments of leisure, as in the environment of a soccer game or social club, was also raised by the users. Thus, usage of these devices was often justified by the fact that the new friendships built in the online environment can be useful for those seeking new business opportunities.

Many users who own the Xbox 360 console justified purchasing this appliance because of its Kinect motion sensor, developed for the Xbox 360 and Xbox One. The Kinect is attached to the Xbox; it recognizes movements via a camera and transmits them directly to the game, thereby transforming the user's body into a controller. This equipment was widely lauded by the players, even those who had other brands of game consoles, due to its innovative features that elevate the interaction between the player and the game.

4.9. Latest users

Games and video game consoles released into the market are desired by this group of users, many of whom wait anxiously for releases of games they are fans of, such as the continuation of franchises like Metal Gear Solid and God of War, which have drawn a huge fanbase due to their immersive scripts, fun gameplay, realistic graphics, and cinematographic plot.

Accessories such as the Kinect were also mentioned by several users due to its perceived innovativeness. When using the Kinect, the player can interact with the game using its body movements alone, unlike sensors provided by other game consoles, such as the Wii Remote (Nintendo Wii) and PlayStation Move (PlayStation 3), which, while considered motion sensors, still have a control (which is shaped like a small bat).

I bought a Kinect more because of my girlfriend (...) and because it was launched! It is the most modern (...) and this attracted me because of this innovation, where you can move with your hands. Sometimes you are with the control far away, and if you wave to the Kinect, you can move the cursors, or use voice command and ask for, I don't know, Xbox videos! Even if you are far away (...) sometimes you are lazy, [so] that is pretty cool.

(P2, Xbox 360 user, JS, 23 years old, 4:32 to 5:58)

The groups that I am a part of are present on Facebook. There, we share information, we [discuss] errors, “bugs,” defects, things related mainly to PlayStation 4. We also exchange information about games, everyone shares information about errors that we find in the video game, in the control and also try to help when we can.

(P4, PlayStation 4 user, DF, 29 years old, 10:24 to 11:06)

News conveyed in the media in relation to the launching of games excites innovators, making them wish to be the first to test the technical specificities of the games with the intention of uncovering new things present in elements such as the story, script, and aesthetics of the game. Besides being the first to adopt the equipment during its launch period, these users are also responsible for detecting early failures, such as system errors, defects related to hardware (such as overheating), or even information related to inappropriate use of the equipment.

From the dissemination of such information identified by innovators, other users can become informed and thus decide whether they will adopt the product. Thus, it was noted that innovative users influence the life-cycle continuity of products on the market (Rogers, 2003). Therefore, for these players, the thrill is in being the first to experience the newest and most advanced video game technologies (Arruda-Filho et al., 2010).
5. Conclusion

This study aimed to identify factors that influence the consumption patterns of users of 7th- and 8th-generation video games. It was determined that factors related to technological convergence provide a range of new possibilities for users of these devices. These new integrated elements have enabled several paradigms related to the gaming market to be restructured. Video games consoles are no longer seen merely as devices that play games. Rather, they now present a multitude of new technological features that attract a large number of users who are eager to experience the functionality of these products.

In this article, we used semi-structured interviews following the netnographic technique to collect and analyze the data, with the goal of obtaining information regarding the usage preferences of the individuals concerned. All interviewees demonstrated extensive experience with the objects studied (which comprised the Xbox 360, Nintendo Wii, PlayStation 3, Xbox One, PlayStation 4, and Wii U).

From the analysis, nine categories of consumers were identified, based on their motivations related to specific characteristics present in the studied video games. These categories were related to technological convergence, equipment design, social positioning due to the virtual social interaction, the possession of dematerialized goods in the online environment, love for the brands, and perception of risk linked to possible defects displayed by products and the insecurity that certain devices can generate due to inappropriate handling. These categories are presented as factors that motivate consumers to adopt certain 7th- and 8th-generation video games.

In relation to the marketing contributions of this study, it was observed that the identified characteristics in relation to the profiles of use and users' consumption can assist businesses in identifying tactics to gain competitive advantage in the retail sector, since companies can develop products based on trends in the technology market in the coming years. One of the main practical contributions is related to the high technology management environment, regarding the perception and interest of consumers' values, which can indicate to companies which attribute should be inserted in the future development of new products.

In conclusion, the main influencing factors when it comes to the adoption of specific games consoles over others comprise brand loyalty, the desire for social status, the wish to own several technologies integrated into a single device, the insecurity arising from perceived risk, and the inclination to have a fashionable device in terms of design.

The present study is subject to limitations, which primarily relate to the gender of the interviewees, since only male users were interviewed. It is well known that women adhere strongly to trends in the gaming market (Nichols, 2013), and companies have invested in specific features, games, and functions to reach this particular audience. Therefore, a study aiming to identify the motivations for consumption by female video game users would be timely, given the capture context of new consumers that companies have experienced. Other methodologies may also be adopted, such as netnography based on specific websites and blogs concerning videogames usage and experiments with specific consumers, in order to assess whether the factors described in this study also arise in other research contexts.

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