THE IMPACT OF GAMERS' EMOTIONAL CONSUMPTION EXPERIENCE ON GAME LOYALTY

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ABSTRACT

In the context of the rapidly evolving online gaming industry, emotional consumption behavior, such as gifting virtual items and engaging in social interactions, has become a central part of player experience and monetization strategies. However, the psychological mechanisms linking emotional consumption to player loyalty remain underexplored.

This study aimed to examine the impact of emotional consumption experience on game loyalty, and to test the mediating roles of social identity and emotional value. Emotional consumption experience was conceptualized in four dimensions: sensory experience, emotional experience, relational experience, and enjoyment experience.

A quantitative research method was employed using a structured questionnaire distributed to online game players in China. A total of 900 questionnaires were issued, and 468 valid responses were collected through simple random sampling. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and AMOS, including reliability and validity testing, multiple regression analysis, and structural equation modeling (SEM).

The results indicate that emotional, relational, and enjoyment experiences have significant positive effects on game loyalty, while sensory experience does not. Both social identity and emotional value were found to partially mediate the relationship between emotional consumption experience and loyalty. These findings highlight the importance of emotional and social experiences in shaping long-term player engagement and provide new insights for both theoretical research and practical game design.

Keywords: emotional consumption experience, emotional value, social identity, game loyalty

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LIU XIAO

DECLARATION

I, LIU XIAO, hereby declare that this Independent Study entitled “THE IMPACT OF GAMERS' EMOTIONAL CONSUMPTION EXPERIENCE ON GAME LOYALTY” is an original work and has never been submitted to any academic institution for a degree.

(LIU XIAO)
Apr 16, 2025

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

In recent years, the global online gaming industry has witnessed rapid growth, not only in terms of revenue but also in the evolution of user engagement. Online games are no longer merely entertainment products; they are now complex social environments where players interact, build relationships, and engage in various forms of emotional consumption. Emotional consumption refers to the use of resources (e.g., time, money, virtual items) to satisfy emotional needs and establish social connections in digital environments (Li & Chen, 2021). In the context of gaming, this may include activities such as gifting virtual items to teammates, engaging in cooperative tasks, or participating in emotionally rewarding interactions.

With the rise of "free-to-play" models, emotional consumption has become a critical component of monetization and player retention strategies. Players often spend money not solely for functional advantages, but to express care, support, or social affiliation with other players (Hamari, 2015). These emotionally driven behaviors enhance player immersion, social bonding, and identity formation, which are all potential contributors to long-term loyalty.

Game loyalty, defined as a player's continued intention to engage with and recommend a game, is an essential metric for evaluating the success and sustainability of digital games (Choi & Kim, 2004). While previous studies have explored the roles of satisfaction, perceived value, and enjoyment in shaping loyalty (Yee, 2006), the emotional and social mechanisms underlying loyalty formation in gift-based and emotionally interactive game environments remain underexplored.

This study focuses on how emotional consumption experience influences game loyalty, with social identity and emotional value as mediating variables. Social identity refers to a player's sense of belonging to a gaming group or community (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), while emotional value captures the psychological gratification derived from emotional interactions (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). By investigating these relationships, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how emotionally meaningful interactions can foster sustained player engagement in digital platforms.

1.2 Questions of the Study

1. Does emotional consumption experience significantly influence game loyalty?

2. How does emotional consumption experience influence players' social identity in online games?

3. Does social identity significantly affect players' game loyalty?

4. Does social identity mediate the relationship between emotional consumption experience and game loyalty?

5. How does emotional consumption experience influence players' emotional value?

6. Does emotional value have a significant effect on game loyalty?

7. Does emotional value mediate the relationship between emotional consumption experience and game loyalty?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to explore how emotional consumption experience affects game loyalty of online game players. Specifically, this study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1) To explore the direct effect of emotional consumption experience on game loyalty.

2) To explore the effect of emotional consumption experience on social identity.

3) To explore the effect of social identity on game loyalty.

4) To examine the mediating role of social identity in the relationship between emotional consumption experience and game loyalty.

5) To explore the effect of emotional consumption experience on emotional value.

6) To explore the effect of emotional value on game loyalty.

7) To examine mediating role of emotional value in the relationship between emotional consumption experience and game loyalty.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the relationship between emotional consumption experience and game loyalty of online game players, with a particular emphasis on the mediating roles of social identity and emotional value. The scope of the study is defined as follows: Emotional consumption experience is measured through four key dimensions: sensory experience, emotional experience, relational experience, and enjoyment experience. The outcome variable is game loyalty, and the two mediators examined are social identity and emotional value. A quantitative research method was employed using a structured questionnaire distributed to online game players in China. A total of 900 questionnaires were issued, and 468 valid responses were collected through simple random sampling.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Theoretical Significance: First, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on emotional consumption by applying it to the context of online games, where traditional consumption motives are increasingly influenced by social and emotional interactions rather than functional needs alone. While prior studies have examined factors such as perceived value, enjoyment, and satisfaction, few have specifically addressed how emotional consumption experiences—including gifting and relational behavior—shape game loyalty.

Second, the study enriches experiential marketing theory by operationalizing emotional consumption through four dimensions: sensory, emotional, relational, and enjoyment experience. This multidimensional approach provides a more nuanced understanding of how players experience value emotionally and socially.

Practical Significance: From a practical perspective, the findings help game developers, platform operators, and marketers design better strategies to enhance player engagement and retention. Understanding that players derive loyalty not just from gameplay quality but from emotional bonding and social experiences enables companies to design features that encourage interaction, gifting, and emotional expression.

For instance, designing reward systems, social missions, or emotional gifting features can promote both emotional satisfaction and community building. Additionally, these insights may guide personalized marketing efforts that appeal to users' emotional motivations, increasing both consumption and player commitment.

Overall, the study serves as a valuable reference for those seeking to optimize user experience, increase player lifetime value, and strengthen loyalty in the competitive online gaming industry.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Sensory experience refers to the player's emotional or perceptual response triggered by sensory stimuli during the consumption of in-game items, gear, or decorations, either their own or others'. This includes tangible stimuli such as graphics, visual effects, and auditory design, as well as intangible consumption atmospheres within the game.

Emotional experience refers to the affective or emotional changes that players experience during emotional consumption activities within the game, such as excitement, joy, or empathy with game content or characters.

Relational experience refers to the connections players form with others during emotional consumption in games. Through social interaction, players find a sense of social identity, character alignment, and belonging in the game community.

Enjoyment experience refers to the sense of satisfaction, pleasure, novelty, and delight players derive from emotional consumption behaviors in games. Based on

Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow experience, enjoyment can be amplified through positive emotional stimulation, allowing players to become immersed and gain immense pleasure from gameplay (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

Social identity is defined as the extent to which a player perceives themselves as a member of a particular social group (e.g., gaming community) and derives emotional and value-based significance from this membership. In games, players may generate group identity, character identification, and recognition through repeated interaction with community members (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Emotional value refers to the emotional benefit or affective utility that players perceive from their consumption experiences in games. This includes feelings of happiness, love, passion, or satisfaction that arise from purchasing or using game-related products and services (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001).

Game loyalty refers to the player's consistent willingness to continue engaging with a specific game, even in the face of environmental changes or competing alternatives. It includes both attitudinal loyalty (emotional attachment) and behavioral loyalty (repeat play and recommendation) (Oliver, 1999; Choi & Kim, 2004).

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Consumer Experience

The attention and discussion surrounding consumer experience are closely intertwined with the global economic development landscape. Prior to 1982, research into consumer experience was in a disordered and ambiguous state, primarily because the marketplace was product-centered. The emergence of consumer experience theory, rooted in economics, gradually flourished with contributions from renowned early economists such as Adam Smith and Karl Marx, who indirectly paved the way for consumer experience studies.

With the end of World War II and the subsequent global economic recovery, many scholars began focusing on the field of consumer experience. Norris (1941) was the first to propose the concept of "consumer experience" academically. He argued that the role of products lies not merely in their functional characteristics, but in the experience they deliver to consumers. He emphasized that product experience significantly impacts the perceived value by customers. Meanwhile, some scholars offered fragmented and scattered theoretical interpretations of consumer experience, lacking a systematic framework.

Consumer experience theory gradually gained scholarly attention in the 1980s. Holbrook et al. (1982) published the article entitled. The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun, proposing the 3Fs—fantasy, feeling, and fun—to describe consumption experiences originating from emotional and sensory pursuits, which significantly influence consumers' future consumption behavior.

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) introduced the concept of "flow experience" through studies of online games and recreational activities, describing it as a positive, immersive consumer experience. Flow experience, part of the 3Fs, is distinguished into immersion and delight. Immersion is considered an optimal experience, while delight is a natural emotional response. The theory of flow has been further explored by researchers focusing on segmented aspects of consumer experience.

With the global shift from industrial and service economies to the experience economy, Pine and Gilmore (1999) proposed the concept of the "experience economy." They argued that consumer perception and cognition place experience at the center, with products as carriers and services as platforms. The goal is to create memorable processes through deep consumer engagement. They posited that "experience" is the

fourth stage of economic evolution, offering a new direction for future research on economic models.

Addis and Holbrook (2001) viewed consumer experience as the interaction between consumers' perception and cognition and the practical objectives of consumption. The former includes the individual's internal states—sensory, perceptual, and cognitive elements—which change depending on environmental stimuli. The latter refers to the services or products needed. Regardless of whether the experience is actively pursued or passively received, it reflects the subjective feedback consumers generate in relation to goods and services, underscoring the value of emotional and functional perceptions in consumer experience studies.

In China, research on consumer experience started relatively late. Wang Shengping (2003) argued that experience involves both emotional and spiritual satisfaction, often leading to happiness and insight triggered by external stimuli. Liao Yimin (2005) emphasized the psychological depth of consumer experience, noting it as a profound, emotional response beyond ordinary understanding—such as awe, shock, and transcendence. Guo Siting (2018) proposed that consumers not only acquire products through consumption, but also receive attention and services from businesses, thereby stimulating multisensory interactions.

Most Chinese scholars' work draws on existing Western theoretical frameworks, but they are gradually delving deeper into localized, practical research on consumer experience.

Currently, one widely accepted definition is provided by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), which views consumer experience as the emotional and cognitive response consumers have during or after interacting with a product or service.

Prior to 1982, research into consumer experience was in a disordered and ambiguous state, primarily because the marketplace was product-centered. The emergence of consumer experience theory, rooted in economics, gradually flourished with contributions from renowned early economists such as Adam Smith and Karl Marx, who indirectly paved the way for consumer experience studies.

Holbrook (2000), summarizing previous academic findings, constructed four major dimensions of consumer experience: experience, entertainment, exhibitionism, and evangelizing, referred to as the 4Es. Each dimension consists of three subtypes as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Consumer Experience 4Es and Their Types

Experience	**Entertainment**	**Exhibitionism**	**Evangelizing**
Emotion	Excitement	Express	Evince
Enjoyment	Ecstasy	Expose	Endorse
Escapism	Esthetics	Enthuse	Educate

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) found that the flow experience is increasingly applied to the study of online consumer behavior. He summarized nine characteristics of flow, such as clear goals, immediate feedback, optimal challenge-skills ratio, focused attention, merging of action and awareness, loss of self-consciousness, distorted sense of time, and intrinsic enjoyment.

Schmitt (1999) argued that experiences are psychological responses triggered by external stimuli. He divided experiences into five types: sensory experience, emotional experience, cognitive experience, behavioral experience, and relational experience.

Sensory experience: Generated from sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch in response to external stimuli.

Emotional experience: Strong emotional resonance resulting from interaction with products or services.

Cognitive experience: Stimulates curiosity and thought, prompting deep reflection about a brand.

Behavioral experience: Refers to actions, lifestyle, and interactions that reinforce identity and values.

Relational experience: Involves social roles, group belonging, and the desire for social connection.

Zhang (2005), based on anthropology and individual traits, added “achievement,” “spiritual needs,” and “psychological experience” to Schmitt’s theory. Lü and Liang (2014), combining consumer experience and social capital theory, developed a model that emphasizes “transcendental experience” as a key to cultivating customer loyalty during consumption.

In summary, Holbrook’s 4Es theory is widely cited for its clarity and contribution. The flow theory is increasingly valued in digital consumer research, while Schmitt's theory is highly actionable in marketing practice. Based on the methodology of this study, we focus on Schmitt’s five dimensions, with special attention to sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and relational experiences, while integrating extensions such as achievement and transcendence.

2.2 Game Loyalty

The concept of online game loyalty is derived from brand loyalty. Choi et al. (2004) argued that game loyalty refers to the player's willingness to continue playing a specific game. Zhang (2007) defined game loyalty as a player's particular preference for a certain game, which leads them to maintain a consistent attitude and behavior toward the game regardless of changing personal circumstances.

Ma (2016) believed that game loyalty refers to the player's sustained enthusiasm and commitment toward a particular game, even when faced with changes in external conditions such as brand promotions and marketing strategies. Players with strong loyalty demonstrate high levels of resistance to switching to competing games.

Some researchers have pointed out that game loyalty and brand loyalty differ in essence. Nevertheless, models developed for brand loyalty remain applicable in the virtual online world (Wu, 2016). Based on academic findings, this study analyzes the current structure of loyalty from different perspectives, categorizing it into three theoretical models: behavior-oriented theory, attitude-oriented theory, and combined theory.

The behavior-oriented theory measures the extent to which consumers are willing to repurchase or reuse a product or service. Indicators include repeat purchasing, recommending others, consumption frequency, and transaction behavior (Ding et al., 2004).

The attitude-oriented theory measures a consumer's preference or favorable attitude toward a product or brand. Prus and Brandt (1995) proposed that indicators should include the consumer's willingness to buy and recommend the product or service, as well as resistance to competing brands.

The combined theory emphasizes both behavioral and attitudinal dimensions. Jones et al. (1995) suggested three components: repeated purchase intention, basic consumer behaviors (e.g., time, frequency, and money spent), and derived behaviors (e.g., recommendation and brand advocacy).

Kristensen (2000) considered game loyalty to consist of four components: recommendation behavior, repurchase intention, transaction behavior, and price acceptance. Zhang (2007) added game reputation as a dimension. Wu (2016) incorporated loyalty transfer in video game switching behavior to include repurchase, overall evaluation, price acceptance, purchasing behavior, brand advocacy, and recommendation.

In summary, most researchers rely on measurement scales to assess loyalty, though variations exist. This study adopts a comprehensive evaluation model, considering both

behavioral and psychological dimensions, and incorporates the emotional characteristics of gaming. Game usage frequency, willingness to recommend, and brand reputation are selected as core indicators of loyalty.

Chinese researchers generally classify the influencing factors of online game loyalty into three dimensions: player characteristics, psychological/cognitive behavior, and game features.

Basic player characteristics include gender, age, and personality. Chen (2010) found that male players tend to be more loyal due to their deeper investment in time and money, while female players are more casual. Hou et al. (2011) also showed that more extroverted players—energetic, passionate, and responsible—tend to display lower loyalty levels due to greater individual differences.

Many researchers analyze how players' psychological and behavioral responses impact loyalty. Zhang (2007) proposed that trust and engagement during gameplay foster loyalty. Zhao (2016) found that players who strongly identify with in-game characters tend to be more loyal.

Ma (2016) highlighted the importance of social and interactional dynamics, and Tseng (2015) introduced four factors—social presence, attachment, community sense, and transformation cost—as critical to influencing loyalty.

Some researchers believe that experiential pleasure is the main motivation for continued gameplay. Hsu and Lu (2007) emphasized immersion as the key component of loyalty. Poels et al. (2007) pointed out that both in-game and post-game experiences affect immersion and thus influence loyalty.

Emotional and value perception has also been studied. Xiong (2010) proposed that different emotional dimensions—joy, excitement, and functionality—drive repeat gameplay. Park and Lee (2011) emphasized that perceived value (functional, emotional, social) significantly influences loyalty.

From the perspective of game design, Wei (2006) argued that differences in products and services influence loyalty levels. Liu et al. (2012) believed that technical elements like storylines and game interface also play a significant role.

Teng (2010) emphasized the importance of personalized game features. Wei et al. (2012) noted that role identity affects loyalty. Wu (2016) summarized that factors impacting loyalty include player characteristics, emotional engagement, game systems, and perceived value.

In conclusion, current studies on online game loyalty have become more systematic, focusing on player traits, game features, flow experience, and perceived value. However, fewer studies examine loyalty through the lens of consumer experience,

leaving room for further exploration in this area. This study posits that game loyalty is manifested in the player's willingness to repeatedly engage with a game, maintain commitment, and demonstrate strong affection and high recognition for the game.

2.3 Social Identity

Tajfel (1986) defined social identity as "the individual's knowledge that they belong to a certain social group, together with the emotional and evaluative significance attached to that membership". Krackhardt (1992) suggested that the tighter the social network within a group and the stronger the interpersonal connections, the stronger the sense of social identity. In virtual brand communities, frequent interactions imply denser social ties, leading to more efficient communication and deeper mutual relationships among members, thus promoting social identity.

Carlson et al. (2008) believed that social identity arises from the emotional and value-related connections among members, or between members and the brand. When members resonate with a specific brand community, they may form a sense of partial identification due to shared interests or interactions with other members. This can also lead to mutual recognition and acceptance within the community.

This study builds on prior work by examining players' social identity in games, focusing on interactions that enhance in-group belonging and mutual recognition among community members.

2.4 Emotional Value

The emotional value theory posits that users seek value during the process of purchasing goods. It has been applied to traditional consumption industries like tourism, apparel, and tea shops, and recently extended into online virtual contexts such as online shopping and social networking (Park & Lee, 2011). Thaler (1985) introduced the concept of emotional value, which gained widespread academic attention. Among various theories, Sheth-Newman-Gross's (1991) consumption value theory is particularly influential. It includes five components: functional, emotional, social, epistemic, and conditional values.

Emotional value is considered a dimension of perceived value. It refers to the affective benefits or psychological states (e.g., joy, love) customers expect while purchasing products. This value often stems from the pleasurable feelings evoked when expressing emotions. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) defined emotional value as the utility derived from a product's ability to arouse feelings or emotional states.

This study adopts prior definitions and contextualizes emotional value as the psychological satisfaction and emotional utility players derive from in-game consumption behaviors.

2.5 Experiential Marketing Theory

Experiential Marketing Theory, first proposed by Bernd H. Schmitt (1999), marked a paradigm shift from traditional marketing—which emphasized product functionality—to a consumer-centered approach focusing on sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and relational experiences. Schmitt argued that modern consumers no longer purchase products solely for utility but seek memorable and engaging experiences that create emotional resonance and psychological satisfaction. Schmitt (1999) identified five types of strategic experiential modules (SEMs):

Sensory Experience (SENSE) – engaging the senses to create aesthetic pleasure.

Emotional Experience (FEEL) – targeting consumer emotions to establish emotional bonds.

Cognitive Experience (THINK) – stimulating intellect and creativity.

Behavioral Experience (ACT) – influencing bodily actions and lifestyles.

Relational Experience (RELATE) – connecting the individual with a broader social context or community.

These components are especially relevant in digital and online entertainment contexts, such as gaming. In such environments, consumers (i.e., players) are immersed in experiences that span across the sensory (graphics, music), emotional (narrative engagement), behavioral (interactive gameplay), and social (multiplayer communities) domains.

Following Schmitt's original framework, researchers have extended experiential marketing into various fields. Gentile, Spiller, and Noci (2007) emphasized that customer experience is multidimensional, integrating rational and emotional components. They proposed that companies should deliberately design emotional journeys that generate lasting loyalty and advocacy.

In the digital domain, Verhoef et al. (2009) conceptualized customer experience as a holistic phenomenon emerging from touchpoints (brand, technology, community). Their work further validated Schmitt's framework in online settings, especially e-commerce and gamified platforms.

Within the gaming industry, Sahin and Aydin (2020) found that experiential marketing elements—especially emotional and relational experiences—significantly influence players' loyalty and in-game purchasing behavior. They demonstrated that

emotional arousal and community identification drive retention in competitive gaming environments.

Thus, experiential marketing provides a robust theoretical lens for understanding how emotional consumption experiences influence player behavior, satisfaction, and loyalty in game-based contexts.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the hypothesized relationships between emotional consumption experience and game loyalty, with social identity and emotional value serving as mediating variables.

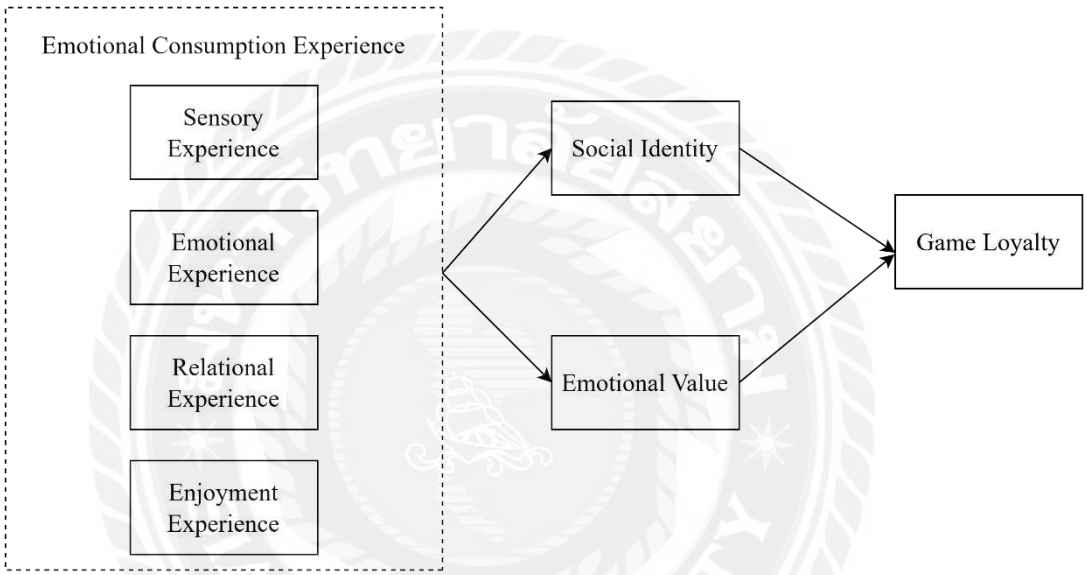

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research design to explore the relationship between emotional consumption experience, social identity, emotional value, and game loyalty. A survey method was used to collect data from online game players, allowing the researcher to gather large amounts of data efficiently.

Using a simple random sampling method, the study ensured that every player in the target population had an equal chance of being selected. The data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS software to conduct reliability and validity analysis, correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis and mediating analysis.

3.2 Questionnaire Design

This study involves four key variables: emotional consumption experience, social identity, emotional value, and game loyalty. Scale items for each variable, measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 5 = "Strongly Agree", are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Measurement Items

Variable	Code	Item	Source
Sensory Experience	C1	I think the items (or props) I buy for others in the game look visually attractive.	Schmitt, 1999; Li, 2012
	C2	The items I buy for others in the game have novel designs and strong visual appeal.	
	C3	The overall experience of consuming for others in the game is aesthetically pleasing.	
Emotional Experience	C4	I feel joyful when I consume for others in the game.	Schmitt, 1999; Gao, 2005
	C5	Consuming for others in the game makes me feel emotionally connected.	
	C6	When I buy for others in the game, I experience emotional resonance.	
Relational Experience	C7	Buying for others in the game strengthens my relationship with them.	Schmitt, 1999; Liu, 2016

	C8	Consuming for others in the game deepens my emotional connection with them.	
	C9	Buying for others in the game gives me more opportunities to interact with them.	
Enjoyment Experience	C10	Consuming for others in the game is a fun and novel experience.	Csikszentmihalyi, 1993
	C11	I feel intense happiness and excitement when consuming for others in the game.	
	C12	The joy I feel when consuming for others is stronger than when I buy for myself.	
Social Identity	C13	I enjoy accomplishing tasks or goals with players I have consumed for.	Algesheimer et al., 2005; Bagozzi et al., 2006
	C14	When members exchange virtual gifts, I feel the team atmosphere becomes more harmonious.	
	C15	Exchanging virtual gifts enhances my sense of closeness with team members.	
Emotional Value	C16	Consuming for others in the game gives me emotional satisfaction.	Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; Xiong, 2010
	C17	Playing with players I've consumed for makes me feel emotionally relaxed.	
	C18	Playing with players I've consumed for gives me emotional pleasure and enjoyment.	
Game Loyalty	C19	Compared to others, I prefer games where I've spent on others before.	
	C20	I'm more likely to recommend the game if I've had emotional consumption experiences.	
	C21	My past consumption for others makes this game more meaningful to me.	

3.3 Hypothesis

H1: Players' emotional consumption experience has a positive impact on game loyalty.

H1a: The sensory experience gained through emotional consumption positively affects game loyalty.

H1b: The emotional experience gained through emotional consumption positively affects game loyalty.

H1c: The relational experience gained through emotional consumption positively affects game loyalty.

H1d: The enjoyment experience gained through emotional consumption positively affects game loyalty.

H2: Players' emotional consumption experience positively affects social identity.

H2a: The sensory experience gained through emotional consumption positively affects social identity.

H2b: The emotional experience gained through emotional consumption positively affects social identity.

H2c: The relational experience gained through emotional consumption positively affects social identity.

H2d: The enjoyment experience gained through emotional consumption positively affects social identity.

H3: Players' social identity obtained in the game positively affects game loyalty.

H4: Players' emotional consumption experience affects game loyalty through the mediation of social identity.

H4a: The sensory experience gained through emotional consumption affects game loyalty through social identity.

H4b: The emotional experience gained through emotional consumption affects game loyalty through social identity.

H4c: The relational experience gained through emotional consumption affects game loyalty through social identity.

H4d: The enjoyment experience gained through emotional consumption affects game loyalty through social identity.

H5: Players' emotional consumption experience positively affects emotional value.

H5a: The sensory experience gained through emotional consumption positively affects emotional value.

H5b: The emotional experience gained through emotional consumption positively affects emotional value.

H5c: The relational experience gained through emotional consumption positively affects emotional value.

H5d: The enjoyment experience gained through emotional consumption positively affects emotional value.

H6: Emotional value obtained by players in the game positively affects game loyalty.

H7: Players' emotional consumption experience affects game loyalty through the mediation of emotional value.

H7a: The sensory experience gained through emotional consumption affects game loyalty through emotional value.

H7b: The emotional experience gained through emotional consumption affects game loyalty through emotional value.

H7c: The relational experience gained through emotional consumption affects game loyalty through emotional value.

H7d: The enjoyment experience gained through emotional consumption affects game loyalty through emotional value.

3.4 Population and Sample

The target population of this study consisted of online game players. In order to ensure representativeness and avoid sampling bias, the study adopted a simple random sampling method. This approach allowed every member of the population to have an equal chance of being selected, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the research findings to the broader gaming community.

3.5 Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through a structured questionnaire survey administered to online game players. A total of 900 questionnaires were distributed both online and offline. After careful screening for completeness and consistency, 468 valid responses were retained for analysis, resulting in a valid response rate of approximately 52%. All respondents confirmed that they had participated in emotional consumption behaviors in games, such as purchasing in-game items for other players. The data collected serve as the empirical foundation for testing the proposed research model and hypotheses.

3.6 Data Analysis

This study employed a range of quantitative analysis methods using SPSS software to examine the relationships among variables and to verify the proposed hypotheses.

First, reliability analysis was performed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients to test the internal consistency of each construct. A Cronbach's alpha value above 0.70 was considered acceptable, indicating that the scale items reliably measured the intended constructs.

Second, validity analysis was conducted based on content validity and discriminant validity. Content validity was ensured by adapting measurement items from established studies and consulting relevant literature. Discriminant validity was assessed by examining the correlations among variables to confirm that each construct was distinct and not excessively overlapping with others.

Thirdly, descriptive statistical analysis was used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents. This provided a general understanding of the respondents' perceptions.

Fourth, correlation analysis was employed to identify the direction and strength of linear relationships between the main constructs. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to examine whether the variables were significantly related to each other.

Fifth, multiple regression analysis was applied to explore the predictive relationships between independent and dependent variables. This method allowed the study to examine how different dimensions of emotional consumption experience influenced game loyalty while controlling for the mediating variables.

Lastly, mediation analysis was conducted to test the indirect effects of social identity and emotional value on the relationship between emotional consumption experience and game loyalty. The bootstrap method with bias-corrected confidence intervals was used to determine the significance of the mediation effects.

3.7 Reliability and Validity Analysis of the Scale

To evaluate the internal consistency of the scale used in this study, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated. As shown in Table 3.2, the overall Cronbach's Alpha value for the 21 measurement items is 0.955, which indicates a very high level of internal reliability. Additionally, all individual constructs in the study demonstrated Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.9, confirming that the scale has strong reliability across all dimensions.

Table 3.2 Reliability of the Scale

Indicator	**Value**	**Number of Items**
Cronbach's Alpha	0.955	21

To assess the suitability of the data for factor analysis, both the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were

conducted. The results are presented in Table 3.3. The KMO value is 0.937, which is well above the acceptable threshold of 0.60. The result of Bartlett's Test is significant ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that the correlations.

Table 3.3 KMO and Bartlett's Test Results

Indicator	**Value**
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.937
Approx. Chi-Square	9497.257
df	210
Sig.	0.000

Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Table 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Game Players (N = 468)

Category	Subgroup	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	332	70.9%
	Female	136	29.1%
Age	18–29 years old	427	91.3%
	30–39 years old	41	8.8%
Education Level	High school or below	10	2.1%
	Junior college	44	9.4%
	Undergraduate	269	57.5%
	Postgraduate and above	145	31.0%
Occupation	Self-employed	36	7.7%
	Government/Institution staff	49	10.5%
	Corporate employees	190	40.6%
	Students	134	28.6%
	Others	59	12.6%
Monthly Disposable Income	None	21	4.5%
	Below ¥3,500	125	26.7%
	¥3,500–¥5,000	80	17.1%
	¥5,000–¥10,000	134	28.6%
	¥10,000–¥20,000	67	14.3%
	Above ¥20,000	41	8.8%
Emotional Consumption Motivation	Voluntary consumption	413	88.2%
	Passive consumption	55	11.8%
Emotional Consumption Behavior	Below ¥500	328	70.1%
	¥500–¥2,000	78	16.7%
	¥2,000–¥5,000	28	6.0%
	Above ¥5,000	34	7.3%

Based on the demographic data, the majority of the respondents were male (70.9%), suggesting that male players are more willing to engage in emotional consumption within games, aligning with the expected gender distribution in gaming behavior

research. In terms of age, 91.3% of the players were aged 18 to 29, indicating that emotional consumption is more prevalent among younger gaming audiences.

Regarding educational background, undergraduate and postgraduate respondents accounted for 88.5%, possibly reflecting their higher willingness to complete the questionnaire and participate in academic research. Professionally, corporate employees (40.6%) and students (28.6%) made up the majority of the sample.

In terms of monthly disposable income, the distribution was concentrated between ¥3,500 and ¥10,000, comprising over 72% of the sample. High-income individuals (earning more than ¥10,000 per month) accounted for 23.1%, representing a significant portion of purchasing power.

On emotional consumption behavior, 88.2% of players reported voluntarily spending money for others in the game, while 11.8% did so passively due to requests. Most respondents reported low consumption amounts, with 70.1% spending less than ¥500, and only 7.3% spending more than ¥5,000 on emotional consumption.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 4.2 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients between all core study variables. As shown in the matrix, all four dimensions of emotional consumption experience (SE, EE, RE, JE) are significantly and positively correlated with one another, indicating internal consistency of the construct. Furthermore, each of these dimensions shows statistically significant correlations with both mediating variables—social identity (SI) and emotional value (EV)—as well as the outcome variable—game loyalty (GL).

Table 4.2 Correlation Analysis

Variables	**SE**	**EE**	**RE**	**JE**	**SI**	**EV**	**GL**
SE	1	.519**	.556**	.431**	.400**	.417**	.308**
EE		1	.745**	.712**	.545**	.641**	.448**
RE			1	.627**	.643**	.654**	.475**
JE				1	.602**	.719**	.641**
SI					1	—	.584**
EV						1	.646**
GL							1

The results of the Pearson correlation analyses provide important insights into the relationships among emotional consumption experience, social identity, emotional value, and game loyalty.

First, the correlation analysis among the four dimensions of emotional consumption experience (sensory, emotional, relational, and enjoyment experience) reveals moderate to high correlations, ranging from r = .431 to r = .745, all significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that the four dimensions are interrelated but still represent distinct aspects of emotional consumption.

Second, when examining the relationship between emotional consumption experience and game loyalty, all four dimensions are positively and significantly correlated with game loyalty. Among them, enjoyment experience shows the correlation (r = .641), suggesting that the emotional satisfaction and pleasure derived from the game are key drivers of loyalty.

Third, the correlations between emotional consumption experience and social identity are also all significant at the 0.01 level, with relational experience (r = .643) and enjoyment experience (r = .602) being the strongest predictors. This shows that forming connections with others through consumption and the emotional enjoyment of the experience enhance players' identification with their in-game social groups.

Furthermore, social identity is positively and significantly correlated with game loyalty (r = .584), confirming that players who feel a strong sense of belonging to a game community are more likely to remain loyal to the game.

Additionally, the four dimensions of emotional consumption experience are all significantly correlated with emotional value, especially enjoyment experience (r = .719) and relational experience (r = .654). This implies that when players engage in emotional consumption, they not only gain pleasure and fun, but also feel emotionally rewarded and connected, contributing to a stronger perception of emotional value.

Finally, emotional value shows a strong positive correlation with game loyalty (r = .646), which supports the hypothesis that players who perceive high emotional value from their gaming consumption are more likely to demonstrate loyalty toward the game.

In summary, the correlation results confirm that emotional consumption experience, social identity, and emotional value are closely linked to game loyalty, providing strong statistical support for the proposed research model and hypotheses.

4.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 4.3 Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable	**Independent Variables**	**β**	**t**	**p**	**Result**

Game Loyalty (GL)	SE	.072	1.731	.084	Not significant
	EE	.144	3.224	.001	Significant
	RE	.188	4.202	<.001	Significant
	JE	.425	9.583	<.001	Significant
Model	$R^2 = .514$, $F = 122.3$, $p < .001$				
Social Identity (SI)	SE	.081	2.066	.039	Significant
	EE	.205	4.968	<.001	Significant
	RE	.308	7.251	<.001	Significant
	JE	.267	6.458	<.001	Significant
Model	$R^2 = .564$, $F = 149.9$, $p < .001$				
Emotional Value (EV)	SE	.065	1.753	.081	Not significant
	EE	.271	6.341	<.001	Significant
	RE	.288	6.772	<.001	Significant
	JE	.339	8.096	<.001	Significant
Model	$R^2 = .652$, $F = 217.1$, $p < .001$				
Game Loyalty (GL)	SI	.584	15.17	<.001	Significant
Model	$R^2 = .341$, $F = 230.1$, $p < .001$				
Game Loyalty (GL)	EV	.646	18.06	<.001	Significant
Model	$R^2 = .418$, $F = 326.3$, $p < .001$				

The results of regression analyses conducted to test the direct relationships among the core variables.

First, three dimensions of emotional consumption experience—emotional experience (EE), relational experience (RE), and enjoyment experience (JE)—showed significant positive effects on game loyalty (GL). Among them, enjoyment experience had the strongest influence ($\beta = .425$, $p < .001$), suggesting that emotional pleasure and immersive fun are key drivers of player loyalty. Sensory experience (SE), however, did

not have a significant effect (p = .084), indicating that visual or aesthetic appeal alone may not be sufficient to retain players.

Second, all four dimensions of emotional consumption experience significantly predicted social identity (SI), with relational experience (β = .308) and enjoyment experience (β = .267) being the most impactful. This finding suggests that building social connections through emotional consumption enhances players' sense of belonging in the game.

Third, emotional experience, relational experience, and enjoyment experience also significantly contributed to players' emotional value (EV), supporting the notion that meaningful interactions and enjoyment are important sources of emotional reward. Again, sensory experience was not a significant predictor.

Finally, both social identity (β = .584) and emotional value (β = .646) had strong, statistically significant effects on game loyalty, further validating their central roles as psychological mechanisms that foster loyalty behavior.

These results offer empirical support for hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H5, and H6, highlighting the importance of experiential and social dimensions in shaping player loyalty.

4.4 Mediation Analysis

Table 4.4 Mediation Analysis

Pathway	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	95% CI Result	Mediation Type
EE → SI → GL	.144	.120	[.085, .163]	Partial mediation
RE → SI → GL	.188	.180	[.138, .230]	Partial mediation
JE → SI → GL	.425	.156	[.121, .200]	Partial mediation
EE → EV → GL	.144	.175	[.135, .217]	Partial mediation
RE → EV → GL	.188	.188	[.150, .233]	Partial mediation
JE → EV → GL	.425	.219	[.173, .268]	Partial mediation

The findings confirm that both SI and EV serve as significant partial mediators: For social identity, the indirect effects of emotional experience, relational experience, and enjoyment experience on game loyalty were all statistically significant (95% CI excludes zero), supporting H4a–H4d. This indicates that emotional consumption can enhance loyalty by strengthening players' sense of community and belonging. For emotional value, the indirect paths from emotional, relational, and enjoyment experience to game loyalty were also significant (H7a–H7d), showing that the emotional rewards players gain from these experiences contribute meaningfully to their loyalty intentions. Notably, enjoyment experience had the strongest indirect effects

through both mediators, confirming its central role in the player experience. These results demonstrate that the influence of emotional consumption experience on loyalty is not only direct, but also indirect through internal psychological mechanisms, which enhances the explanatory power of the model.

These findings provide strong support for hypotheses H4 and H7, reinforcing the value of social-psychological pathways in understanding online game player behavior.

4.5 Discussion

The findings reveal that emotional experience, relational experience, and enjoyment experience significantly and positively influence game loyalty, while sensory experience does not show a significant direct effect. This suggests that emotional depth, social connection, and hedonic pleasure are more influential in retaining players than mere visual or design features. These results align with prior studies (e.g., Schmitt, 1999; Hsu & Lu, 2007), confirming that emotional and interactive experiences are key drivers of behavioral loyalty in digital environments.

Second, all four dimensions of emotional consumption experience were found to have significant positive effects on social identity, especially relational experience and enjoyment experience. This indicates that when players engage in gift-giving or supportive behaviors, they form stronger emotional bonds and group belonging, which is consistent with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This also reinforces the social nature of gaming, where shared experiences and reciprocity build long-term community connections.

Third, the analysis showed that emotional value is significantly influenced by emotional, relational, and enjoyment experience, but not by sensory experience. This supports the idea that emotional return is rooted in interaction and meaning, rather than visual novelty. These findings are in line with Sheth et al.'s (1991) consumption value theory and highlight the importance of emotional value as a subjective psychological outcome.

In addition, both social identity and emotional value were found to have strong positive effects on game loyalty, confirming their roles as mediating variables. The structural equation modeling (SEM) further validated that these two variables partially mediate the relationship between emotional consumption experience and game loyalty. These mediating effects demonstrate that players' loyalty is not simply a result of gameplay or transaction but also shaped by psychological affiliation and emotional return.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

This study explored how emotional consumption experience affected game loyalty, with social identity and emotional value serving as mediators. A quantitative research method was employed using a structured questionnaire, and data were collected from 468 online game players through simple random sampling. The constructs were measured using validated scales, and data analysis was conducted using SPSS and AMOS software. Analytical techniques included reliability and validity tests, correlation analysis, multiple regression, and structural equation modeling (SEM).

The results confirm that emotional consumption experiences—particularly emotional, relational, and enjoyment experiences—have a significant and positive impact on game loyalty. In contrast, sensory experience does not directly influence loyalty. The study also finds that emotional consumption experiences enhance both social identity and emotional value, which in turn significantly promote game loyalty. Both social identity and emotional value act as partial mediators, indicating that emotional and social mechanisms play a critical role in players' continued engagement with a game.

These findings suggest that game loyalty is not solely a behavioral outcome of gameplay mechanics or design features, but also the result of emotional bonding and social connectedness cultivated through in-game consumption.

5.2 Recommendation

Game developers and marketing teams should focus not only on the technical and visual design of games but also on creating emotional and social experiences. Features such as gift-giving systems, interactive missions, social spaces, and reward mechanisms tied to relational play may enhance players' emotional value and sense of community.

Moreover, platforms may consider promoting emotional consumption behaviors (e.g., giving virtual gifts or assisting teammates) as a way to strengthen emotional engagement and retention. The enjoyment derived from these experiences should be highlighted as a core product value rather than a secondary feature.

5.3 Further Study

While this study provides valuable insights into emotional consumption and game loyalty, several limitations should be addressed in future research.

First, the current model focused on emotional and social variables. Future studies may include cognitive variables such as perceived usefulness, trust, or game quality to develop a more comprehensive understanding.

Second, the study used self-reported data, which may be subject to bias. Future research should consider experimental or longitudinal designs to validate causal relationships over time.

Third, the sample was limited to players with emotional consumption experience. Future studies could expand the sample to include non-paying players to compare motivations and loyalty differences between different user groups.

Finally, emotional consumption behavior may differ across game types or cultures, so future research should explore cross-cultural comparisons or genre-specific models to enhance generalizability.

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Appendix

Dear participant,

This questionnaire is designed to explore how emotional consumption behavior in games influences players' loyalty. All responses are anonymous and used strictly for academic purposes. Please answer based on your actual gaming experience.

Thank you for your participation!

Section A: Screening Questions

1. Have you ever purchased in-game items or currency to **give to other players** (such as gifts, skins, equipment, or boosters)?

☐ Yes ☐ No *(If no, please stop here. Thank you!)*

2. What is the main reason you gave in-game gifts to others?

☐ Voluntary

☐ Requested by others

Section B: Demographic Information

3. Gender:

☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other

4. Age:

☐ Under 18 ☐ 18–29 ☐ 30–39 ☐ 40 and above

5. Education Level:

☐ High school or below ☐ Junior college ☐ Undergraduate ☐ Postgraduate and above

6. Occupation:

☐ Student ☐ Company employee ☐ Government staff

☐ Freelancer ☐ Other: _____

7. Monthly disposable income (RMB):

☐ None ☐ Below ¥3,500 ☐ ¥3,500–¥5,000

☐ ¥5,000–¥10,000 ☐ ¥10,000–¥20,000 ☐ Above ¥20,000

8. Total emotional spending in games (gifting others):

☐ Below ¥500 ☐ ¥500–¥2,000 ☐ ¥2,000–¥5,000 ☐ Above ¥5,000

Section C: Emotional Consumption Experience

(Please rate your agreement with the following statements. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Item	1	2	3	4	5
The items I buy for others in the game look visually attractive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
These items have unique and appealing designs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gifting in the game creates a pleasant visual atmosphere.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel joyful when giving items to other players.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel emotionally connected during the process of gifting.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I often resonate emotionally with others when I give gifts in the game.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gifting strengthens my relationship with other players.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gifting deepens emotional bonds between us.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gifting increases our interactions and communication in the game.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gifting in games is fun and refreshing.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It brings me excitement and happiness.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I enjoy gifting others more than buying for myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I enjoy completing tasks with players I've gifted.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gifting makes the team atmosphere more harmonious.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gifting enhances my sense of closeness with other players.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel emotionally satisfied after gifting others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Playing with gifted players relaxes me emotionally.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Item	1	2	3	4	5
Gifting brings me pleasure and inner happiness.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I prefer games where I've gifted other players.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I'm more likely to recommend games where I've engaged in emotional consumption.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Emotional consumption makes the game more meaningful to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

มหาวิทยาลัยสยาม SIAM UNIVERSITY

บันทึกข้อความ

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เรื่อง ขออนุมัติสำเร็จการศึกษาประจำปีการศึกษา 2567

เรียน ท่านอธิการบดี

เรื่องเดิม นักศึกษาหลักสูตรบริหารธุรกิจมหาบัณฑิต MISS. LIU XIAO รหัสนักศึกษา 6317195002 ได้ศึกษารายวิชาครบถ้วนสมบูรณ์ และได้ปฏิบัติตามเกณฑ์สำเร็จการศึกษาตามที่มหาวิทยาลัยสยามกำหนดเรียบร้อยแล้ว ทั้งนี้พร้อมยื่นเรื่องขออนุมัติสำเร็จการศึกษา โดยมีรายละเอียด ดังต่อไปนี้

1. ผ่านการตรวจสอบความซ้ำซ้อนด้วยโปรแกรม Grammarly เมื่อวันที่ 16 สิงหาคม 2568
2. ผ่านการสอบประมวลความรู้ข้อเขียน เมื่อวันที่ 2 มีนาคม 2567
3. ผ่านการสอบปากเปล่าขั้นสุดท้ายวิชาการค้นคว้าอิสระ เมื่อวันที่ 18 กรกฎาคม 2568
4. ผ่านเกณฑ์มาตรฐานความรู้ภาษาอังกฤษ Oxford Placement Test score 76 CEFR B2 เมื่อวันที่ 26 พฤษภาคม 2566
5. ผ่านการประชุมวิชาการระดับนานาชาติ at The 18th National and International Academic Conference on "Sustainable Horizon: Transforming Ideas into Impact" Subject : The Impact of Gamers' Emotional Consumption Experiences on Game Loyalty on 6-7 August 2025, United Nations Conference Centre Bangkok Thailand

เรื่องพิจารณา เพื่อพิจารณาเข้าประชุมสภามหาวิทยาลัย และอนุมัติบัณฑิตสำเร็จการศึกษา ประจำปีการศึกษา 2567 ดังรายละเอียดเอกสารประกอบการสำเร็จการศึกษาตามที่แนบมา

จึงเรียนมาเพื่อพิจารณาอนุมัติ และให้ดำเนินการต่อไป

(รศ.ดร.จอมพงศ์ มงคลวนิช)
คณบดีบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย สาขาบริหารธุรกิจ

ตรวจสอบเรียบร้อยแล้ว
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สำนักงานอธิการบดี
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ลงชื่อ.....
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