Romanian consumer profile of PlayStation games

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Abstract

PlayStation is the market leader of the console industry, with over 90 million active users registered on their platform. It is a remarkable feat to appeal to so many consumers and keep them interested. This study reveals the results of an online survey on 600 Romanian PlayStation console users. The Romanian consumer is loyal, perceiving longevity with the brand as stability and which will encourage their level of loyalty to increase. The main disparity between the Romanian and foreign consumer lies in the average monthly income, which, however, does not hinder the former's buying intention, pointing towards a tendency to sacrifice other needs in order to fulfil playing experience and desires. The study has revealed a complex characteristic behaviour which shapes and constructs the consumer profile of the Romanian PlayStation user.

Keywords: PlayStation console, customer loyalty, customer retention, customer profile

Introduction

The video game industry has become a catalyst in today's society, encompassing a culture of its own and establishing itself both as a point of interest and prosperity. It is much more intricate than it appears to be and has propelled forward, as an extension, the console industry, both becoming compelling and influential aspects of today's society. Both have continuously managed to attract consumers. The figures showcase this fact as the gaming industry has reached $137.9 billion in revenue in 2018, $151.9 billion in 2019, $165.9 billion in 2020 and is expected to grow even more, to an estimation of $180.1 billion in revenue in 2021 (Tomic, 2018, p. 22). Overall, there are 2.2 billion games around the world, accounting for a third of the population, highlighting the increased level of interest and commitment to playing that has become an usual, much desire and enjoyed experience by people of all ages, from everywhere, worldwide.

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Video games have since long surpassed the notion of being a “fad” or a new technology and became a staple of contemporary entertainment (Bryant and Vorderer, 2013, p. 167). Having engraved themselves in today’s society, video games refined a complex and extended culture of their own. Constantly developing and evolving, it is difficult to homogenize and pinpoint a set of characteristics of video games, their players, their culture and impact (Muray and Crawford, 2018).

Each consumer will have a different perspective on the product and act in a certain way, therefore Romanian consumers may not exhibit the same kind of behaviour, attitudes or emotions as foreign ones. But this is mere speculation and unknown as no studies have delved into the topic in order to provide insight into the matter. Consequently, this study aims to pursue this aspect and “get to know” the Romanian consumer. What is their pattern? What is it that they seek into the PlayStation product and what are the reasons for doing so? To what degree do they showcase loyalty to the brand and what are the reasons for this? These are the questions the study aimed to answer and has, ultimately, provided insight into. The overall purpose is establishing a Romanian consumer profile, seeking to pinpoint the main characteristics that help shape and define attitudes in relation to the PlayStation. The exploration of reasons, attributes and behaviours will be explored in relation to PlayStation in order to acquire better comprehension of their intentions and motivations in the buying process.

1. Theoretical framework

People love playing games for a long time and they will continue to do it. Human history shows that games have been played in all societies since a very long time ago. Game designs are distinct in their conception and each offers a certain degree of choice available to the player of the sequence of actions or the goals and missions which must be undertaken (Ryan *et al.*, 2006, p. 351). Gaming environments have their very own appeal which entices players and motivates them to get involved, but all of this is done voluntarily and to game developer Bartle’s words (2004) “the players must expect to get something out of their experience”. On account of this, it would appear that players need to find video games gratifying and pleasurable in order to engage because, like any other form of entertainment, video games are sought for enjoyment and relaxation, in most part. Their popularization has taken off in the past years, thus it is no wonder that they are adapting and providing players with deeper, impactful and long-lasting experiences that make the game unforgettable for some (Panchal *et al.*, 2017, 966). Players are slowly but surely building a connection with their favourite games and attribute meaningful feelings of nostalgia, joy, amusement or even sadness.

Finishing a video game leaves each individual with a different mixture of emotions, either of anger and frustration that the ending was the complete opposite of what they had expected or in shock at the events that unfolded as the ending credits rolled. It is in the nature of video games to wake strong emotions deep within the player (Abdelmogeth, 2017, p. 52) if all the elements have been correctly aligned and played their part as intended, but, in the end, a good video game should leave players with a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment, feeling that the time invested was in no way a waste, but well spent and dedicated. In spite of all of this, the "motivational pull" of video games has been debated by various scholars, but few formal theories of motivation have actually been applied to video games overall, including to the motivational catalyst of the players and the welfare of gameplay (Ryan *et al*., 2006, p. 369).

Mood influences the type of game a player will choose at a respective moment because, as consumers, they yearn for games that "elicit appreciated emotional responses" (Brown and Cairns, 2004, p. 1299). As an extension of this, the Seven-Factor Model of player experience has been developed and includes the following: tension, competence, challenge, positive affect, negative affect, sensory/imaginative immersion and flow (IJsselsteijn *et al*., 2008, p.88). Each of these factors plays its own role in carving player experience and guiding the emotions and impact the player feels in conjunction with the gaming environment and narrative. To these were added puppetry and video-game perception as essential components which further aided shaping up the player experience (Calvillo-Gámez *et al*., 2015, p.51). The former captures the interactivity of the player with the game in terms of controls and actions, as well as goals and accomplishment. The latter, video-game perception refers to the way in which the environment is observed and "felt" by the player (world-building aspects such as sound effects, aesthetics). Here, immersion is particularly tricky to discuss as it is one of the top elements on which the focus shifts during game design and planning. Each game strives to enhance realism as part of meaningful interactions within the created universe. The final ambition is achieving a world that retains real-life elements so that the player can relate to these, all the while providing them with completely different, unprecedented situations and scenarios (Khaleghi and Lugmayr, 2012, p. 285). Conclusively, what is paramount to the consumer in regards to video games is the immersion level, the control they possess over the gaming environment, alongside the achievements and rewards they are seeking to accomplish and gain, all of which must be met while the player feels a positive effect on themselves from the story, characters, in-game world and experience as an overall package. Additionally, it is imperative to notice that escapism has been found as the best predictor of gaming intensity (Yee, 2006, p. 311)

PlayStation is the market leader of the console industry, with over 90 million active users registered on their platform and the most sold console of all time, globally, in the PlayStation 2. It is a remarkable feat to appeal to so many consumers and keep them interested. Witnessing this and the continuous consumption of the product, it is only rational to wonder what the PlayStation consumer's traits and characteristics are, what their motivations are which drive them towards this type of consumption (Yan and Gilbert, 2018). While previous studies have focused on video games, both the positive and negative effects upon players, no specific study has been conducted and made public on PlayStation and, in particular, its defining consumer. As such, the motivation for this particular study stems, first and foremost, from the dearth of research in relation to consumer behaviour related to consoles specifically. Thus, the image of the PlayStation consumer has been left blank and has not been recognized enough to be studied in-depth. This applies even less to the Romanian consumer in particular, who chooses to engage in video games, specifically through the usage of a PlayStation console. A 2014 study has revealed the "Romanian gamer profile" by analysing casual and serious games, the study reveals an overall perspective on the Romanian gamer in relation to games as a whole, it does not tie into the usage of PlayStation as a product or the perspective of the console consumer (Constantin *et al*., 2014, p. 329). Moreover, each consumer is complex on their own, displaying their own set of characteristics, motivation and desires in relation to the product they wish to use in order to fulfill different kind of needs.

2. Research methodology

The purpose of this research is analysing and evaluating the consumer behaviour of PlayStation users, specifically from Romania in relation to PlayStation as a consumer product in order to asses contributing factors to loyalty. The study seeks to pinpoint the factors which drive consumers towards developing their loyalty as well as identifying the elements which aid maintaining it. What hopes and looks to be achieved is a careful, detailed introspect of the continuous consumption of the product from the consumer behaviour point of view.

While initially intended as a global study, the sample results have veered the direction of the study towards analysis of the Romanian PlayStation consumer. Consequently, the main premises upon which the basis of this study is build are the following:

1. The Romanian consumer displays a set of behaviour and attitudes which have been left up to question due to the dearth of appropriate conducted research;

2. The Romanian consumer can be described in terms of cultural values, life-style, environment and socio-economic factors (income, occupation, etc.).

While consumer behaviour has been analysed in regards to video games (both positive and negative aspects), from the hedonic vs. utilitarian point of view, as well as psychological approaches to video games as a mere form of entertainment or more meaningful experiences capable of inducing deep stimulus and emotions on the player, there have been no public research studies conducted in relation to the PlayStation consumer specifically. Therefore, there is limited information and insight into the behaviour patterns of console consumers and the way they perceive the brand and choose to act in respect to it from a variety of consumerism focused aspects. This leaves the portrayal of such a Romanian consumer blank and up to debate, questioning the way in which they act and behave in relation to the product.

The main research questions are the following:

1. Can we speak about a loyal Romanian PlayStation consumer and, if so, to what degree?
2. What are the main perceived attributes of the consumer which define loyalty to the PlayStation brand?

Secondary research questions revolve around the following purposes:

1. Is there any perceived difference in terms of loyalty between the Romanian consumer and those belonging to other (sampled) countries?
2. What are the main attributes that hold importance on the Romanian consumer's decision making process when purchasing PlayStation products?

The main goal of the research is the construct and embellishment of a Romanian PlayStation consumer profile. This will consolidate the exploration of the consumer behaviour elements that tie into the related, given topic and help asses factors such as loyalty, involvement and overall opinion on the chosen product in the form of PlayStation consoles. As such, the two main objectives of the analysis, which are split in secondary objectives, are the following:

Objective 1: Identifying the perceived consumer loyalty in relation to PlayStation as a brand and product.

O 1.1: Exploring the longevity as consumers of the brand.

O 1.2: Exploring the degree to which the Romanian consumer can be swayed to make the switch to another brand and which factors influence this decision the most.

O 1.3: Identifying the perceived type of consumption and playing commitment.

Objective 2: Identify the main attributes of importance which cultivate the consumption of PlayStation as a product.

O 2.1: Identifying whether console exclusivity is a strong enough of a factor to sway the consumer's perspective on the brand through its existence.

O 2.2: Identifying the attributes of the product which hold importance to the consumer in the buying, respectively decision-making process.

Subsequently, we have formulated the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between the perceived loyalty of the Romanian consumer and their longevity with the brand. (Constantin *et al*., 2014)

Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between the Romanian's consumer income and their decision to switch to another brand for a more accessible price. (Constantin *et al*., 2014)

In order to meet and satisfy the objectives of the research, the primary method carried out was the quantitative one - an online survey. After an extended review was conducted from literature in order to gain better understanding of the perception of gaming and its purposes, for entertainment specifically in this study, a survey was subsequently created in order to gain insight on the consumer's perspective and decision-making process in concern with the PlayStation brand and its products. As such, the instrument of use was an online questionnaire, specifically a cross-sectional one, which collects information from a specific sample drawn from a population and involves data collection at one point in time.

The reached sample size was of 600 individuals residing in Romania. The population of interest consisted of gamers who own one or more PlayStation console and are continuous consumers of the brand and its products, in order to be able to analyse their behaviour in relation to the brand and its attributes.

The survey was created online, through Google Docs and distributed with the aid of social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and PlayStation focused forums at the end of the March 2019, remaining available and accepting responses for a period of 2 months. It was posted only once in each respective group and in only one sample, with no duplicates or additional posts needed as a result of the prompt, quick responses. The data collection process was conducted from March 21st to May 21st of 2019, reaching a sample size of 600 participants.

The questionnaire consisted of 17 different questions, which were, with one exception, close-ended and encompassed only one section, focusing on single choice, multiple choice and Likert type of answers, aimed at finding out the consumers' preferences in terms of product performance, improvement as well as personal, individual data in regards to their commitment to the brand/playing.

The first part contains 4 questions and sought to identify the consumers' position to PlayStation as a brand, as well as product by focusing on simpler elements such as the already bought PlayStation products, competitor's products owned, along with the preferred type of games and the time dedicated to playing solely on a PlayStation console. This helped create an image of the consumer from their standpoint with the brand, in terms of involvement and play-time, to favoured products and perspective on PlayStation competitors in the form of the classic rival consoles (Xbox, Switch) or the vastly used PC.

The second part consists of 7 questions and encompasses the core of the questionnaire as it focuses on the consumer behaviour aspects sought to be analysed. It revolves around a more complex type of questions and the answers required necessitating better thought through answers. The questions ranged from statements which necessitated the consumer's agreement or disagreement based on a Likert scale, as well as multiple choice questions in relation to playing commitment and loyalty to the brand. Moreover, this section explored the factors that come into play from the consumer's perspective in terms of importance in the buying and decision-making process, as well as overall performance. The consumers' opinion on the switch to another brand was assessed, along with the aspects that could lead to such a decision to abandon PlayStation's products, all the while seeking to pinpoint the specific impact of exclusive games into this topic.

The third part concerns the demographic aspects of the targeted sample, including questions such as: age range, gender, current occupation, monthly income (in euro), and country of residence.

3. Research findings

3.1 Demographics

The study comprised of a 600 sample size. The main demographic area of interest investigated was the participant's country of residence. The study was distributed online and hoped to reach individuals on a global scale, but the results accounted for the majority of the individuals partaking in the survey as being from Romania. But because we reached only 90 responses from abroad (which is not concluding in order to make a comparison), we decided to refer only to those 600 Romanian respondents.

The majority of the participants were male, at a staggering over 90%. This was not an unexpected result, as statistics have shown continuously through time that there are more males who consider themselves “gamers”, than females (Statista, 2018). However, this is not to imply females do not play games, because they do, but the participants of this particular study favored male respondents. The age categories were spread out relatively evenly across the participants but indicated that most of the individuals belonged to two main intervals 18-24 years old (35/7 %, respectively 17.8%) and 25-34 (32.7%, respectively 45.6%), thus marking the target sample to be from their early 20’s to mid-30’s. It is important, however, to notice that there were also participants in the 45-55, respectively over 55 categories of age, where they accounted for 5.6%, respectively 3.3%. While these may not be very high, it proves the fact that gamers belong to all age categories and the appeal does not cease with age, in particular, however, as it appears the average Romanian consumer is of younger age.

In relation to current occupation, most participants registered either as students or full-time workers. The monthly income situation exhibited the first major discrepancy between the two categories as in the case of Romanian consumers, the average income placed them either under a value of 500 or up to 1000 € (41.2 %, respectively 36.8%), which enhances the idea that the Romanian consumer is not as prosperous from the materialistic point of view of income, which may, in turn, affect their buying intention and limit their options.

What occupation and monthly income highlight is an existing concordance between the occupation and income of the participants as the majority of both were full-time workers and students with incomes mostly under the value of 500 €. An expectation of high values in terms of income from participants who have proved to be mostly students and full-time workers is not realistic and would skewer the interpretation in an unfavourable manner.

3.2 Romanian PlayStation consumer perspective as a PlayStation user

- **Stand with the brand**

The consumer’s standpoint with the PlayStation brand was analysed through their answers to the first two questions which targeted current/previously owned PlayStation products, as well as any belonging to competitors. From the analysed data, what can be observed is that the vast majority have not owned any PlayStation product up until the latest model (PlayStation 4), where 558 out of 600 Romanian consumers (93%) have answered with a definitive yes to the question of having owned or owning a PS4 console. This points towards a tendency of the consumer towards the modern and new site of the product as the latest console provide players with new, intriguing and technologically advanced features which ease and improve their overall experience. Later on, we will take a look at exactly how much each element plays its part in the player's overall experience and outlook.

In the case of products owned alongside and apart from PlayStation, the Romanian consumer does not appear to be entirely or wholly exclusive to one product, but rather expands their choices for gaming devices to a certain extent. As such, for Xbox, Switch or Wii products, over 90% of the respondents gave a negative answer, while in the case of PC, 455 (75,8%) have recognized they do indeed own it along with a PlayStation product. It is important to note that 17% of respondents have confirmed not owning any other gaming system, thus marking the idea that some will, indeed, choose to stick solely to the PlayStation brand for gaming purposes. These results reinforce, however, the notion of consumers branding themselves to a certain console and sticking with it, as there are very few people who own both a PlayStation and a secondary gaming console since they serve the same purpose, more or less and while they rival each other in certain aspects, remain the same product at their core.

- **Longevity of the consumer**

In concern to the period of consumerism, it was found that the larger percentage of respondents (38%) have been consumers for a period ranging between 2 to 5 years, while the rest of the answers were relatively even spread across: 139 (232%) for more than 10 years, followed by 118 (19, 7%) for less than a year, 115 (19,2%) between 5 and 10 years.

- **Playing commitment and involvement**

This section sought to shape the consumers' personality in terms of the commitment they have to the product as a whole by analysing willingness to play, along with time devoted to this activity overall.

The results expose that the average playtime spent by the consumer on a PS console is between 1 and 7 hours, with 245 (40,8%) participants, followed by an increase to 8 - 13 hours of 174 (29%) of the answers. The remaining 30% is evenly spread to 13 - 19 hours and over 20, highlighting the more hardcore, hard commitment nature of some of the consumers who choose to indulge into long daily sessions of playtime over the course of a week. Further, preferences in relation to game genres were evaluated since they are the central, fundamental element of consoles and PS is no exception to this. As such, results showcase a widespread set of data across multiple genres of games, which will be displayed below for a more comprehensive and clear perspective.

Table 1. The preferred genre of games

Genre	Action	Adventure	Roleplay (RPG)	Strategy	Sport	Arcade	MOBA	MMO	Shooter	Other
Preferred	472	440	277	144	288	140	36	75	385	32
Not preferred	128	160	323	456	312	460	564	525	215	588

Source: Data from our own research

As it can be observed, the predominant genre of games that Romanian consumers tend to prefer action driven games, or those encompassing adventure or the classic shooter type of experience. On the other hand, games such as Arcade, MOBA and MMO seem to be the least favoured, perhaps due to their multi-player nature. In theory, it may that this preference in genres is a result of the consumer's genders, but this was tested and, in fact, the only type of games for which gender accounts as a factor of difference is "Shooter". Independent Samples Test result is 0.760275, which means that that 76% of the variance in preference for the shooter type of games is explained by the consumer's gender, a very high and telling percentage. This difference exists and is undoubtedly statistically significant in the overall outlook of comparison of the consumers, thus further enhancing the idea of females and males having different preferences in the game genres they choose to partake in, with males more focused towards mechanics driven ones.

The last statement which encompassed this segment of analysis focused on the player's own perception of their commitment to playtime. The choices varied from "I play for entertainment/relaxation purposes", thus, casually, to "I play often, but most games I hold particular interest to and have no decisive commitment to finish them" to reach the last stage of a user " I play on a regular basis and consider myself a hardcore type of gamer", within which commitment and involvement is at a significantly increased level in comparison to the other two mentioned categories. Henceforth, the collected data a proportional distribution among the results, with the first statement involving entertainment focused and casual play as the highest percentage at 39,7% (238 respondents) while the remaining two accounted for close percentages at 31,2 % (187 respondents), respectively 29,2% (175 respondents).

As a continuity of the factors which hold importance to the consumer, an assessment of the current features and the perspective on them is necessary for a complete exploration of the product from this aspect. Because elements such as virtual reality (VR) and streaming services are not as important and used by the consumer, the assessment of their performance is average, implying the need for improvement and novelty to be brought about for the consumer to properly start using them. Further, features such as share and remote play, which allow extension of gameplay with others and push towards group experience, encompassing, as well, a performance which meets expectations pushing towards a better assessment. This may be as a result of the fact that these features, to a certain extent, enhance the playing experience because they offer opportunities to do it together with others or from afar (remote play). These two features allow consumers to share their gameplay with friends anywhere at any time, as well as the option to stream the playing process on other devices. Exclusive titles score the highest in this section, further accounting for the consumer's focus on emphasizing their playing experiencing and thus perceiving the highest performance from the factor which aids this the most out of all the available ones.

Performance assessment will be given to PlayStation features in conjunction to what matters most for the consumer because those factors in question are those that contribute most to the extension and improvement of the playing experience, thus leading to a satisfactory outcome of enjoyment and gratification.

- **Switching away from the brand (reasons and factors of influence)**

The last section of the questionnaire cantered on the prospect of making the switch from the brand while exploring the factors of influence which could sway the consumer in this decision.

In regards to having already made the switch or considering it, a number of 378 (63%) have responded no to either of the possibilities, while 222 (37%) affirmed that they have, indeed, if not made the switch, at least consider it as an option to replace their PS product with another. With reference to the elements significant enough to impact this decision in any form, results have shown that there are only two aspects which the majority of the consumers would contemplate upon in relation to this decision. As such, better features (in the sense of controls/mechanics of use, services provided) and portability (the ability to use the product while on the go and ease carrying it around, anywhere and anytime) are essentials for the majority of the consumers and could potentially convince them to divert from PlayStation and seek another product that could offer them such benefits that will assist them in the overall playing experience.

At the other end of the frame, an extended library of games along with the influence of family and friends emerge as meaningless to consumers and do not represent, for a large number of them, a prospect which could not change their view on the situation or sway their outlook. Moreover, a surprising number of participants, 415 accounting for 69,2% of the total deems a more affordable price negligible. This ties into the results regarding monthly income where it was discovered that the majority of the participants average 500 - 1000 €, with the highest percentage even 500 €. Intrinsically, with these values in mind, there was an expected importance placed on the price of the product (usually 350€), but that appears to be just the opposite and showcases that the consumer will not shy away from the price of the product as long as it offers them the essentials which they seek and desire for a fulfilling, enjoyable and entertaining playing experience.

Moreover, the last statement of the questionnaire, which sought to discover whether the buying intention and usage of the product is limited (and in what measure) to the existence of the proclaimed "exclusive titles", which have become the staple, "iconic" elements of each console available on the market and has influenced consumerism in one manner or another.

As it can be assessed, a cumulative percentage of 59% participants agree to a strong extent with the statement and confirm the continuity of their buying intention and usage of the product, even if any kind of exclusive titles would be absent from the product package and overall offered experience. To many, this would not offset or take away from the experience, pointing towards a consumer not veering for exclusivity, but rather for well-rounded, polished features and aspects that can perk and spark interest in the experience as a whole process of entertainment. These results further enhance the ideas portrayed before - video games represent a means of entertainment and the consumer seeks them for enjoyment and pleasurable purposes, thus searching in them features and aspects that can improve and further prolong this state of gratification.

The hypotheses were tested and the results are presented below.

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between the perceived loyalty of the Romanian consumer and their longevity with the brand.

The longer a consumer has been with the brand, the more loyal they are expected to be to it. In order to be able to analyse the above hypothesis, a Pearson Correlation test was conducted. A Pearson loyalty-longevity correlation test was run to determine the relationship between longevity as a consumer and loyalty to the brand. According to the p-value $p = 0,000$ which is below the chosen significance level for this case ($\alpha = 0.01$), the test was statistically significant. The coefficient of correlation's strength of $r=0.213$ ($N= 600$) indicated a moderate, positively linear relationship between the two variables in question: longevity of consumerism, measured in years ($M= 2.46$, $SD= 1.052$) and loyalty ($M= 3.48$, $SD= 0.700$). Conclusively, the longer the Romanian consumer has been with the brand, there is an increase in the likelihood of them considering themselves loyal to the brand as times goes on.

Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between the Romanian's consumer income and their decision to switch to another brand for a more accessible price.

Given the average lower of the Romanian income in comparison to that of foreign consumers, they would hold more importance on the price factor. In order to interpret this hypothesis, a Chi-square test was conducted. The corresponding p-value of the test statistic is $p = 0.226$, that is greater than our chosen significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), we can conclude that there is not enough evidence to suggest a statistically significant association between monthly income and considering the switch to another brand for a more affordable price after the concluded Chi-square test $t(5.663)=4$, $p=0.226$. Based on these results, we can state that price holds no impact on the Romanian consumer's decision-making process in the scenario of considering switching to a completely different brand which offers more accessible prices. The Romanian's consumer sense of loyalty and desire to stand, stick continuously with the PlayStation is not influenced by the price they are willing to pay for it, even in spite of average monthly income. We can thus conclude that, for the Romanian consumer, the play experience is worth no matter the price and there are other factors they seek in the product, rather than price, which is negligible at best. They may even choose to sacrifice other needs in order to account for the price of the product which holds more interest to them than other factors, willing to spend even up to half of their monthly income on PlayStation and give up other materialistic necessities.

4. Conclusion: the Romanian consumer profile as PlayStation user

The average Romanian PlayStation consumer is male, belonging to the age interval 20 – 30 years old, either a student or full-time employee with an averagely low income ranging between 500 € and 1000 €. With a penchant for game genres such as classic action, adventure and shooter and less preference towards MOBAs and MMOs, the Romanian consumer's playing commitment is, more often than not, of casual nature and is chosen as a means of relaxation and for entertainment purposes. There is a tendency towards more dedicated engagement, but usually gratification comes in the form of a laid-back experience meant for unwinding and enjoyment purposes.

The Romanian consumer has a high perceived level of loyalty to PlayStation as a brand, which is highlighted through various aspects, such as their longevity with the PlayStation brand and its product, which averages between 2 to 5 years and is, in turn, related to the loyalty they display. The longer a consumer, the higher sense of loyalty and involvement to the brand. As such, it appears that the Romanian consumer distinguishes a link between stability and loyalty and , while it takes time to as his time with the brand increases, so does their allegiance and devotion to it.

Moreover, the Romanian consumer is not tied down to the PlayStation product as a whole, even if remarkably loyal to it. While he will not limit himself to PlayStation as a gaming system, he will not buy competitor items in terms of consoles and only focus on PCs which are usually multi-functional, further enhancing the sense of loyalty by sticking to PlayStation as a console product. From this perspective, of PlayStation products perception, the Romanian consumer showcases a tendency towards being a “modern” consumer, as they cultivate curiosity and buying intentions for the newer models (PlayStation 4), rather than older models. This speaks for preference in terms of novelty, as the Romanian consumer is on the lookout for technological advancement in their product, which can further enhance their overall playing and entertainment experience as a whole. On this note, the Romanian consumer treasures and holds in high importance the factors related to product quality and enhancement of their playing experience in the form of games library, exclusive titles and graphics quality. Each of these acts as a catalyst for building and augmenting player immersion, enjoyment and involvement through unique elements which build up the experience – PlayStation as a product would not matter as much in the absence of the video games that make it what it is. These influence and push towards meaningful experiences, which, in turn, lead towards consumer satisfaction and gratification, thus happiness with the chosen product and an increase in the level of loyalty. On the other hand, features such as virtual reality (VR), streaming services hold much less value to the Romanian consumer, indicating a move away from technical features that are not strictly related to the playing experience and do not particularly bring any upgrade in that sense, but are merely bonus features which encourage the usage of different services on the same product that are not the core functionalities. The social factors, such as family and friends influence, do not account for much for the Romanian consumer, implying a nature of not being easily swayed or impressionable by those around. Even so, in contrast, professional product reviews appear to be quite crucial for the Romanian consumer and an aspect worth taking into consideration in the decision-making process which will influence the final buying intention to a certain degree. What sets apart the Romanian consumer from this point of view is that, there is a tendency towards placing more reliability on professional product reviews, consequently highlighting the need for a proper, dependable opinion to inspect and scrutinize before diving into making a purchase. As such, the Romanian consumer is a more careful assessor in relation to the product he contemplates buying, choosing a more careful, standardized approach which takes into consideration multiple factors, rather than making a quick, harsh decision that may not turn out to be as beneficial as originally thought.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing characteristics of the Romanian consumer is in relation to the way the perceived product price in their decision-making process as a whole. Even in spite of low, average income per month and occupation of student or full-time employee, the Romanian consumer does not shy away from the high price of the product, believing quality is most important when considering a new product to try out. This showcases commitment to the product and willingness to sacrifice other needs, if the situation arises, for a fulfilling, enjoyable and entertaining PlayStation experience. All features mentioned previously served immersion and enhancement purposes, while price is a mere factor that must be accounted for in the buying decision and make it possible, but for the Romanian consumer it is only there for that reason only and plays no critical role in the final outcome of their buying intention. This further ties into the Romanian consumer's approach to the scenario in which a potential switch to another brand is to be examined as better features (games, graphics, controls) account for the main reason, along with portability (being able to take the product anywhere and at any time) which, once again, over and above strengthen the Romanian consumer's desire for an enhanced and embellished playing experience. Meaningful, entertaining experiences are what the Romanian consumer is looking for the most out of the product and that which attracts him the most towards even another product than PlayStation. Repeatedly, price and family/friends opinion remain standardized factors regarded as less important or relevant in this process and emphasize the meaningful, fulfilling experience focused essence of the Romanian consumer. The Romanian consumer's loyalty does tie into the idea of making the switch to another brand as the relationship is negative, implying that higher levels of loyalty will lead to being more closed to the idea of switching the brand or acknowledging it as a possible opportunity. As a result of the high level of loyalty of the Romanian consumer, he does not overly-dwell on this aspect and is content with the brand and product he chose to dedicate himself through in PlayStation.

Last but not least, as a loyal one, the Romanian's consumer outlook on the essentiality of PlayStation exclusive titles offers insight into the behaviour in relation to this staple concept as the leading, marketing and motivational tool that encourages the consumption of consoles as a whole. The Romanian consumer affirms a clear and strong stand in this matter, willing to continue purchasing and using a PlayStation console even in the event that the product offered no more exclusive games. Fundamentally, the Romanian consumer's focus does not lie within "exclusive" features that set their product apart from others, but rather, what matters is a well-rounded product that can encompass of all their desired elements into one, to offer a seamless, meaningful entertainment experience in the form of video games to which access is made through a PlayStation console.

Conclusively, the Romanian consumer is a loyal, long-time PlayStation customer, with a high focus on factors that enhance the overall playing experience in terms of entertainment and fulfilment. With a preference for novelty in terms of products, the Romanian consumer is a careful assessor and will not rush in their decision making process, but attentively consider factors of importance for him (such as available games library and graphics quality) all the while showing an willingness to sacrifice other needs to fulfil their playing experience as a means for entertainment and enjoyment (price is not a factor, in spite of low average monthly income). While not limiting himself only to PlayStation as a gaming product, the Romanian consumer may consider alternatives but only if they meet the requirements which strengthen the overall experience, as a player choosing to engage in this particular activity through a console. To the Romanian consumer, stability and longevity with the PlayStation brands points towards a tendency in an increased level of loyalty, highlighting a time-window when the Romanian consumer needs to ensure the brand is what they are seeking for before becoming loyal and committing to it. The Romanian consumer displays a complex, characteristic behaviour which shapes up the buying intentions and carves the perspective on PlayStation as a brand and product he has chosen to commit to for playing purposes and entertainment fulfilment reasons. Exclusivity is not an appeal to the Romanian consumer and neither is a measure of the loyalty level to the brand, made apparent by the decision to continuously buy and use PlayStation products in the theoretical absence of console exclusives. The Romanian consumer is highly and entirely aware of what he seek and desire from a product and what to focus on in order to choose the most suitable product and achieve this. Meaningful, entertaining experiences are what the Romanian consumer is looking for the most out of the product and that which entices the most towards the product and shapes up the behaviour in relation to PlayStation as a means for entertainment and play, usually casual in nature and relaxation focused, looking to achieve a state taken over by a gratifying and satisfactory experience as a whole.

While initially intended to be a global study, respondents from outside Romania did not meet the expected, hoped for number, thus restraining the manner of interpretation of the results. A larger sample of foreign consumer could have accounted for more reliable, error-free comparison and results.

The research findings have portrayed a Romanian consumer profile before the pandemics. However, future studies during or post-pandemics may achieve more in terms of reliability and discover novelties in regards to the topic.

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