Chapter 16
Factors That Explain Adolescent and Young Adult Mobile Game Play, Part 2:
A Quantitative Examination of the Casual Player in the Context of Age and Gender

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ABSTRACT

The second of two chapters, a study is presented that quantitatively examined the adolescent and young adult casual video game player from the perspective of age and gender. A total of 1,950 South Korean students self-reported their game play on mobile phones by answering a 92-item questionnaire designed to capture data on technology ownership; preference for game genre and titles; where and how often games were played; what factors influence the selection of games to play, what game features were the most desirable, the rationale behind playing games, and psychophysical changes experienced as a result of playing; as well as, spending habits with regard to game purchases. The findings supported many of the age and gender suppositions made about the casual player. For example, females played mobile games as much as males, and play time was limited to 30 minute increments almost equally among age groups and gender. New discoveries were also found to include positive benefits stemming from mobile games, such as improved mood and feelings of well-being along with better mental attention and focus.

INTRODUCTION

In part one of this two chapter presentation, we discussed that considerable attention continues to concentrate on the unfavorable aspects of video games (DaCosta, Nasah, Kinsell, & Seok, 2011), with these games long viewed a public concern in the U.S. and other countries (Kirsh, 2003; Schneider, Lang, Shin,

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& Bradley, 2004). Even so, advocates have strived to comprehend the attractiveness of video games and how such overwhelming interest can be harnessed to encourage the use of these games in nonentertainment contexts. This interest is not baseless, as there is empirical evidence supporting the educational benefits of these games. With interest increasing in the utilization of video games in primary, secondary, and higher education; government; financial services; healthcare; hospitality; science and technology; telecommunications, and corporate and military training (Garris, Ahlers, & Driskell, 2002), purposed for achieving a variety of learning outcomes (Kebritchi & Hirumi, 2008).

Advancements in mobile computing have, to some extent, paved the way for research in video games, with focus on social development, intellectual activities (Spikol & Milrad, 2008), and general learning (Facer et al., 2004; Rogers & Price, 2006). As discussed in part one, video games played on mobile devices (e.g., smartphones, tablets), hereafter "mobile games", have been of interest because they are frequently depicted as *different* from video games played on traditional gaming platforms (e.g., dedicated game console, handheld game device, personal computer [PC]). Mobile games have been characteristically regarded as simple, problem-solving or puzzle-based games (e.g., *Sudoku*®, *Where's My Water*®), a departure from complex, traditional games commonly cited for their massively multiplayer online (MMO; e.g., *Lineage*®, *RuneScape*®) features and mature content (e.g., *Alien: Isolation*®, *The Walking Dead*® season series). Resulting in considerable debate about the notion of the "casual" player, often contrasted with the "hardcore" counterpart, pointing to tribal divisions within the video game culture (Nelson, 2013; see part one of this two chapter presentation for a more in-depth discussion on differences between the casual and hardcore player).

Delineating between the casual and hardcore player, however, is difficult (Juul, 2010). For example, although casual play has become almost synonymous with mobile games, there are many factors that play a role beyond preference for gaming platform, to include, frequency of play, game titles and genre, and circumstances for play. Age and gender are said also to be such factors in this form of game play.

Mobile game play is oftentimes portrayed as being the predominant pastime of young people. This may stem from the fact that these individuals already use mobile devices (Paavilainen, 2003). They are also more likely to be smartphone owners (Information Solutions Group, 2011). This is important because it has been proposed that those who rely heavily on their mobile phones are more likely to play these types of games opposed to those who depend on landlines (Rainie & Keeter, 2006, as cited in Katz & Krzys Acord, 2008). However, there is research to suggest that mobile games appeal to a much broader audience, and are actually played by people of all ages (Grimes, Kantroo, & Grinter, 2010).

Furthermore, females are also thought to play mobile games as much as males (Information Solutions Group, 2011, 2013; McAteer, 2005). A departure from what has primarily been seen as a male-dominated activity (admittedly, it could be argued that the game industry has traditionally targeted males [Fron, Fullerton, Morie, & Pearce, 2007]). In fact there is considerable research to suggest that middle-aged females dominate the mobile gaming market, comprising Caucasian, high school-educated women, who play in their living rooms and bedrooms in the evening (as well as proposing that this demographic are the highest spenders of mobile games; e.g., PlayPhone, 2014). This could be explained by the increasing popularity of social networking (Information Solutions Group, 2011) or social games (e.g., *Words with Friends*®, *Minecraft: Pocket Edition*®; Information Solutions Group, 2011; Kirriemuir & McFarlane, 2004). In that those who play mobile games are believed to also frequent social media (e.g., *Instagram*®, *Twitter*®; Information Solutions Group, 2011). Another explanation may lie in the game genre, in that females are said to prefer card, puzzle, and arcade games (McAteer, 2005). There is data to support this supposition. There are findings, for instance, showing that *Clash of Clan*® players are predominately