

Women's mobile gaming love not enough

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No longer just the domain of teenage boys, video games lead to big profits for many companies, and manufacturers of mobile game players are no exception. In fact, more women are playing games on their mobile phones than men, according to one survey.

According to a survey by Dallas-based Parks Associates, a market research group, women make up 59 percent of all those in the United States who play games on their mobile phones. What's more, 61 percent of those women played games one to four hours per month.

"These results reaffirm the importance both of women in the gaming market and of the industry's efforts to promote casual games for the mobile phone," said John Barrett, director of research at Parks Associates, which released its study entitled "electronic gaming in the digital home" over the weekend. "Women are the foundation of the gaming market, and as an industry, we need to cater to their preferences. This effort is key to future revenue growth because right now women generally spend little on gaming even though they like to play games and often have disposable income. The industry just needs to find a game they are will to pay for," he added.

Interestingly enough, women are the more enthusiastic Internet gamers on personal computers too, being particularly fond of online trivia and card games. Male players, on the other hand, are more interested in intense action and role-playing games, the research group reported.

Still, playing games on-the-go hasn't been as popular as some in the

business had hoped, most notably for mobile phone operators. While cell phones have become ever more sophisticated to provide crisper images on screens coupled with improved access, there are signs that people are actually downloading fewer games onto their handsets than before, in part because of the relatively high cost of getting access to the videos, which average about \$10 per game.

But while frustration with the game providers persists, mobile-phone makers should not abandon their hopes for the market to boost their profit margin in the long run, so argued San Francisco-based Telephia Mobile Research. The research group pointed out that downloaded games made up 53 percent of all games played on mobile phones, while 39 percent of games played pre-existed on the handset, and 8 percent were played online on the mobile Web. Meanwhile, 71 percent of all downloaded mobile-game revenues came from on-portal game purchases, while 29 percent came off-portal.

"The large share of pre-existing games reflects an opportunity for carriers and content providers to generate more revenue by converting that game play into downloaded, pay-for-play games," said Kanishka Agarwal, vice president of new products at Telephia.

Still, what motivates consumers to use their mobile handsets to play games in the first place is being familiar with the game through other platforms such as personal computers more than having free trials.

"Cohesive marketing across all platforms -- PC, console and mobile -- is critical to a mobile game title's overall success," Agarwal said.

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