

\$6 billion for Candy Crush highlights the importance of female mobile gamers

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Credit: picjumbo.com from Pexels

Computer game publisher [Activision Blizzard](#) has this week [announced](#) that they intend to buy [King Digital](#), the makers of "Candy Crush Saga", for US \$5.9 billion.

Unlike [competitors](#) like [Zynga](#), [King Digital](#) does actually manage to make money from its games, although its revenues have been declining and there seems to be no obvious replacement for Candy Crush on the [horizon](#). For Activision, the question is what they will get out of the purchase of the company if, as many fear, the gaming public get bored with the current batch of games.

Activision, best known for its first person shooter games like Call of Duty, may be banking on King Digital to bring it into the world of [mobile gaming](#), and probably more importantly, provide access to an extremely large female audience. Of King Digital's 447 million monthly [mobile users](#), 58% are [girls or women](#). 62% of Candy Crush players are female, many of whom are willing to pay for in-app purchases which is where the money is made in mobile games.

The games industry is peculiar in that it largely [ignores](#) the majority of its potential customers. Women make up 52% of gamers, but companies like Activision currently sell games that appeal predominantly to their male customer base. The irony here of course is that some of the games that currently appeal to a female audience like Candy Crush, Words with Friends, and Farmville require massively lower budgets to produce than the highly produced first person games like Call of Duty and [Assassin's Creed](#).

One possible reason for the seeming shortsightedness of the games' industry is that there are [very few](#) women involved in the development of games. This in turn has an impact simply because the types of games that appeal to a female audience would not be the games that most of the designers and programmers working in the games industry would normally play.

With Candy Crush, King Digital seem to have hit on a game that is appealing to women. In particular, the Candy Crush games are puzzle

games that are highly visual, have a social element to them and allow the player to make quick initial progress. Because this progress is also partly down to chance, it provides challenges and rewards in such a way as to maintain a high level of interest in the game. These attributes mean that the game can also be played repetitively without getting bored. The prompts for in-app purchases kick in fairly quickly and it doesn't take long before buying new episodes is the quickest way that players can continue with the game.

Whether King Digital deliberately targeted women with the game or have any particular insight into producing new games that will continue to resonate with that market remains to be seen.

Activision faces the challenge of dwindling interest in console games as sales worldwide for this format continues to [slow](#). The games market is increasingly shifting to mobile, and King Digital has always been a "mobile first" games developer so brings Activision additional expertise in that area. This is important because of the particular challenges of the mobile platform for games developers. Not only is it constrained in terms of space and the limitations of battery life on a mobile device, but the barrier to producing games is much lower resulting in much more competition.

Creating games that are "hits" is down to chance as much as anything else. Companies that are built around a single game concept like [Rovio's Angry Birds](#) also face the additional hurdle of breaking away from an idea that has proved wildly successful. It is too tempting to simply make a new version of the same [game](#). With a new owner, the makers of Candy Crush may have enough incentive to successfully do that.

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