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Hypercasual Oyunlar Sadece Gençler Tarafından mı Oynanır? Video Oyunu Oynayanların Demografik Özellikleri Üzerine Bir Araştırma*	Do Hypercasual Games Only Attract Young People? An Assessment on the Demographic Characteristics of Gamers
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ÖZ

Teknolojinin gelişmesi ve bilgisayar teknolojilerinin hayatın her kademesine dahil olması ile birlikte video oyunlar da hayatın ve sosyalleşmenin bir parçası haline gelmiştir. Sofistike strateji oyunlarından basit telefon uygulaması oyunlara kadar çok geniş bir spektrumda olan video oyunlarının kullanıcıları da sanıldığı gibi teknoloji içine dünyaya gözlerini açan Z kuşağı değildir. Günümüzde okul öncesi çocuklardan gençlere, orta yaştan ileri yaş grubuna kadar birçok birey video oyunları ile zaman geçirme, sosyalleşme ve kendini geliştirme çabası içindedir. Değişen sosyal hayat koşulları, teknolojinin bir araya gelmeden de iletişimi mümkün kılması gibi nedenlerle, bireyler sosyalleşmede daha fazla bilgisayar teknolojilerini kullanırken, video oyunları da yıllar içinde giderek daha fazla rağbet görmeye başlamıştır. Gelişmiş konsollar yanında telefon uygulamaları üzerinden kolaylıkla indirilebilen basit mobil oyunlar dünyanın her yanında giderek daha fazla kullanıcıya hitap etmektedir. Bu çalışmada basit (hypercasual) oyunları oynayan bireylerin demografik özellikleri, farklı kaynaklardan elde edilen veriler üzerinden analiz edilecektir. Çalışmada elde edilen bulgulara göre, bu oyunlar çocuk ve gençlerden çok orta ve ileri yaş grubu kullanıcılar tarafından oynanmaktadır. Bu çerçevede bu çalışma, hypercasual oyunların tarihçesi, küresel ölçekte ve yerelde kullanım düzeyleri, kullanıcıların demografik özellikleri analiz edilerek değerlendirilecektir. Elde edilen bulgular, bu sektörde teknoloji geliştirme çalışmaları yapan bilim insanları ve piyasa oyuncularının hizmetine sunulacak ve çalışmanın son bölümünde kullanıcı profillerinin geliştirilmesine yönelik politika önerileri de yer verilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Video Oyunu, Hypercasual Oyunlar, Demografik Özellikler

ABSTRACT

With the development of technology and the inclusion of computer technologies in every stage of life, video games have also become a part of life and socialization. The consumers of video games, which come in a wide spectrum from sophisticated strategy games to simple phone application games, are not only the generation Z, contrary to popular opinion. Today, many individuals, from pre-school children to young people, from middle-age to advanced age groups, are in an effort to spend time, socialize and improve themselves with video games. Due to the changing social life conditions and the fact that technology makes communication possible without coming together, individuals use computer technologies more in socialization, and video games have started to gain more popularity over the years. Simple mobile games that can be easily downloaded via phone applications, as well as advanced consoles, appeal to more and more users all over the world. In this study, the demographic characteristics of individuals playing simple (hypercasual) games will be analyzed through data obtained from different sources. According to the findings of the study, these games are played by middle and advanced age group users rather than children and young people. In this context, this study will be evaluated by analyzing the history of hypercasual games, their usage levels on a global scale and locally, and the demographic characteristics of the users. The findings will be made available to scientists and market players working on technology development in this sector, and policy recommendations for the development of user profiles will be included in the last part of the study.

Keywords: Video games, Hyper casual games, demographic properties

Introduction

Video games can be defined as electronic games that can be played with the help of equipment such as computers, mobile phones, game consoles. Esposito (2005) defines video games as games played on a computer (mobile) with a certain story and fiction through visual and auditory apparatus. The most important feature of video games is that they are interactive. Although there are millions of different video games with different themes and goals, almost all of them are played cooperatively or competitively on various devices such as consoles, computers, or mobile phones (Granic, Lobel and Rutger, 2014:67). Owen (2016) describes video

games as sports that take place on the computer. Merriam-Webster defines a video game as an electronic game that players control the game on a video screen. We can conclude the definition of a video game as various games which have a specialized electronic gaming device, computer, mobile phone, or display screen to control graphic images (www.dictionary.com). According to the Entertainment Software Association (ESA) research, there are 214 million video players in the USA alone. This huge statement has revealed that video gaming is the fastest growing industry in the entertainment industry on a global scale, with consumers spending tens of billions of dollars every year in this industry.

This huge statement has revealed that video gaming is the fastest growing industry in the entertainment industry on a global scale, with consumers spending tens of billions of dollars every year on this industry. More than 2020 billion was spent on software and hardware needs and accessories for video games in 50 alone (Richter, 2021). The opportunity to socialize without having to come together physically, which the games offer to its consumers, promises a social life that is in harmony with the rapidly developing living standards of recent years. In addition, the personal profiles defined through the characters and avatars used in the game offer the player the opportunity to build the world they want to build in real life. A wide range of game alternatives, from web-based games to board games, from online games to games played through social media channels, provide satisfying opportunities to the consumers of this sector. The ever-growing game industry offers simple, short, and fast games to its consumers as well as more serious and sophisticated games (İlgaz Büyükbaykal and Abay Cansabuncu, 2020:3). Despite these developments in the game industry, many scientists focused on the positive and negative aspects of the games and caused significant confusion. In Table-1, the positive and negative effects of video games are briefly explained.

Positive effects	Negative effects
animated games improve visual and spatial abilities	violent games are assumed to increase violent tendencies
educational games help students gain knowledge and experience permanently	aggressive thoughts, behaviors increase
computer-assisted exercise games to increase physical activity	decrease in empathy
social games develop empathy skills	may reduce school success
	may cause a lack of concentration
	may cause gaming addiction

Table-1. Positive and negative effects of video games
Source: Prot et al. (2012:648)

According to Anderson and Dill (2000), video games may increase aggressive behaviors by increasing aggressive thoughts and emotions even though they are kept under physiological control. Ferguson (2007) pointed out that aggressive thoughts and arousals negatively affect social behaviors. Higher exposure to aggression may lead to aggressive personality (Bartholow, Sestir, and Davis, 2005). Furthermore, playing excessive video games may lead to

desensitization which can be defined as a reduction in emotional reactivity to violence (Carnagey, Anderson, and Bushman, 2005).

Keeping the negative aspects, on one hand, a strong perception has emerged that technological developments and video games can be used effectively in many areas from education to health, from daily life to business life. Many authors have also explained that with the right strategies, video games can be quite useful (Granic, Lobel, and Engels, 2014; Eichenbaum, Bavelier, and Green, 2014). In addition, the video game pie chart, which is growing all over the world today, is considered as an essential sector with the revenues from the games as well as the advertising revenues.

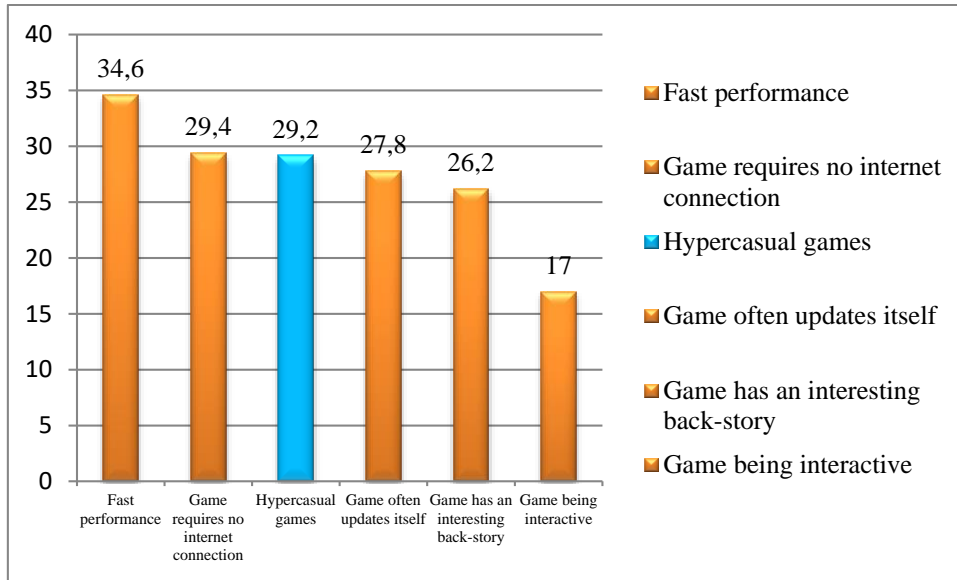
Depending on the platform on which the game is played, games can also be subdivided into computer games, console games, and phone games. Simple games (hypercasual games) in phone applications started to attract much more attention due to the development of smartphones in the late 90s since they are portable and their use in social communication is more effective. (Clement, 2021).

The main features of hypercasual games can be listed as follows:

- a. *They are simple::* These games being easy to understand and play make them preferable
- b. *They cause addiction:* It has been observed that those who play these games continue to play the game intensely for a long time.
- c. *They can be played with smartphones and tablets:* Due to these features, it has brought the opportunity to be played anywhere. and in any environment.
- d. *They are minimalistic:* The user interface is quite minimalist. There are not many menus, elements, and numbers on the game screen. Many hypercasual games are played with only one start/end button.
- e. *Playing time lapses as short as 1 minute*
- f. *Reward and success performance that satisfies the player*
- g. *They offer limitless gaming:* In hypercasual games, the number of games is generally considered to be infinite. In addition, there are more difficult levels as one progresses in these games.
- h. *They consist of mechanical operations and are easy to control.*
- i. *They require no experience/knowledge:* These games do not require skills, game experience, high concentration, or learning certain operations. They can be easily played without requiring too much focus while traveling on public transport, watching TV, or chatting.

- j. *They have a large player and follower base:* Hypercasual games are big in the market and amongst players, because they are simple, easy to play, and do not require high focus or memory skills. In addition, the short and fast progress of these games allows them to be played anywhere, anytime.

In Graph-1, video players' reasons for their game preferences are explained. While the highest reason was stated to be the fast performance of the game with %34,6 %29,2 of the players stated that the game they played was simple. In fact, according to this graphic, almost one in every three players states that they play simple games (hypercasual games).



Graph -1. Players' reasons for choosing a game
Source: Statista (2021)

The types of hypercasual games can be listed as follows:

- Time:** Games to complete in a time frame.
- Speed:** Games in which speed and adeptness are important.
- Crossword:** puzzle-solving games (word-finding, question answering, etc.)
- Social media games:** simple games that have applications in social media such as Facebook or Instagram.

Hypercasual games, which are more popular amongst gamers all over the world increasingly, are shown as a great source of income for their producers, along with their cost-effectiveness. Table-2 lists the countries that download the most hypercasual games on a global scale. In this ranking, the USA represents the highest rate with %30,15 while Brazil ranks second with %10,16 In this list, Turkey is the 8th with %3,68. %3,68.

Rank	Country	Download rate (%)
1	USA	30.15
2	Brazil	10, 16
3	UK	6.52
4	Germany	5.18
5	France	5.1
6	India	4.67
7	China	4.54
8	Turkey	3.68
9	Mexico	3,49
10	Russia	3,48
11	Canada	3,29

Table 2. Download Rates of Hyper casual Games by Country
Source: Tenjin (2018:17)

1. Historical development of hypercasual games

Though the use of digital games for entertainment is an important initiative, the history of game science goes back hundreds of years. In 1810, the Prussian army tried to train its soldiers through war simulations using war games. Over time, war games have become a standard part of military training. II. In the post-World War II period, when a significant part of the US soldiers became managers in companies, they started to use this information in company management simulations. The main purpose of the games applied in the companies was to have experienced and competent personnel in the sector in order to make the company more competitive. The first computer-aided business game was developed in the 1950s. However, due to the low level of computer technologies in this period, the level of success was low. In the 1960s, the simulation field of game science extended to many different fields from sociology to psychology, from international relations to urban management, from geography to ecology (Klabbers, 2006). In 1979 Atari company improved the Lunar lander game. Game designers introduced the joystick to control the game with both hands. Those games were characterized by speed and high-performance strategies. 1980, all video games were based on violence which offered simple stages for free time activity. Pac-man was a milestone in gaming history as the game allowed gamers to decide the features of characters. In 1985, Tetris was introduced in the gaming sector. The game was very simple. There were bricks falling from the top of the screen to the bottom. The aim of the game was to put the bricks in the proper form of blocks. In 1989, Nintendo company introduced GameBoy and Mario Bros (Karışmaz, 2019:24-26). After the technology revolution in the internet and

computer technologies in the 1990s, the concept of games has reached a very different dimension. Today, a wide variety of game models such as action, adventure, strategy, mathematics, sports, educational, online have developed. Recently, hypercasual games are also very popular.

It is no doubt that smart mobile phones have a great role in the popularity of hypercasual games. Launched by Vietnamese Dong Nguyen in May 2013 Flappy Bird was downloaded 2014 million times until January 50 making it the most downloaded game to date (amazon.com).

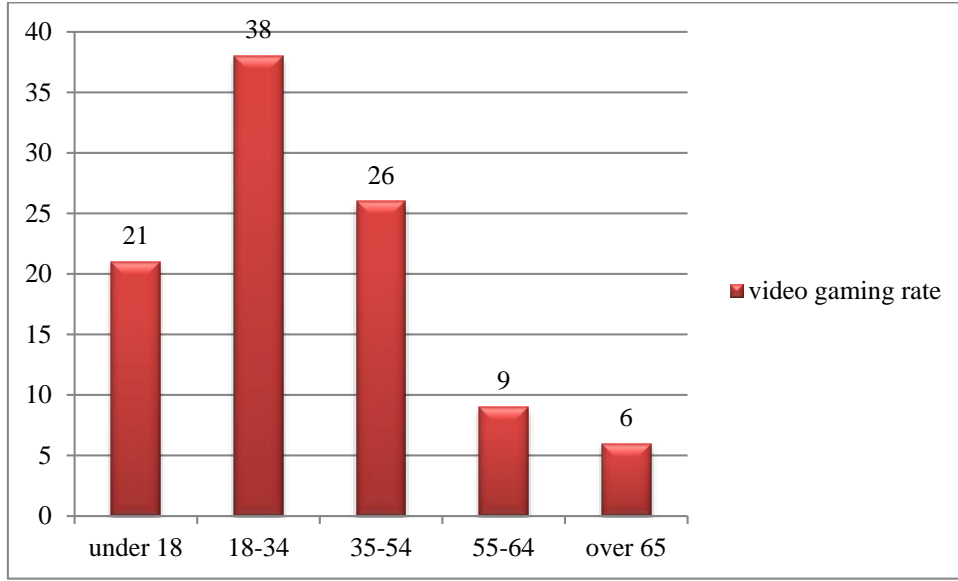
However, the history of these games goes back much further. The earliest known hypercasual games are Space Travel, developed in 1969, and Pong, developed in 1972. Despite all their convenience, these games did not spread widely among the players due to the fact that computers and consoles were very expensive and rare at that time. In 1975, Atari released a home version of Pong. This version enabled thousands of players to play games at home. Breakout (1976), Pac-Man (1980), Tetris (1984) are other historically important hypercasual games that progressed rapidly on the path opened by Atari (Karnes, 2020).

Over the years, the demand for hypercasual games has accelerated and increased. The hypercasual gaming industry, which brought in 2-2,5 billion in revenue as of 2018, has recently begun to include companies that are well-known by the financial industry, such as Goldman Sachs. Goldman Sachs entered the industry with an investment of 200 million dollars in the Voodoo game (Kaplan, 2019).

On the other hand, during the pandemic period for the last two years, lockdown measures taken globally have increased the interest in these games much more. Installs doubled from December 2019 to March 2020. In March 2020, the month when lockdown went into full force, downloads of hyper-casual games increased by 72%. In 2020, hypercasual games showed %1,18 increase in Android applications; and %2,72 increase in iOS applications (Adjust + Unity, 2020:3, 14).

2. Demographics of hyper-casual game players

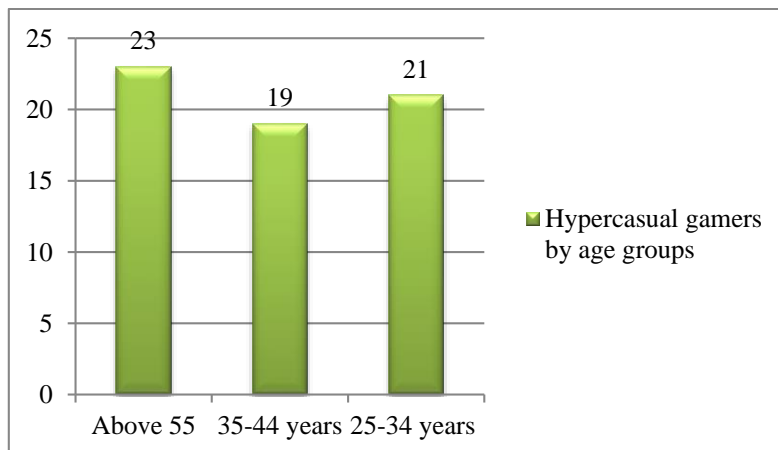
One of the most common misconceptions about video games is that these games only attract young people. However, the target audience of the video game industry is not only young people but also middle and upper-middle-age players who show as much interest as the first. Particularly, elderly and retired individuals see video games as an important tool for socializing due to being excluded from physical social life, especially during the pandemic. In addition to social media, simple computer and mobile phone games called hypercasual games have become essential for many middle and older individuals. ESA drew attention to this issue and emphasized that video gamers present various profiles rather than merely being a leisure activity for young people or an entertainment tool that only attracts men. The most important piece of evidence explaining this is that according to the study conducted by ESA, %41 of all gamers are female and the average age range is much higher than expected with 35-44 (Richter, 2021).



Graph -2. Rates of playing video games by age
Source: Statista (2021)

According to the findings of the survey study, in which more than 4000 people participated in the USA, %70 of minors, %65 of adults, and %41 of women report that they play video games regularly.

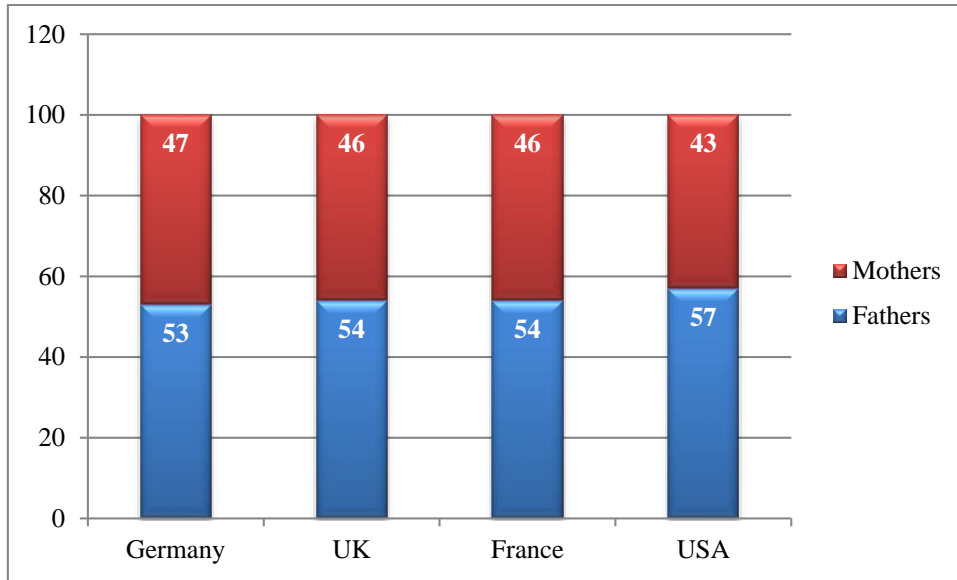
On the other hand, according to a study conducted in the USA, the answer to "who plays casual games" was determined as %63 women and %37 men. This finding reveals that women are the highest target group for mobile games and hypercasual games. It has been revealed that the largest player group in hypercasual games is elderly, unlike video games (www.medium.com, 2021) (www.medium.com, 2021).



Source: www.medium.com (2021)

In the research conducted by Tapjoy (2017) the results were outstanding. It was determined that the biggest age group playing hypercasual games was individuals over 55 years of age, contrary to what was thought. %57 of players over the age of 55 declared that they play hypercasual games at least 10 times a week. On the other hand, only %47 of the youth who play hypercasual games between the ages of 18-24 declared that they engage in these games at least 10 or more times a week (www.medium.com).

As shown in Graph-3, in a survey conducted by Statista on 25-54 people aged 36.641 in 4 countries including Germany, England, France, and the USA, it was observed that parents are as interested in video games as children and young people. Additionally, it turns out that the belief that fathers are more interested in video games than mothers, in general, is not valid.



Graph 4. Parents Playing Video Games
Source: Statista (2021)

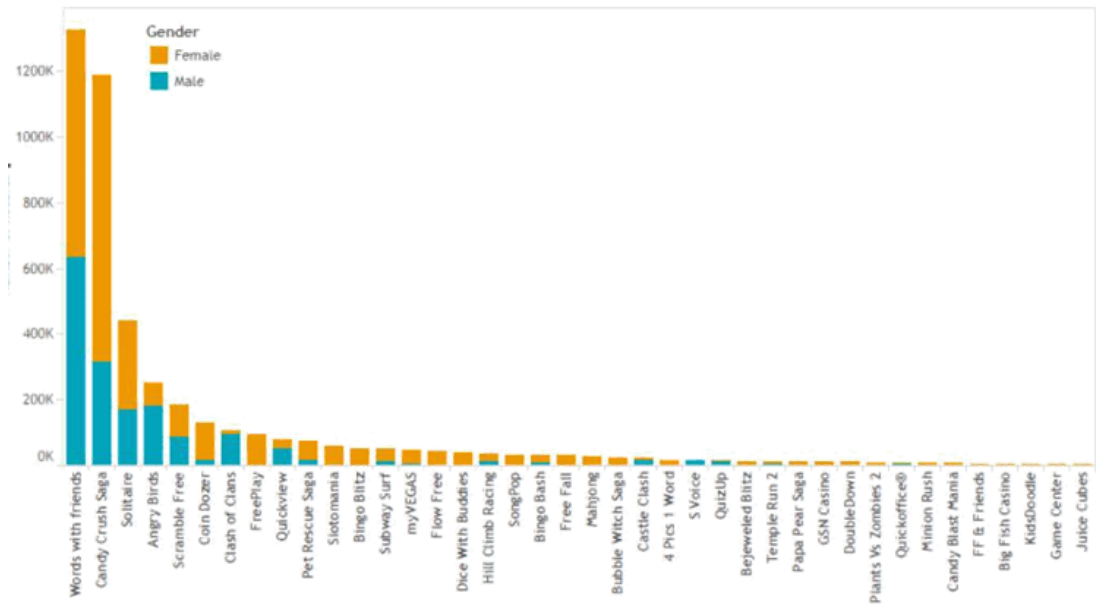
As explained in Graph-4 it was stated that German mothers represented the highest rate with %47 and that US mothers ranked four with %43. Although it has the lowest score among the four countries, it was observed that the rate of mothers from the USA was well above the predicted values.

3. Hypercasual Games on Smartphones

Particularly with the development of smartphones, mobile phones have become one of the most important items of our daily usage. Aside from their actual roles, mobile phones have offered major game platforms and markets all over the world. Starting from 2008, more than 950.000 mobile games have been published through the App Store. While there were mostly mid-core games and hard-core games until 2017, starting from that year, hypercasual games became very popular.

The easiness of these games provided gamers to spend limited time and play periodically during the day. Easy to play causes easy to learn, play, and addiction because of their short duration of 3-5 minutes and easiness to stop playing with low frustration value. Most smartphone players spend 30 minutes on mobile games. Although 30 minutes is too little to finish one game, gamers do not need to worry about the time spent on hyper-casual games due to the short playing period of those games (Sun, 2020:860). There is also a misconception that mobile games are generally more popular with teenagers and children. However, researches conducted in many countries has shown that the main customers of mobile games are middle-aged women. Female players represent %63 while male players represent %37 of the total mobile gamers. Furthermore, while female players play these games almost every day, only %47 male players play a hypercasual game daily (www.medium.com, 2021).

It is again predominantly women that prefer the games available in smartphone applications. While %66 of men prefer mobile games, this rate is %70 among women. Women who are usually 40 years old or older prefer mobile games. The time spent in the game during the day is %25 longer for women than men. According to a study conducted in 2016 games such as Candy Crush Saga, Worlds with Friends, Angry Birds are the most preferred hypercasual games by women.



Graph 5. Mobile games preferred by male and female players (2016)
Source: www.mmaglobal.com (2021)

In Graph-5 the rates of male and female players' game preferences in 2016 are explained. In the graphic in which women are shown in orange and men are shown in blue, it is clearly seen that women play games such as Words with Friends, Candy Crush Saga, Solitaire much more than men. Similarly, in other mobile games, it is seen with the color orange that women are much more than men.

Policy Recommendations

Computer technologies, which is a growing sector, provide individuals with the opportunity to have a good time and socialize, as well as to meet all their needs. In the 1990s, when the revolution in computer and internet technologies was experienced, the generation representing the young and middle-aged generation kept a distance from these technologies for a long time. However, with the development of social media alternatives, individuals belonging to the middle and advanced age group have also come under the influence of this magic world. It is becoming more and more common to benefit from the entertainment opportunities offered by computer technologies while traveling in public transport, resting at home, and even in social life. Hypercasual games are computer applications that should be considered within this framework. While children and young people are playing games that require strategy and thinking more and more, middle and old-aged individuals and especially female users draw attention as the most intense users of simple and fun games such as “candy crash” and “words of wonders”. It would be a rational marketing strategy to consider the demands and expectations of elderly and elderly individuals and especially female users in this regard.

On the other hand, competition is an important motivation. Stronger integration of these games into social media channels will be the right strategy to use the competitive factor effectively. Sharing the high scores obtained and creating an online competitive environment simply with the involvement of different players will increase the interest in the games. In addition, the fact that the games can be followed by invited viewers (friends) and third parties will increase the competitive motivation and attract more attention to the games. In addition, the reward mechanisms that will keep the players in the game more will contribute to the popularity of these games. In accordance with this situation, attractive gains included in the game allow the user to spend more time at the beginning of the game. Considering demographic characteristics in the creation of advertisements and content to be given to the games will contribute to the success of advertising campaigns.

Conclusion

In this study, in which the demographic characteristics of the gamers playing hypercasual games are examined, it is understood that, contrary to what is thought, children and young people are not the main target audience of these types of games. These types of games are mostly preferred by middle-aged women as is shown by researchers in different countries. Although there are some cultural and social differences between countries, there are some common reasons for this situation that can be accepted as general. The physical separation of individuals brought by modern life from each other, the transformations that require separation from work and social life such as retirement, and changes in the social environment are some of the reasons for playing such games more. In addition, the generation aged 50 and over has difficulty in comprehending complex computer games, as they were in their middle age during the years of technological transformation and transition to

information technologies, but they try not to stay out of the age of technology. In this context, while trying to use social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as actively as possible, simple games that can be downloaded from these platforms also attract their attention. These games, which are free to download, easy to install, and do not require any extra knowledge or technological knowledge to play and understand, not only contribute to the leisure time of the player in a fun way but also help individuals socialize with interactive forms. Particularly during the pandemic period, with the quarantine measures, socialization opportunities are severely restricted, and the concerns of being involved in social life for health reasons have led to an increase in the popularity of these games. The misconception that men play more games as a general opinion has been shown by many country surveys. It has been observed that especially women who have increased free time after retirement, women who are lonely due to the loss of a spouse or the marriage of their child, women who are housewives, and women with children often play these games for the purpose of socializing and enjoying their free time. On the other hand, the rapid growth of the industry of these simple games has led to an increase in the income from the industry, and many famous companies and technology companies have started to invest in such games.

The most important finding of this study is that the target audience of such games is middle-aged and older women, which is important data in the design of the games to be developed by these companies.

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Katkı Oranı Beyanı

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