

Online Gaming Audience Defies Stereotypes

Contributed by eMarketer
Monday, 19 September 2011

Audience demographics shift as new gaming possibilities open up in social and mobile

The online gaming space is an exciting place for both gamers and brand marketers. In particular, the growing appeal of casual and social games is encouraging users to play them across multiple platforms, from PCs and consoles to smartphones and tablets. And that appeal is growing beyond the typical gamer demographics.

“Gone are the days when only males ages 18 to 34 were hardcore gamers or only moms were pelting their Facebook friends with requests for hens or heifers in social games like FarmVille,” said Lisa E. Phillips, eMarketer senior analyst and author of the new report, “Online Gaming Audience: Lines Blur as the Market Grows.” “Today’s core gamers are playing casual games. More women are using game consoles beyond the Nintendo Wii, and their game choices include many genres.”

eMarketer estimates that social gaming will reach 61.9 million US internet users by the end of this year, or over a quarter of the online population. Growth, which is beginning to level out after strong increases, will be driven by the rise of mobile social gaming.

The audience for all types of mobile games (excluding pre-installed games on feature phones) is even greater, and growing more rapidly. This year, 73.5 million mobile users will play games at least monthly, up 22.1%. By 2015, more than 100 million US consumers will play games regularly on their phone.

eMarketer also estimates the online console gaming audience at 38.2 million this year, while 89.5 million consumers will play casual online games like solitaire, mahjong and Scrabble. These four groups of gamers overlap, as players become increasingly platform-agnostic.

“Although certain affinities still exist, most gamers are playing games on at least three different systems,” said Phillips. “However, marketers must still be prepared to support a promotion across multiple platforms.”

The full report, “Online Gaming Audience: Lines Blur as the Market Grows” also answers these key questions:

- Do the various game platforms attract different audiences?
- Are video games giving way to online games?
- How do players feel about in-game marketing?
- How do successful in-game promotions connect with the audience?

29 August 2011