
Female Players Reign Supreme in Casual Online Games

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By: R.L. Fielding

Online games offer an equal opportunity for women of all ages to get in on the fun – and advertisers are taking notice. In fact, a study by game industry research firm DFC Intelligence reveals that advertisers spent close to \$150-million to buy space on casual game sites or in the games themselves in 2006, up from \$74-million in 2002.

What's behind this shift? Advertisers recognize that the audience for casual online games is expanding to encompass all genders and all ages. Research shows that these players spend more time online and consume less traditional media. Companies that ignore this space miss out on a critical opportunity to reach their target audiences while they're at their most engaged.

Online Games Attract Women of All Ages

Casual online game sites continue to attract an ever-growing audience of female players who can't get enough mind-bending puzzle and strategy games. While the total female online gaming audience in August 2008 grew 27 percent versus last year to nearly 43 million visitors, the number of female gamers in the 12-24 and 55-64 age segments grew at a substantially faster rate, reports comScore in its 2008 study of online gaming audiences.

This presents a significant opportunity for advertisers, who have primarily looked to the electronic game industry as an arena to reach young males. The increased interest in online gaming among teenage girls and adult women is encouraging marketers to move more of their ad budgets into the free online gaming space. And it's not just retail brands that are making the move. Many pharmaceutical advertisers now use online game portals as a platform for reaching female consumers.

What's more, the online games industry is encouraging the trend by developing gaming content, portals and websites that are geared toward the interests of a female audience. This strategy ensures that the popularity of casual online games among women of all ages will continue to skyrocket in the coming years.

A Passion for Casual Online Games

Not only are millions of women playing casual online games, these women are dedicated players. Adult women are almost twice as likely as men to spend 20 hours per week playing PC games, reports the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA). In fact, a survey conducted by Slingo, a digital interactive entertainment company and thought-leader in the casual games industry, reveals that nearly half of all visitors to the Slingo.com portal play casual games seven days per week. The majority of respondents admitted to playing several different games in one sitting (71.6%) and to playing a particular game more than five times in a row (61.1%).

What does this mean for advertisers? Casual online game sites are among the stickiest entertainment sites on the Web. By tapping into this highly engaged audience, advertisers can connect with consumers more easily than in other

advertising platforms where the message is often tuned out.

There are also a variety of innovative ad formats available in the online games space. In addition to rich-media and conventional banner ads, some casual online game sites offer in-game advertising, contest sponsorships, or branded “advergames”. These formats further enhance advertiser brand engagement, providing a tangible return-on-investment for advertisers in comparison with traditional media buys.

The take away: A quickly growing, diverse female audience is turning to casual online game sites to connect with like minded people, make new friends and have fun. Advertisers and media planners stand to win big by purchasing space in these online game destinations.

About Slingo

This article is provided by Slingo.com, a leading online destination for people who enjoy playing games, winning prizes and having fun. In fact, 1 out of every 20 people in the U.S. has played Slingo online. The Slingo website offers free, original online games, downloadable games, and contests with cash prizes, as well as a social-networking community for game players. For more information, please visit <http://www.slingo.com/>.

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