User Perceptions of Facebook Games

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Introduction

- Social games are a type of online game that one typically plays through a social networking site (e.g., Facebook)
- Distinct features of social games (Chen, 2009; Radoff, 2011):
  - Connection/interaction of one player to other players
  - Asynchronous gameplay
  - The exchange of real-world money for virtual money
  - Lack of a final ending or victory
- The release of FarmVille by Zynga has helped catapult social games to a new status
- Social games are one of the fastest growing segments in the multi-billion dollar video game industry
  - In 2012, Facebook game players have increased from 205 million to 235 million (15%+ increase) (Goddard, 2012)
  - Almost half of Facebook gamers play games on Facebook at least once per day (Pidgeon, 2012)

Purpose

- Examine in detail the usage and preference of past and current Facebook gamers
- Identify the main attractions of Facebook games and key challenges commonly found in Facebook games

Method

Participants
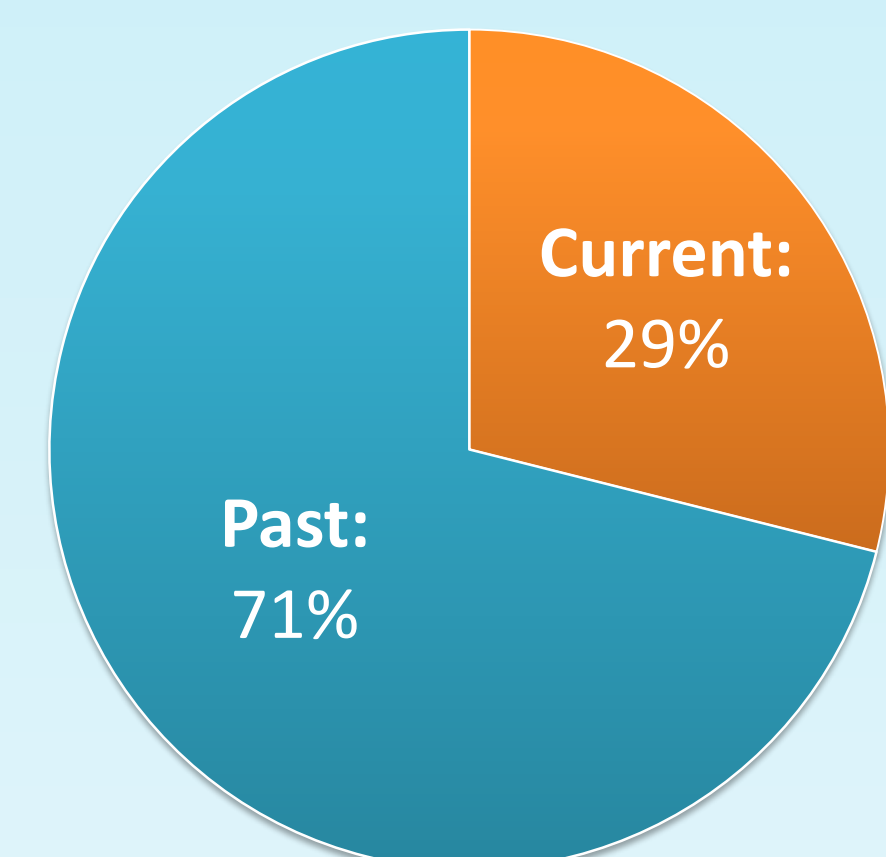
- N = 287 past and current Facebook gamers

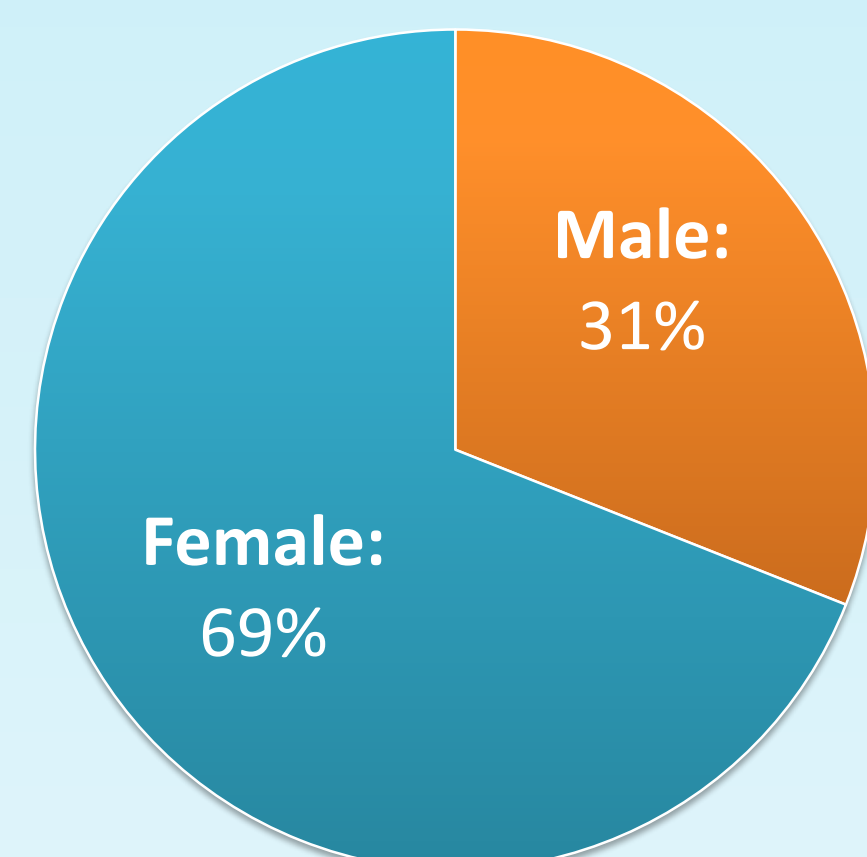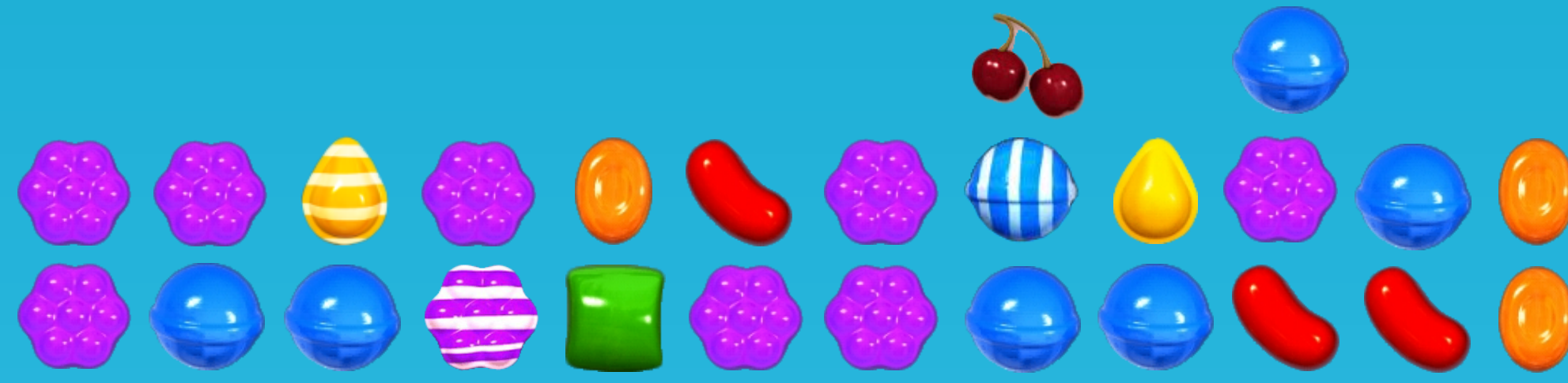*Figure 1.* Breakdown of past and current Facebook gamers.

Figure 2. Breakdown of gender.

Method cont'd

Participants cont'd

- Age ranged from 18-57 years old (M = 22.08, SD = 6.01)
- Majority were White (67%), single (61%), and a full-time college student (93%) with a yearly income less than $25,000 (72%)
- 55% of Facebook gamers reported to play other video games outside of Facebook at least once a month

Materials

- A 54-item questionnaire about Facebook game usage and preference

Procedure

- Distributed through WSU's SONA Experiment Management System and gaming communities on Facebook
- Took approximately 30-45 minutes to complete
- Collected from September to November, 2012

Results

Current Facebook Gamers

- 42% were active gamers who played at least once a day
- Spent 2.49 hours per week (SD = 1.06) playing games
- Each individual played around 2 games (SD = 1.52)
- Facebook games frequently listed:

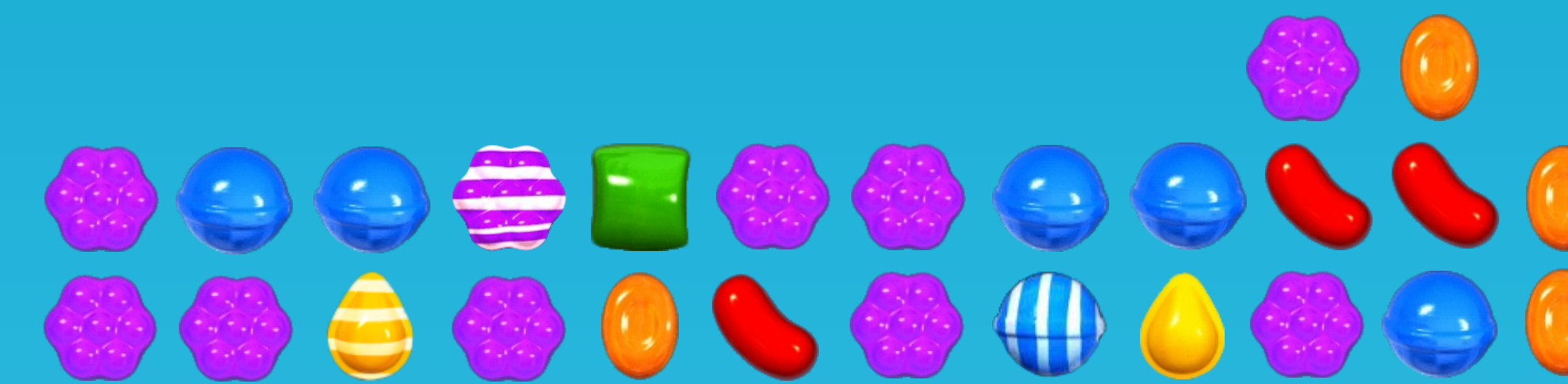SongPop (12%)   FarmVille (10%)   Words With Friends (8%)

- Frequently used device to play Facebook games:

Laptop/Notebook (47%)   Desktop Computer (25%)   Smartphone (19%)

Results cont'd

Current Facebook Gamers cont'd

- On average, each gamer had around 26 Facebook friends (SD = 31.17) who played at least one same game
  - Consisted of mostly "offline" friends and family (75%)

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for the Ratings of 16 Game Statements (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)

Statement	M (SD)
Play during weekends	3.53 (1.27)
Play during evenings	3.70 (1.21)
Play during the day	2.92 (1.21)
Play for long periods of time	2.36 (1.23)
Games on Facebook are totally immersive	2.52 (1.26)
Often lose a sense of time when play games on Facebook	2.41 (1.35)
Forget where I am when I play games on Facebook	1.41 (0.78)
Lose a sense of my body when I play games on Facebook	1.30 (0.78)
Hate to be interrupted when I play games on Facebook	2.10 (1.18)
Mostly play games on Facebook on my own	3.19 (1.33)
Mostly play games on Facebook with other people	3.01 (1.28)
Don't understand the attraction of games on Facebook	2.59 (1.05)
Have better things to do than play games on Facebook	3.33 (1.00)
Only play games on Facebook when others are playing	2.43 (1.23)
Feel guilty when I play games on Facebook	2.08 (1.08)
In 15 years, I still see myself continuing to play Facebook games	2.00 (1.13)

Past Facebook Gamers

- **Longest playing game:** FarmVille (42%)
  - Mean duration = 4 months (SD = 4.71)
- **Most recent game played:** FarmVille (30%)
  - Mean duration = 3 months (SD = 3.34)
- Most indicated on a 7-point Likert scale (1=Very Unlikely; 7=Very Likely) that they were unlikely to play Facebook games again (M = 2.24, SD = 1.51)

Reasons People Start and Stop Playing

Start Reason	%
Boredom	28%
Received an invitation from Facebook friends	26%
Saw many Facebook friends playing	21%

Note: Responses = 712

Stop Reason	%
Bored with the game	34%
Game was too time-consuming	20%
Game required real-world money for it to be fun	11%
Not enough friends played the game	10%

Note: Responses = 616

Results cont'd

Facebook Game-Related Activities

- 8% (n = 24) of the 287 respondents used real-world money to purchase Facebook game cash/credits vs. 27% (n = 76) completed an advertisement request
  - Spent an average of $24.25 ($SD$ = $26.32) per year on Facebook game cash/credits
- 45% of respondents did not share any posts generated by Facebook games
- Many were not likely to engage in the following activities: **1)** visit a game's community forum, **2)** visit a game's help page/section, **3)** visit the wall of a game; **4)** send a game invitation to someone on Facebook

Likes and Dislikes About Facebook Games

Like Category	%
Entertainment Value	17%
Social Connection	17%
Escapism	16%
Ease of Play	13%

Note: Responses = 615

Dislike Category	%
Time Related	21%
Cost Related	13%
Functionalities	11%
Boredom	10%

Note: Responses = 573

Top Features of the "Ideal" Facebook Games

Essential Feature	%
Fast loading time	9%
Good graphics	8%
Game rewards	6%
Option to play without needing real-world cash	6%
Challenging missions/quests	6%
Option to play game without adding friends	6%

Note: Responses = 2942, respondents can select more than one option

Discussion

- Surprisingly, over 70% of Facebook gamers reported to no longer play Facebook games at the time of the survey
- Interestingly, cost is a recurrent theme
- Future studies should examine:
  - A more diverse population
  - The characteristics that differ among "Hits", "Successes", and "Awesome" Facebook games (Constine, 2012)