

Postprint: Analysis of Honor of Kings Player Behavior and Motivations Based on the Mobile Game Industry

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Abstract

With the continuous growth of China's mobile game user base, China has become the world's largest gaming market. Currently, online games are predominantly dominated by online battle games as the mainstream genre. Such games emphasize fairness; even if players purchase skins for game characters, it does not affect the final outcome. Given this, why are so many players still willing to spend? This study finds that players' consumption motivation stems from emotional connections with game characters. As a multiplayer online battle arena game, the Honor of Kings mobile game has already established a comprehensive gaming, commercial, and social model, and its future commercial development also holds certain research significance. Therefore, this paper takes the Honor of Kings mobile game as the research object, with users as survey subjects, based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory, from the perspective of user assimilation, conducts research on the psychological satisfaction of Honor of Kings users, further explores the relationship between Honor of Kings and online players' psychological satisfaction, provides an in-depth analysis of the impact of mobile games on players' real lives, and conducts examination and reflection on this basis.

Full Text

Preamble

Analyzing Honor of Kings Mobile Game Player Behavior and Motivation Based on the Mobile Game Industry

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Abstract: As China's mobile game user base continues to grow, the country has become the world's largest gaming market. Currently, online games are dominated by multiplayer online battle games that emphasize fairness—where purchasing cosmetic skins for game characters does not affect match outcomes. Given this, why do so many players still spend money? This study finds that players' spending motivation stems from emotional connections with game characters. As a multiplayer online battle arena game, Honor of Kings has developed a sophisticated model integrating gameplay, commerce, and social interaction, making its future commercial development worthy of investigation. This paper examines Honor of Kings as its research subject and users as its survey population. Grounded in uses and gratifications theory and adopting a user assimilation perspective, the study investigates the psychological satisfaction of Honor of Kings users, explores the relationship between the game and player psychological gratification, and analyzes the game's impact on players' real lives, offering critical reflection on these findings.

Keywords: Honor of Kings; mobile game players; uses and gratifications; user assimilation

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1. Research Background

As living standards gradually improve, people's demand for entertainment has become increasingly diversified. Moreover, with mobile networks—supported by 4G technology—covering most regions of the country, the hardware foundation for mobile game development has been solidified. Cross-industry collaboration between cultural and entertainment sectors has also driven the growth of the gaming industry, contributing to the rapid expansion of China's gaming market scale. According to the 45th “Statistical Report on China's Internet Development” released by the China Internet Network Information Center, by March 2020, China's mobile game users reached 529 million, accounting for 58.9% and 59.0% of total internet users respectively. China has become the world's largest gaming market. App Annie's “2020 Mobile Market Report” predicts that global mobile game market transaction volume will reach \$100 billion in 2021. Currently, online games are dominated by multiplayer online battle games that emphasize fairness—even if players purchase skins for their characters, it does not affect the final outcome. Given this, why do so many players still spend money? Research reveals that players' consumption motivation originates from emotional associations with game characters. Therefore, this paper takes Honor of Kings as its research subject and users as its survey population. Based on uses and

gratifications theory and from a user assimilation perspective, the study investigates the psychological satisfaction of Honor of Kings users, further exploring the relationship between the game and online player psychological gratification, and deeply analyzing the impact of mobile games on players' real lives, upon which critical reflection is offered.

2. Research Methods

This study investigates the behavior and motivation of Honor of Kings players, primarily based on uses and gratifications theory, employing the following research methods.

Questionnaire Survey Method. A questionnaire was designed and distributed from the perspective of “uses and gratifications” to survey players' actual experiences and satisfaction levels with Honor of Kings. The questionnaire covers basic player information, online gaming duration, frequency, recharge amounts, frequency of sharing outstanding achievements, and overall recognition of the game's value, providing sample and data support for this paper. This process requires obtaining substantial player experiences and relevant gaming histories to yield results consistent with the research objectives; therefore, the questionnaire method was adopted as the primary research methodology. On the other hand, since this paper mainly uses questionnaire surveys, SPSS data software was employed for data analysis. These tools offer simplicity, ease of operation, and strong functionality, providing excellent technical support for the research methodology.

3. Research Hypotheses and Variables

3.1 Research Hypotheses

H1: The degree to which people' s need for victory is satisfied is positively correlated with satisfaction toward Honor of Kings.

H2: The degree to which people' s vanity and collection desires are satisfied is positively correlated with satisfaction toward Honor of Kings.

H3: The degree to which people' s sensory stimulation needs are satisfied is positively correlated with satisfaction toward Honor of Kings.

3.2 Variables

3.2.1 Independent Variables Based on uses and gratifications theory, this paper follows a research structure of “research background—research methods—research hypotheses and variables—data organization and analysis—conclusion.” The independent variables are defined as follows:

IV1: Honor of Kings players' desire for victory

IV2: Honor of Kings players' vanity and collection desires

IV3: Honor of Kings players' sensory stimulation needs

3.2.2 Dependent Variable DV: Mobile game players' satisfaction level with Honor of Kings

4. Mobile Game User Analysis

A total of 507 valid samples were collected from the survey questionnaire. Data analysis reveals that Honor of Kings players exhibit the following general characteristics.

4.1 Balanced Gender Ratio Among Players

According to the collected data, the male-to-female gender ratio is 53:47. The traditional view holds that competitive games attract more male users, while female users prefer simpler, more accessible games such as dress-up or puzzle games. However, Honor of Kings' audience composition clearly defies this stereotype, proving friendly and accessible to users of different genders.

4.2 Platform for Social Interaction and Emotional Regulation

Survey results indicate that the vast majority of players—totaling 72.78%—learned about the game through social media and recommendations from friends and classmates, making social interaction and online information exchange the catalyst for game adoption. The gaming world is gradually becoming a means for players to process and regulate their emotions from real life during personal time. This demonstrates that Honor of Kings possesses pronounced social attributes as a non-single-player game.

4.3 Player Attitude Analysis

The survey on what attracts players to Honor of Kings primarily focuses on “game visuals,” “game modes,” “game storyline,” “game interface,” and “game sound effects.” Nearly 60% of respondents found “game visuals” attractive, indicating the game's significant advantage in visual design, which also serves as a key factor in attracting female users. Regarding players' true attitudes toward Honor of Kings, overall satisfaction levels are relatively high. On average, over 80% of users agreed with statements such as “I can obtain a lot of fun and excitement,” “it helps reduce pressure from life or studies,” and “I often play with friends.” This suggests that among the surveyed population, social needs constitute the primary motivation for game usage. The game enables players to reconnect with old friends and, through in-game communication (including text, signals, and voice chat), strengthen relationships with “weak ties,” forming more stable and stronger connections and thereby obtaining greater satisfaction.

5. Data Organization and Analysis

5.1 Questionnaire Content Export and Organization

After completing the questionnaire import and organization, a complete data file was obtained. Based on the research hypotheses, variables were defined as multiple independent variables (IV) and a single dependent variable (DV). The models were designed as follows: The dependent variable is “I can obtain more fun by playing Honor of Kings.” In uses and gratifications theory, use and needs serve as independent variables, while the gratification and satisfaction obtained after media exposure constitute the dependent variable. Therefore, the dependent variable was embedded within questions, with “fun and excitement” defined as specific manifestations of gratification. Using a Likert scale format, the dependent variable DV was established as an ordinal variable, allowing it to function as a continuous variable that could accurately express its relationship with other independent variables in regression analysis.

5.2 Regression Results Presentation

Based on the hypothesis content, linear regression analysis was conducted. The regression results are shown in [Figure 1: see original paper].

5.2.1 Variable Selection for Hypothesis 1 Regarding people’s need for victory, the following two independent variables were selected, with the dependent variable remaining unchanged: IV1: “Have played and enjoyed battle games before” and IV2: “Honor of Kings ranking promotion system is reasonable.” DV: “I can obtain a lot of fun by playing Honor of Kings.”

5.2.2 Normality Distribution Test Since IV1 is a binary variable, normality distribution testing was not conducted. Therefore, this section focuses on normality testing for IV2. The model presents an ideal normal distribution, indicating that IV2 “Honor of Kings ranking promotion system is reasonable” conforms to normal distribution.

5.2.3 Regression Analysis for Hypothesis 1 Following the above analysis, linear regression was performed according to the hypothesis content. The regression results show: IV1 “Have played and enjoyed battle games before” shows $p > 0.05$, indicating no significant relationship with the DV; IV2 “Honor of Kings ranking promotion system is reasonable” shows $p < 0.001$, demonstrating a significant positive correlation with the DV. These results indicate that, to a certain extent, when people’s need for victory is satisfied, overall satisfaction with Honor of Kings increases.

5.2.4 Variable Selection for Hypothesis 2 Regarding people’s “vanity and collection desire” needs, the following two independent variables were selected: IV1: “Recharge amount” and IV2: “Willingness to share battle achievements.”

5.2.5 Normality Distribution Test for Hypothesis 2 Both IVs were subjected to normality distribution testing. The results show that both IVs essentially present normal distribution characteristics, allowing for subsequent regression analysis.

5.2.6 Regression Analysis for Hypothesis 2 After selecting IVs and DV and completing normality testing, regression analysis reveals that both IV1 and IV2 lack significance ($p > 0.05$). This indicates that the satisfaction of vanity and collection desires is not related to game satisfaction, contradicting the researchers' expectations and experiential assumptions. Consequently, an attempt was made to exclude "willingness to share battle achievements" and examine the relationship between "recharge amount" alone and the DV. However, the relationship between recharge amount and satisfaction still showed $p > 0.05$, indicating no significant correlation.

5.2.7 Variable Selection for Hypothesis 3 Regarding sensory stimulation needs, the following independent variables were selected: IV1: "Game sound effects," IV2: "Game visuals," IV3: "Game storyline," and IV4: "Game interface."

5.2.8 Normality Distribution Test for Hypothesis 3 Since all these variables are ordinal, normality distribution testing was not required.

5.2.9 Regression Analysis for Hypothesis 3 Linear regression analysis was conducted using the four independent variables. The results demonstrate that IVs "sound effects," "visuals," and "storyline" all show significant positive correlations with the DV. Notably, game visuals show $p < 0.001$, indicating the highest significance level. Other significant factors including "sound effects" and "game mode types" also confirm that as players' sensory stimulation needs are met, their satisfaction increases concurrently.

5.3 Summary of Regression Results

After completing regression analysis for the three hypotheses, the following summary is presented.

Hypothesis 1: Significant Positive Correlation for "Victory Desire"

Regression analysis of the two IVs for "victory desire needs satisfaction increases player satisfaction" revealed that IV2 "ranking promotion system is reasonable" shows significant positive correlation with the DV. Players who selected this option can be assumed to have experienced continuous victories and rank improvements while playing Honor of Kings, thus representing the manifestation of victory desire.

Hypothesis 2: No Significance for "Vanity and Collection Desire"

Both IVs for hypothesis 2 show significance levels well above 0.05, indicating

that “recharge amount” and “willingness to share battle achievements” do not produce the expected effects in the uses and gratifications model.

Hypothesis 3: Significant Positive Correlation for “Sensory Stimulation Needs”

After regression analysis of several IVs, the audiovisual “sensory stimulation needs” composed of these variables all show significant positive correlation with the DV. Therefore, in the uses and gratifications model, when sensory stimulation needs are satisfied, player satisfaction with Honor of Kings significantly improves.

In summary, among the proposed hypotheses, significant relationships between “social needs,” “relaxation needs,” “victory desire needs,” and “sensory stimulation needs” with “game satisfaction” have been confirmed. When these four needs are satisfied, player satisfaction significantly increases, leading to continued use of Honor of Kings rather than seeking alternatives. The explanatory power of the remaining two needs— “time-killing needs” and “vanity and collection desires”—proves insufficient and are therefore temporarily excluded from consideration.

5.4 Limitations and Shortcomings

As graduate students in this field, the researchers acknowledge limitations in knowledge reserves. The investigation of player behavior and motivation could theoretically incorporate more quantitative analysis dimensions and possibilities, while qualitative analysis could benefit from further discussion using sociological and psychological theories. The researchers will continue to strengthen their academic cultivation in future studies and persist in exploring mobile games and player behavior and motivation. Although comparing some survey results with reports from early well-known research institutions aimed to minimize the impact of non-randomness in online questionnaire distribution and limitations in subject selection on research findings, the diversity of personalized needs among different players during game usage means that the analysis of behavior and motivation still contains certain subjective elements, representing an inherent limitation of this study.

6. Conclusion

As a mobile game with a broad audience and high topicality, Honor of Kings has consistently been the focus of media attention and discussion. This study primarily employs empirical research methods through survey questionnaires, conducting data analysis and visualization to derive conclusions regarding Honor of Kings player behavior and motivation. This research provides new perspectives on user studies for game developers and promotes the development of China’s mobile game industry.

By summarizing and analyzing the characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes of Honor of Kings players, the study reveals that the user base shows a near-balanced gender ratio, with most players having education levels above high

school. Social interaction and online information exchange serve as catalysts for game adoption, and Honor of Kings demonstrates pronounced social attributes as a non-single-player game. Social needs constitute the primary motivation for game usage, enabling players to reconnect with old friends and strengthen relationships with “weak ties” through in-game communication. Players demonstrate rationality regarding in-game purchases. The game’s significant advantage in visual design also serves as a key factor in attracting female users.

Through the collection and analysis of 507 valid online questionnaires, the researchers tested independent variables selected for “victory desire (personal ability display needs),” “vanity needs,” and “sensory stimulation needs” against the dependent variable of Honor of Kings player satisfaction. The results show: a significant positive correlation for “victory desire,” consistent with the research hypothesis; no significant correlation for “vanity” and “collection desire,” contradicting the hypothesis; and a significant positive correlation for “sensory stimulation needs,” also consistent with the hypothesis. This indicates that when sensory stimulation needs are satisfied, player satisfaction with Honor of Kings significantly improves.

Exploring Honor of Kings player behavior and motivation from the uses and gratifications perspective both expands the application domain of uses and gratifications theory and broadens the theoretical lens for research on online gaming behavior and motivation. The profundity of game art and the complexity of human nature mean this article can only offer a preliminary exploration of game player research. As an important cultural carrier and entertainment medium, mobile games currently shoulder the social mission of cultural dissemination. Understanding player behavior and motivation through uses and gratifications theory not only helps researchers comprehend player psychology but also enables game developers to obtain effective user feedback, laying the foundation for producing and promoting more and better games. With reasonable use, games can make reality a better place.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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