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Mobile gaming – everything to play for

By Christopher Smith

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Chances are that you or someone you know is affected by the mobile gaming virus. There is a lot of it about and developments in technology are helping it to spread like wildfire. Even if you do not consider yourself a gamer you could one day be exposed to its effects. All it takes is a Java-enabled mobile phone and there are already over 150 million of them in the US alone.

What we are really talking about of course is the growth in popularity of mobile gaming; in other words, playing games on your mobile phone. Mobile gaming is set to become big business in 2004 as the number of BREW (Binary Runtime Environment for Wireless) and Java-enabled mobile phones in circulation continues to grow. In addition, manufacturers are continually adding colored screens and advanced features to their latest models, making mobile gaming a rich and vibrant experience for users.

The games themselves are readily available from a wide range of sources and can be easily downloaded from numerous web sites, with prices starting at \$2.99 or less. There is something for everyone with games ranging from favorites such as PacMan, chess and checkers to motor racing, jet-skiing and even erotic games.

Many people consider online gaming to be a predominantly male activity and a young male activity at that. Last fall, at a conference on mobile gaming, Mark Stanger from game developers Eidos suggested that 92% of PlayStation 2 players are men. Whilst it is probably true that online and console gamers are mainly male (how many women do you know that own a Sony PlayStation 2) analysis suggests that mobile phone gaming could be encouraging a growing percentage of women to play games.

Downloading games to a mobile phone can be done from anywhere. Women do not need to venture into the testosterone-laden atmosphere of game shops and this may account for why an increasing number of females are entering the world of mobile gaming. Interestingly, it also appears that women are playing the more traditional games such as solitaire and backgammon rather than the 'shoot 'em dead' kind.

Just as more women are playing games, so to are an increasing number of older people. Figures from the Entertainment Software Association released in August 2003 indicate that a full 17% of game players are over age 50, up from 13% in 2000.

This would suggest that gamers are an increasingly diverse group and the appeal of gaming is spreading across the sexes and across different ages and socio-economic backgrounds. People seem to be more and more at ease playing games on consoles, online and now on mobile phones.

With growing awareness of mobile gaming, improved and ever-wider distribution channels for mobile games, and an increasing degree of comfort with payment and delivery over the air amongst subscribers, everything points to an explosion in growth. This translates into a multi-billion dollar

market for providers of mobile technology, game developers and retailers and a completely new way of looking at mobile phones.

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Jumping to Mobile Gaming

By Richard Hsu

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Just imagine if you could have fun playing your favorite color games anytime, anywhere – while waiting in line for bus and movie tickets, riding in cars, buses or trains...

Welcome to the world of mobile gaming. Mobile gaming is getting hot...more and more people are playing games on their cell phones as wireless carriers introduce improved models of cell phones with big, bright color screens to their customers. Some experts predict that the number of people playing mobile games, especially young people, will increase by leaps and bounds in the next three years. So catch the hot wave now! There are all kinds of games available: action/adventure, puzzles, casino, sports, etc. They are fun, intuitive and entertaining. Presently, some of the most popular, compelling games are: Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell and Prince of Persia Mobile Pet.

Many major cellular carriers offer online services for mobile games (and ring tones/graphics) that you can download directly to your cell phones. There are more and more leading online services, such as eWirelessGames.com and cellmedia.com, which can provide similar services at an affordable cost.

Before you can start, you need to understand a few things about mobile gaming.

First, you need to find out if your current or new cell phone is Web-enabled and text message capable. If you are not sure, contact your carrier's customer service department for help.

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Next, you need to subscribe a data service with your wireless phone carriers. Available data services usually include game downloads, ringtone downloads, picture transmission, text messages and email. Most carriers offer data services and bill you in term of the amount of data you download. Some carriers offer the option of paying by the minute.

T-mobile, for instance, charges \$29.99 a month for unlimited usage for its T-mobile Internet while data service from Verizon Wireless is offered for an additional \$5 monthly access charge, plus airtime and other applicable charge.

With your phone capable of and subscribed to data service like text messages and Mobile Web, you are now ready to download your favorite games. The downloading process is usually simple and easy to follow.

Here are few more things to keep in mind:

When choosing mobile games at a mobile gaming site, make sure that the games you like are compatible with your cell phone. It is a good idea to check for a compatibility chart available from the mobile gaming site from which you will purchase your downloads. (See a compatibility chart at eWirelessGames.com)

You must also know the limits of your cell phone's built-in memory. Find out how many games you can download. Typically, you can download about 5–6 games, depending on your cell phone model, and you must remove your existing games before you can download additional games.

One last thing, check for special deals available at these wireless gaming sites. You may get a discount if you order in large volume. For example, eWirelessGames.com offers pre-purchase bulk credits for those who order ring tones/color graphics.

Enjoy your mobile gaming!

Richard Hsu is a wireless gaming enthusiast and manager at eWirelessGames.com.



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