Is mobile games wasting our time?

Due to the development of technology, mobile phone become more and more functional, and some of them are capable of playing games. So instead of making Triple-A games, some game designer begin to create small, simple and time-consuming games on mobile phone, such as angry bird. In Sam Anderson (2016)’s article, he called those games the “Stupid Games”, because they are super easy to play. And they are also very addictive. According to Alison Murdock (2016)’s article, generally gamers spend 1.15 billion hours on playing mobile games. So what are players doing during this long gaming hours? In Anderson (2016)’s article, he state that the time players spent on stupid games might be meaningless, because most of players just repeat the same action in games. But, later, he interviewed the game’s designer, and found out that stupid games may have some good effects. The similar argument emerges online. Some believe that mobile games can create serious side effects, while others believe that mobile games are good for us. Without hesitation, I believe that those positive effects can overcome the negative effects when players are playing mobile games. In this essay, I will discuss the reason of mobile game addiction, the positive and negative effects of mobile games and some personal suggestion for mobile game design.

To understand the both positive and negative effects of hyper-addictive mobile games, first we need to understand what makes it so addictive. The first factor is that mobile mobile
games are extremely easy. Instead of requiring players to react quickly or think carefully, those games just ask players to touch screen several times, which makes it very fast to pass a chapter or finish a mission. According to Anderson’s article, gamers usually just need 10 seconds to finish the first mission of angry bird. So, by playing those mobile games players can gain satisfaction quickly. After gaining satisfaction, players will feel happy and willing to continue the game. Secondly, it is very convenient to play mobile games. This is because mobile games are based on mobile phone which everybody has one. So people can play them at anytime and anywhere. Also it is much faster to open a mobile game than to open a large game on other game console. According to my calculation, it will spend about 30 seconds to open Clash and Clan on my phone, while it will spend about 4-5 minutes to open Bloodborne on my PS4.

After discussing the two main factors of mobile games’ addiction, we will notice that each factor actually determines one positive effect of mobile games. First of all, when gamers keep getting satisfaction in mobile games, they can build their self-confidence. This is because those easy-solving mission in games can make them believe that they are capable of solving problems. In the long round, those players will become the gamers that described in McGonigal’s speech, “Gamers are super-empowered hopeful individuals. These are people who believe that they are individually capable of changing the world”. If players can transfer this virtual life confidence in physical life confidence, they will believe that they can conquer everything. Secondly, playing mobile games can utilize fragmental time in real life. The short time lunching and short time mission can help us relax in small break, such as the break between two exams or after an assignment. Usually those break time is too short to read books or watch videos, but it perfect for play around of mobile game. For example, I usually play Clash of Clan when I am waiting for my meal in restaurant. Finally, mobile games also have the potential for
improving education of children. According to Clark’s (2009) article, this is because children will feel fun when they are learning new elements from a game. So if we change or modify some of the games’ elements for educational purpose, those games can highly improve people’s learning efficiency. For example, in Andrea Eldridge’s (2013) article, players can learn the basic physics such as gravity unconsciously when they are playing Angry Birds.

However, some people believe that mobile games have some serious side effects and will influence our life. For example, according to Drea Christopher (2015)’s article, playing games can effect children’s performance at school. Also, some other people believe that playing mobile games can increase social disconnection. Reasonable thought those statements may sound, I believe that some of the negative effects of mobile games are not completely true. On the one hand, playing mobile games, especially online mobile games, will create and improve the friendship between people instead of isolating players. This is because most of the mobile games provide internet service and ask for cooperation between players. So players are interacting and building trust with each other when they are playing the game. According to McGonigal (2010)’s ted talk, “playing a game together actually builds up bonds and trust and cooperation. And we actually build stronger social relationships as a result”. On the other hand, instead of affecting children’s grade or performance at school, games will improve children’s grade by improve children’s efficiency of learning. As I discussed earlier, this is because games are more attractive than ordinary method of education. Actually there are some school have begun to use video games for education. According to Elena Malykhina (2014)’s article, teachers in Quest to Learn public school use the principles of video games for their classes after the school was opened.

But, mobile games indeed can create some unavoidable side effects when players are super addicted, such as sleep deprived. I believe we can only minimize those side effects by
improving the method of mobile game design and operation. First of all, designer should decrease the effect of premium system in a game. It is totally waste of time and money if people have to pay money to gain elements in games. A good premium system is that player can get access to all the game’s elements, and spending money can only increase their developing speed in game. For example, in Clash and Clan, players can build every building and level up any army in the game. But spending money to buy demands can increase building and leveling speed. Secondly, there should be a timing system in game. If player speed too many hours on the game, it will automatically restrict player’s action in game. Doing so can prevent players from out of control time spending. Also Clash and Clan is a good example, players have to wait their army to recover after initiate an attack.

All in all, I believe that mobile game can bring positive effects to the players. Not only because it can create confidence to players, but also it can utilize people’ break time and improve education. Even though I have proved that some of the negative effects that people said is actually not true. There are still some unavoidable side effects that can only be solved if manufacturer improve their method of designing games. So, we should not prohibit players from playing mobile game just because of the side effects. We should try to improve it and use it to benefit people.
Reference


