

Gaming as a marketing tool to ‘escape everyday stress’.

Whether it is matching candy, solving puzzles, living vicariously through an avatar in a fantasy world or teaming up with friends to conquer cities; if your game is popular, it is big business. The rise in smartphone ownership has turned our love for mobile gaming into a lucrative and competitive industry. Creators and marketers of mobile games are constantly competing for the attention of players, and with billions to be made but millions of options available, understanding what drives and what inhibits individuals in selecting specific mobile games is critical in gaining a competitive advantage.

A research study was conducted by Brett Vlok, a Master’s student in the Department of Marketing Management, to try and understand what drives and what inhibits individuals’ choice to download and play a mobile game. The study utilised the uses-and-gratification theory as a foundation to investigate the effect of various gratifications on mobile game adoption. The study focused on two stages of adoption, the first being the choice to adopt a mobile game in relation to the need for escape from stress, social pressure and risk avoidance. The second being the intention to adopt a specific type of game as mediated by the need for achievement and the exchange of privacy. A total of 591 responses were collected globally from mobile gamers via an online survey.

The study found the need to escape the stress of everyday life to be an important predictor of mobile game adoption, while risk and social influence did not have any significant impact on predicting adoption behaviour. Furthermore, the need for achievement had significant parallel mediation in the selection and adoption of reactive games such as action games, sports games and racing games.

The results of this study showed that game developers and marketers should enhance their promotional messaging to demonstrate elements that offer users an escape. Furthermore, they should target individuals who are trying to escape stress, as well as capitalise on situations where the need for escape is heightened such as utilising train stations, airports and waiting rooms. The inclusion of leader boards, tournaments,

prizes and other displays of achievement in racing, action and sports games could also have a favourable effect on game adoption.

This research was conducted as part of the fulfilment of the [Master's degree](#) in Marketing Management in 2019 with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Brett Leon Vlok under the supervision of [Prof Yolanda Jordaan](#).