

# Profile, Gaming Usage and Purposes of Gaming of Internet Café Users in Manila: An Exploratory Study

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## ABSTRACT

*This descriptive-exploratory study attempted to give the readers a portrait of cyber café gamers in Manila. It determined the profile of gamers, their gaming usage, and their purposes of cyber café gaming. Descriptive statistics revealed that most of the respondents were Manila settlers, students, pursuing or had obtained college degrees, male, young, Roman Catholic, single, belonged to middle-income class, and played games in cyber cafés in the afternoon once to twice a week. One-way chi-square showed that frequency of gaming was not equally distributed in a week and gamers showed tendency to play games in a cyber in a particular time of the day. Real-time strategy games were the most frequently played games in cyber cafés. To recreate, to relieve boredom, and to have fun were the top three reasons in playing games in cyber cafés. Conclusions and directions for future research were also presented.*

*Keywords: Cyber Café, Cyber Café Gaming, Games, Internet Café, Manila, Online Games*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

It has been shown that even though a person does not own a particular information and communication technology (ICT), there are different means of accessing it with the aid of another member of the family, a friend or a neighbor, through the workplace, or in public places (Olatokun, 2009). Free public access of computers and Internet can be done in telecenters or in public libraries. On the other hand, they can also be accessed for a relatively small fee through cyber cafés.

It is argued that cyber cafés could help bridge the digital divide since they could provide better equipment or faster connections for different and more advanced users (Haseloff, 2005), and could offer minimal cost alternative to personal computer ownership, Internet access, and other multiple financial barriers (Adomi et al., 2003; Haseloff, 2005). Because of these advantages, they became the most common Internet access model (Haseloff, 2005; Kadli Jayadev, 2010) in developing countries (Rogers and Shukla, 2001; Wahid et al., 2004; Furuholt and Kristiansen, 2007b) either in urban or rural settings (Alam et al., 2009; Furuholt & Kristiansen, 2007a; Haseloff, 2005; Liff & Lægren, 2003). Thus, Rogers and Shukla (2001) concluded that most of the people in developing countries relied on cyber cafés.

In the Philippines, public access to computer and Internet is also predominantly done through cyber cafés. The cyber café is interchangeably called internet café, internet shop, or computer shop. The cyber café became an instant-hit business in the Philippines because of its affordable services. In 2004, one of the biggest cyber cafes in the Philippines had 112 branches all over the country (Netopia, 2010). Today, almost every corner of the streets of Metro Manila has an Internet shop or a cyber café. In Manila alone, there are 627 cyber cafes scattered all over its 14 districts (Business Record Database, 2010). The convenience of having a high-speed broadband connection for a relatively small rental fee (Alam, et al., 2009)

makes this business innovative (Icafebusiness.com, 2009).

Cyber cafés offer varied services. One of these services is gaming. Gaming is the central activity in café life (Haseloff, 2005; Alam et al., 2009). Somoni et al. (2010) found out that customers repeatedly returned to the cyber cafés because of computer games. This was also confirmed in the studies on cyber cafés in Malaysia (Alam et al., 2009) and in Pakistan (Batool & Mahmood, 2010).

Despite the growing popularity of gaming in cyber cafés, no studies have been conducted to determine the profile of the gamers, their cyber café gaming usage, and purposes of gaming in cyber cafés in local or foreign settings. There is also a pressing need to conduct such study due to the increasing market share of Filipino online gamers in Asia (Hermosa, 2010). In other words, little is known about who the cyber cafés gamers are in the Philippines. Thus, this study has been conceived. Toward this end, it sought answers to the following questions. 1) What is the profile of the respondents in terms of place of residence, occupation, educational background, sex, age, religious affiliation, civil status, personal computer ownership, and monthly family income? 2) What is the respondents' gaming usage of the cyber café in terms of hours spent per visit, visiting time in a day, frequency of gaming in a week, length of years of playing games, and games played? 3) Is the respondents' frequency of gaming equally distributed in a week? 4) Do respondents show the tendency to play games in a cyber café in any particular time of the day? 5) What are the purposes of the respondents in playing games in cyber cafés?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Demographics

In the study conducted by Teng (2009), the age of the 114 Taiwanese adolescent online gamers ranged from 12 to 18 years old and the average

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