GAMING SKILL DEMOGRAPHICS: AN ANALYSIS OF CONSISTENCY IN VIDEO GAME RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Video games are a popular topic in academia, with many varied subjects of research. Often researchers investigating video game subjects partition the participants by the participant's familiarity with video games. Unlike other demographic categories on which research subjects are divided, such as age range or income, sorting participants into gamer skill categories, such as "Expert Gamer," has no objective consensus on what the labels should be. The inconsistency in terminology makes comparison between research works impossible. This paper highlights this problem, collects demographic questions in existing research, and showcases the data collected from a user study with these questions. The results show that self-chosen categories are a statistically significant metric and is recommended as an easy-to-obtain value.

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic research containing human subjects requires a standardized method of categorizing study participants into demographic labels for accurate analysis of results. Standard demographics include age, gender, ethnicity, or income. One such way to categorize participants when involved in video game research is the participant's perceived gamer experience level. Categorizing participants into "Expert" or "Novice" groupings could control for the differences that arise from players' varying levels of expertise, experience, and familiarity with a gaming system. The problem arises when trying to find a consensus on the definition of what makes someone a specific gaming demographic.

One option from Adams and Ip (2002) is a 15-factor gamer classification method based on the previous work of Adams (2000) and Kim (2001). Each factor is given a different weight based on importance, and each player is given a player dedication score. These scores are then used to categorize gamers into "ultra casual," "casual," "transitional/modern," "hardcore," and "ultra hardcore." This classification method could be used as a standard and is a great starting point for defining important questions and factors, but a standardized weighting should be created that all researchers use. Adams and Ip state: "Moreover, in applying the classification procedure, weightings can be determined arbitrarily according to the importance the marketer perceives them to hold for his own purposes."