

No Time for a Bath, Can't Make it to the Salon – Today's June Cleaver is Busy on CityVille

From housewives to high-powered professionals, 40-something DigiMoms are spending their dwindling free time on social games. But are marketers making the most of this captive audience?

"June Cleaver would definitely be on CityVille," chuckled my friend, the 40-something Chief Financial Officer of a technology start-up, and an admitted social gaming addict. "I work 12 hours a day, and I have 2 kids at home" she continued, "that doesn't leave a lot of down time. So, I have to grab it when I can – a minute at a time, if necessary"

Hands down, June Cleaver would be a Bejeweled Blitz addict," another friend – a 38 year old stay-at-home mother of three elementary school children - declared. "Mafia Wars is too in-depth. After an afternoon with my brood, I need something to distract me, not engulf me," she laughs.

Pick Your Poison

CityVille or Bejeweled Blitz, what's clear from all the conversations I've been having with social-gaming women is this: the days of luxuriating in a bath at the end of the day are gone. The beauty parlor is more fast-food than five-course French restaurant for the June Cleaver's of the world. And I'm using June Cleaver in the loosest sense, here – because, let's face it, she would NOT be a housewife in 2010. In any case, these busy ladies have turned *en masse* to social games to fill their rapidly disappearing down time.

Recent market research confirms just this. A 2010 survey by Information Solutions Group found that 55% of social gamers are women, on average aged 43, and the vast majority of them are either at-home, self-employed or working moms.

Why are these modern June Cleaver's playing social games? Down time, according to the research. Over half listed fun and excitement, while almost half cited stress relief, as their primary reasons for playing social games.

"I admit it, I'm hooked," continued my Farmville-addicted CFO friend. "I'm a committed professional, and an excellent multi-tasker - which is why I can sit



in a conference room and play Farmville during boring meetings, and still participate in the discussion," she confesses. "Nobody's going to give me my personal time. I've got to take it. And if that means taking it while I'm doing something else, so be it."

So, what have we come to, if we're now relaxing and working simultaneously? What kind of superhuman workaholics are we becoming? Surely, there's a redeeming social value – creating communities, deepening relationships, growing new friendships – to social games, I pondered hopefully.

I was wrong again. "I definitely don't play for social interaction," said one marketing professional, and self-defined CityVille junkie, interviewed – shooting down my personal theory and confirming market research findings. "I interact because the game requires it, and I like the competition between real people. But I don't need the game to make friends or interact with friends. I do that offline."

A Perfect Picture, Almost

So, social gaming DigiMoms are very happy right where they are, thank you very much. And, social gaming companies should be ecstatic, right? They've got this great segment, loyal to their games of choice, and they keep coming back.

They should be happy – complacent even. But something's missing from this perfect-home, perfect-office picture that's keeping marketers awake at night.

The missing link is the limited constancy of engagement that social games suffer. Social gaming companies "only" get access to two-thirds of these DigiMoms for *less than five hours a week*. Of course, five years ago, any marketer would have given his right (and possibly left) leg, for a shot at five (or even one) uninterrupted hours with a prospect. But we're in 2010 now. And in 2010, we're marketing for total attention domination.

So, the real challenge for social gaming companies is – how to lengthen the engagement with gamers. How to draw out the time they're spending in-game, and (of course) more effectively monetize the game in the process?



Even DigiMoms Sleep

It's a challenge, because even DigiMoms have to sleep. And they also have to show actual productivity to maintain those high-powered, high-salaried jobs. There is really only a finite window of time in which social gaming companies can engage gamers.

Or is there? DigiMoms are online for many more hours than they're logged into games, especially the professionals, who likely spend most of those 12-hour days in front of the screen. What if gaming companies could reach them even while they're not gaming?

The key here is immersion. In 2010, we're not looking just to engage – we need to immerse our prospects in our brand messages. They need to be swimming in the calming waters of our offerings, not skimming across the surface on a jet ski.

And to immerse DigiMoms in gaming, to draw them ever-deeper into the game environment – maximizing brand exposure and growing monetization – social gaming companies need to seek out always-on solutions. They need to optimize June Cleaver's online time – making sure that, even when she's not actively gaming, she knows how her buildings are collecting rent. Because if she's not immersed, June may find time for a long hot bath, away from her computer – and what would we marketers do while she's away?

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