

THE REPRODUCTION OF MOBILE GAMING INDUSTRY:

HYPER-CASUAL GAMES

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İNTİHAL SAYFASI

Yüksek lisans tezi olarak sunduğum, bu çalışmayı, bilimsel ahlak ve geleneklere aykırı düşecek bir yol ve yardıma başvurmaksızın yazdığımı, yararlandığım eserlerin kaynakçada gösterilenlerden oluştuğunu ve bu eserleri her kullanışında alıntı yaparak yararlandığımı belirtir; bunu onurumla doğrularım. Enstitü tarafından belli bir zamana bağlı olmaksızın, tezimle ilgili yaptığım bu beyana aykırı bir durumun saptanması durumunda, ortaya çıkacak tüm ahlaki ve hukuki sonuçlara katlanacağımı bildiririm.

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ABSTRACT

The Reproduction of Mobile Gaming Industry: Hyper-Casual Games

This study offers the definition, building blocks, producers, marketing strategies and practices concerning a significant type of mobile gaming industry, hyper-casual games. Due to my profession, I actively participate in the production process of hyper-casual games as a producer and consumer. In addition to explaining the production process from such a point of view, the study uses self-reflexivity method to cover the narratives of this type's producers. Notions and phenomena that emerge during the production of such games are explicated in relation with the ideas of various thinkers and theoreticians.

The concept of game is explained in the study over hyper-casual games, which represents an important area, where production modes in our modern capitalist system change and transform. A literature review was conducted to observe the existing studies in the field. Especially the speed factor, which is one of the most visible characteristics of our time as we experience it, continues to change spaces substantially, allowing its users to produce, much like the gaming industry. Such transformation brings along a new and up to date perspective to the concept of game. The persisting existence of active producers and consumers of hyper-casual games can be viewed as a powerful reproduction of games.

Keywords: Game, Mobile Game, Hyper-Casual Game, Speed

ÖZET

Mobil Oyun Sektörünün Yeniden Üretimi: Hiper Gündelik Oyunlar

Çalışmada mobil oyun sektörü için önemli bir tür olan Hiper Gündelik Oyun türünün tanımı, yapı taşları, üreticileri, pazarlama stratejileri ve uygulama biçimleri yer almaktadır.

Ayrıca çalışmada mesleğim gereği benim de hem üretici hem de tüketici konumunda yer alarak içinde bulunduğum ve deneyimlediğim Hiper Gündelik Oyun üretimi süreci açıklanırken, self-reflexivity yöntemi kullanılarak türün üreticilerinin söylemlerine de yer verilmektedir. Üretim süreci esnasında ortaya çıkan olgular, çeşitli düşünür ve teorisyenlerin söylemleri ile ilişkilendirilerek açıklanmıştır.

Araştırmada oyun kavramı, içinde bulunduğumuz modern kapitalist sistemdeki üretim biçimlerinin değişim ve dönüşümünün gerçekleştiği önemli bir alan olan Hiper Gündelik Oyun türü üzerinden aktarılmış, bu alanda literatürde yer alan çalışmalara da yer verilmiştir.

Özellikle deneyimlediğimiz zaman diliminin en gözle görülür özelliklerinden biri olan hız faktörü, oyun sektörü gibi kullanıcılarına üretim gerçekleştirme olanağı tanıyan alanları büyük ölçüde dönüşüme uğratmaya devam etmektedir. Bu dönüşüm, oyun kavramına yeni ve güncel bir bakış açısı kazandırmaktadır.

Hiper Gündelik Oyun türünün büyük ölçüde aktif üretici ve tüketiciye sahip olmaya devam etmesi; oyun kavramının güçlü bir yeniden üretimi olarak ele alınabilmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Oyun, Mobil Oyun, Hiper Gündelik Oyun, Hız

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1. INTRODUCTION

Along with the developing technologies of today, content has been changing and spreading with great speed without stumbling upon any temporal or spatial limits. Especially with the opportunities brought along by the internet to render interpersonal communication simultaneous and multi-dimensional, individuals have been facing less and less obstacles in sharing with each other. On the other hand, target groups that any launched product can reach can also be analyzed in functional terms with new technologies.

Producers are able to track the actions of their target groups by using technological means. Therefore, analyzing the target group to whom content is relayed, represents a roadmap for them during production. Such roadmaps ensure that producers do not encounter any unexpected situations, in addition to allowing them to shape user experience in the light of acquired data.

Producers shape the content with the current times and value judgments; this way, they can find current topics to generate a more active user experience.

This study concerns the reproduction of content in the gaming industry. Both content and performances have significantly changed in the gaming industry, which is viewed as a field with intensive user experience in our present day. This study explains the reproduction in question through ‘hyper-casual games’, which are rapidly marketed by many game producers across the world recently. In this context hyper-casual games are analyzed in detail in line with my own experiences and observations as an insider to hyper-casual games due to my profession, and with the interviews I conducted with other producers of this type.

Examinations are carried out over the main characteristics of hyper-casual games, separating this type from others, the visual language, textual content, main purposes, tools, aims, and marketing strategies taken as basis to reach target groups. On the other hand, questions such

as what kind of concepts hyper-casual game performance producers come up with for their users as their main targets, how they prioritize their production process and what

kind of criteria they consider to ensure that these games succeed, are attempted to be explicated.

The second part of the study includes an overview of the notion of gaming and its development. As time and space transformed, the notion of gaming started to be expressed in varying definitions. This section of the study explains this notion with respect to its etymological roots, in addition to offering various definitions of the notion by different thinkers and the main components of games.

The third section of the study focuses on the type of ‘hyper-casual games’, which is the core of this thesis. Building blocks of this particular game type throughout its emergence are approached. Mechanisms used in hyper-casual games, educational elements that direct users within games and level designs are details that are covered in this section of the study

The fourth section focuses on the relationship between hyper-casual games and social media content, which is one of the most important factors of this day and age. The ways in which hyper-casual game producers utilize social media content, how they approach current social media content as a concept and how they gamify such content before presenting them to target groups are items that are covered throughout this process.

The fifth section of the study describes the actors in the production process of hyper-casual games. This section also explains the duties and processes, required by their duties, throughout the production of hyper-casual games.

The sixth section of the study includes the current research studies and other works in the literature concerning games and hyper-casual games, to be more specific. Information regarding such studies, researchers and content of studies, can be found in this section.

The seventh section of the study includes discourse and theories of theoreticians, who shed light on my research study as well with their ideas, thoughts and points of view. Theories have been quite functional in making sense of the data I acquired in this study and in pondering upon their findings.

The eighth section of the study includes the method, adopted in the writing of this thesis, the justification as to why this method was selected, the occurrence of interviews, characteristics of interviewees and my position and responsibilities in my workplace.

The ninth section of the study reveals the findings I acquired consequent to the interviews as well as my observations and experiences. This part also includes detailed information regarding the discursive structure of interviewees' statements and concepts, which were expressed by multiple individuals.

The tenth and final section of the study approaches the covered topics during the research in combination with the findings, acquired as a result of the interviewees' statements. Expressed notions and situations are put into perspective with ideas of various thinkers and theoreticians. In addition, stated situations are concluded with narratives that include my own ideas and opinions. Within the scope of this study, detailed analyses concerning hyper-casual games I also produce and consume at the same time, the change and transformation of which we witness in this day and age.

1.1. The significance and aim of the study

Hyper-casual games began to become more common after 2017, which is why there are limited studies regarding this particular type (Yang, 2020). Therefore, information on hyper-casual games is scarce.

The majority of information on hyper-casual games are written by people, who work at firms that produce such games, and who are experts in their communication channels. Still, this content covers only certain types under certain titles. The lack of content, in which the structure of hyper-casual games is examined, tasks of various actors, who perform in the background, are probed, or the production process of hyper-casual games is relayed in detail, is quite important with regards to the significance and purpose of this study.

The study covers the emergence of ideas, which can be main themes for hyper-casual games that have taken hold of the world, and the process from the application of these ideas to their adaption to this type of games, which is thought to be of benefit to groups, who wish to carry out productions regarding this type. The study presents a roadmap to convey the best practices that succeeded so far in generating ideas for a

gamification process for this type of gaming, drawing the limits of the idea in question, prioritizing products that can be used in generating a visual world, selecting the best mechanisms for the idea to be applied in terms of user experience, and preparing the most attractive campaign to relay this experience to users. Those, who wish to pursue similar paths, can find important information in this study to acquire more knowledge on hyper-casual game processes.



2. THE CONCEPT OF GAMES

This section examines the concept of games, its purposes and fundamental elements. The concept has been defined in various manners by the time and age, while its limits have been attempted to be designated by different thinkers.

This concept has evolved to be more comprehensive with technological developments in today's age of technology, hence improving the quantity of masses it reaches.

2.1. What is a game?

Definitions of games vary by thinkers. Such definitions are quite different than one another with respect to the way in which people perceive life, their tendencies, their adopted philosophies, beliefs and experiences. The concept of games, at first glance, reminds one of the actions children take within the framework of a certain set of rules. The cultural notion underlying games date back to ages ago. At its core, the concept of game is referred to universally as 'game', used with the verb 'play'.

From an etymological point of view, the Turkish word 'game' (oyun) was used as oyun/oyug in Yenisey Inscriptions, referring to 'entertainment, dance, competition'. The same word refers to 'playing a game, competing, dancing' in Uyghur language too (etimolojiturkce.com, 2013).

In Latin, on the other hand, games are approached over two words – iocus and ludus. Iocus refers to puns and jokes, while ludus includes bodily activities to the concept of games. Over time, iocus became more common and started to be used as a concept that includes all types of games (Huizinga, 1995).

The word 'ludology', on the other hand, is also derived from 'ludus' in Latin, referring to the discipline concerning games. Ludology is a scientific field that concerns games per se.

Positing a general definition for games, Huizinga states, "A game is a willful act or activity one freely agrees with but carries out within particular spatial and temporal limits as per its entirely commanding rules with a purpose in itself and accompanied

by the consciousness of ‘being somewhat different’ than ‘the usual life’ alongside feelings of tension and happiness” (Huizinga, 1995).

Caillois, on the other hand, uses the term ‘ambiguity’ in the definition of games. Accordingly, a game is an ambiguous activity. Games without any rules, which are quite ambiguous, foresee improvisation, and arise from moving as if one is someone else or something else, exist in the society (Caillois, 2001).

Referred to as ‘Paidia’, the game is used to describe the content of children’s games mainly in Ancient Greek. On the other hand, ‘paidia’ includes other games, the rules of which are designated spontaneously, as well. Competitions in Ancient Greece, which are clear symbols of cultural notions at the time, are called ‘agon’ and are different than ‘paidia’ type of games. “Competitions have become such intensively cultural functions for Greeks at the time that they were viewed ‘ordinary’ and completely legitimate, therefore not felt as games anymore” (Huizinga, 1995).

2.2. Main Elements of the Game

Defining games as a field of activity with a purpose, where insufficient tools and methods are consciously chosen, Bernard Suits argues that obstacles concerning games must also be considered and voluntarily overcome. As the main elements of the game are explicated, Bernard Suits underlines that games must have a purpose and set of rules, besides a particular attitude for the player. Suits evaluates games over four main elements – purpose, tools, rules, and lusoric attitude. Suits describes the main point, to which players wish to achieve, is the ‘purpose’. Each game has a purpose. Unless the goal that needs to be fulfilled is not designated within the game, it is not possible to play that game.

The player, first and foremost, joins the game. The second goal of the player, who joins, is to win that game. Thus, the player displays their actions to win the game in line with a particular goal (Suits, 1995).

Suits describes the notions in the game, which are provided to players by producers for them to fulfill the goal in the game, as tools. The player can use tools in line with their strategy to fulfill their goals within the game and by considering the rules of the game (Suits, 1995).

Rules, on the other hand, are essential to designate the boundaries for players in the game. Players consider the rules of the game to progress. Rules refer to the actions, which the players must take or avoid taking.

According to Suits, there are two types of rules. Both have to do with prelusoric and lusoric goals. They are the rules that are of benefit to win but at the same time, are banned. The first is ground rules and the second is skill-related rules. Ground rules are those that reveal the characteristics of the game, whereas skill-related rules are those that are needed to win the game. Bernard Suits argues that what differentiates games from goal-oriented technical activities is the voluntary selection of tools and methods that make it harder to fulfill the goal (Suits, 1995). On the other hand, Suits calls the player's attitude in being included in the game by accepting the game's purpose, tools and rules, the lusoric attitude (Suits, 1995).

3. HYPER-CASUAL GAMES

This section includes the definition of hyper-casual games and the examination of certain mechanisms, during which users in these types of games take action, including visual references. Additionally, this section covers the practical explanations of tutorials, which explain to users how they have to take action within the game as soon as the user faces a hyper-casual game. Tutorials play an important role in the sense that users understand easily and quickly the actions they need to take for the game to move on, which is why they are also important for hyper-casual games.

3.1. What are hyper-casual games?

The word ‘hyper’ refers to excessiveness, superiority, height and exaggeration, in the broadest terms. The English word ‘hyper’ has Greek etymological roots, where it means ‘over’ and ‘above’ (turkcenedemek, 2020). The word ‘casual’, on the other hand, is approached as ‘happening everyday’ (turkcenedemek, 2020). A combination of the words hyper and casual, hyper-casual games, on the other hand, is a particular game type with essential building blocks that separate it from other types in addition to being reproduced on a daily basis. Hyper-casual games are simple game types that are easy to play, appeal to a wide range of ages, are often free with simple content (Moloco, 2021). This type has gained popularity with Flappy Bird, launched in 2013 and reached 50 million downloads in 2014 (Knezovic, Udonis, 2022).

Hyper-casual games started to be intensively consumed across the world in 2017 (Yang, 2020). Simplicity and plainness are prominent in hyper-casual games. The player must understand the action needed to be taken for the game to continue in the first five seconds at least. Quick and easy perception of user interfaces is one of the fundamental purposes of this time for the massive target group to which hyper-casual games appeal. Thus, these games are set over the simple logic of understanding what needs to be done at first glance as well as the process and purpose (Applovin, 2020). Players do not encounter detailed elements within the game such as long texts, various interfaces and color palettes, characters with realistic anatomies, or different potential consequences by variables in winning or losing circumstances. Limited interfaces, directive buttons, characters forms and shades of color are what make the game simple and plain.

Hyper-casual games are played with one hand in portrait mode of smartphones, which brings users quite a comfortable gaming experience. With such simple content, players can play these games any time they want during their everyday lives with only one hand, adding to their gaming experience (Quiring, Applovin, 2020).

The most fundamental characteristic of hyper-casual games is the simplicity factor. This factor makes sure that users develop a certain addiction to the game. Therefore, the purpose here is fulfilled as players keep playing the game within a particular cycle. Furthermore, easy mechanisms ensure that the game is continuously played.

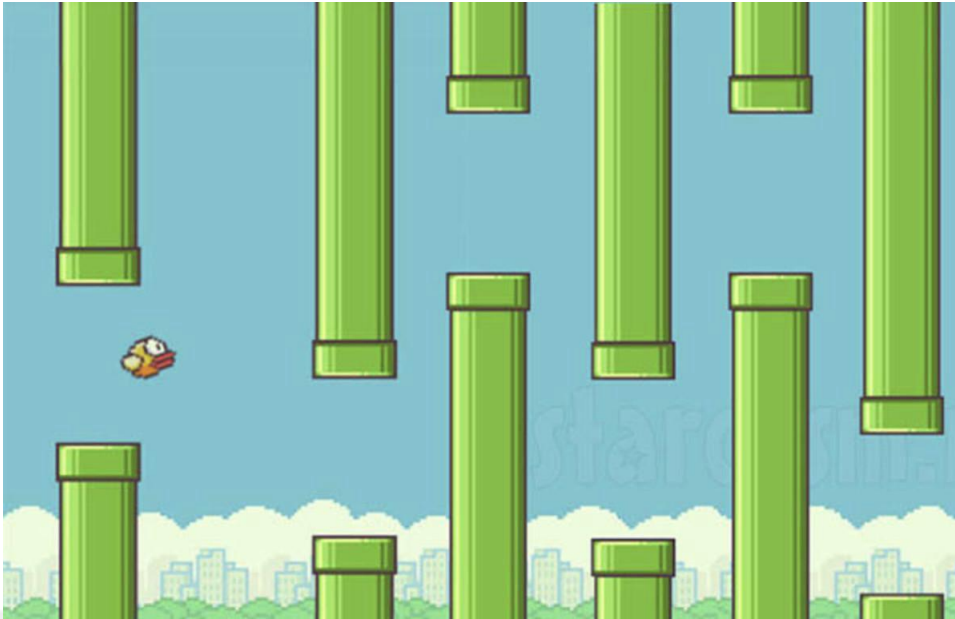
This particular type of game has become rather visible in 2017. The reason as to why it became widely acclaimed in 2017 can be traced back in time. Simplicity and plainness of the games that were launched in the 1970s were brought back to life in the form of hyper-casual games in 2017 (Yang, 2020).

As a matter of fact, hyper-casual games are very much similar to 1970s' games with respect to their visual language, process of fulfilling goals and simplicity in playing. Many games from that time such as Space Invaders, Galaxian, Pong, and Asteroids, have the same characteristics as those of current hyper-casual games.



Space Invaders (Codeheir, 2018)

Space Invaders is very simple for the player just like other hyper-casual games. The player only has to move the main object to left and right. It can hence represent an early example for the current games with addictive simplicity in everyday lives. Players are not given any conditions, where they may be confused, while the steps they have to take are clearly and concisely expressed. The background of the game, simple details in the characters and simple texts on the screens in Space Invaders make sure that players can easily understand the game and interact with it. On the other hand, Flappy Bird is one of the first games in the category of hyper-casual games. Created by Dong Nguyen, Flappy Bird was launched in May 2013 by Gears Studios and quickly became popular across the globe. The game reached 50 million downloads by the year 2014. Flappy Bird was available on both Google Play and App Store, when it was first launched, but was later removed upon the producers' request in 2014 (LinkedIn, 2021).



Flappy Bird, (Gears Studio, 2014)

Actions expected from the player in Flappy Bird are quite clear and understandable. The main character of the game is a bird that accelerates as it falls down. The player taps the screen to make sure the bird does not hit the floor or touch the pipes at the top. The most important trick to functionally play this game is to tap the screen, when the bird is closest to the pipe at the bottom (Time, 2014).

3.2. Mechanics of hyper-casual games

This section examines one-by-one the structures of hyper-casual game type and the links between these structures. Mechanics of hyper-casual games are important for gamers' loyalty to the game and for their advances in them.

The concept of mechanics in question is defined as the entirety of factors, which create interaction between the game and the player. The lack of such mechanics within the game means that the player cannot interact at all with the game. In this case, the player cannot intervene with anything in the game. Game mechanics differ by game types and content (Mobidictum, 2022).

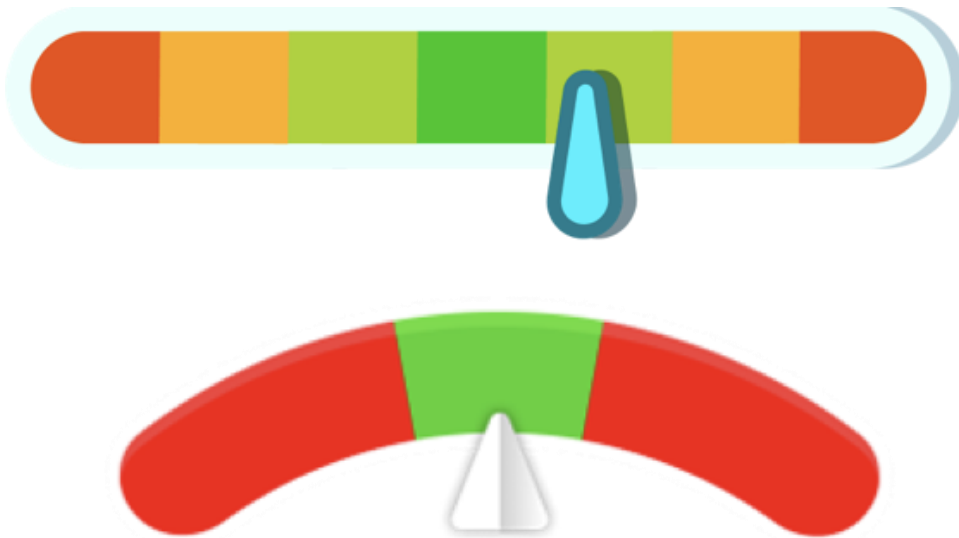
Mechanics include the actions, applied by the player to be able to actively play the game, as well as the movements they conduct. The player aims to complete levels by checking required mechanisms. The mechanics of the game is the most important factor that would render it enjoyable for the target group.

Considering that simplicity and plainness are prioritized in hyper-casual games, mechanics are aimed to be quickly, easily and clearly understood by players. Contrary to popular opinion, ease and understandability of game mechanics do not negatively impact the game's popularity or significance. For example, Pac-Man, one of the most popular games in the world that appeals to many people and continue to do so even today in terms of gaming mechanics, is quite a simple game with respect to its control mechanisms; still, its popularity persists today (Moloco, 2021). Among the most frequently used hyper-casual game mechanics, tap&tap Timing mechanics, swerve mechanics, swipe mechanics, merge mechanics, idle mechanics, stack mechanics, turn mechanics and rising/falling can be listed.

3.2.1. Tap Timing

Tap&Tap Timing game mechanic is very popular for hyper-casual games. This mechanism allows players to play the game with one hand and in portrait mode, which brings about a certain harmony. In this mechanism, all that the player has to do is to tap the screen at the right time (Hunter, Voodoo, 2020).

At this point, a bar on the screen must be placed with easy access for the player. It is planned that the player does not experience any difficulties in tapping this bar, which can be managed with one hand only. Thus, based on the way in which the player holds the phone, the most appropriate place for the bar is determined. All negative possibilities such as the bar coinciding with the bottom of the player's finger, lack of distinction due to background colors or too large or too small tapping areas, must be eliminated.



Drawing of tap timing bars for the mechanics, (Çil, 2021)

Tap/Tap timing mechanics can be illustrated with the two exemplary bars in the figures above. The cursors on the bars move from left to right and right to left with certain speed. The player has to tap the screen when the cursor is on the green area and avoid to tap the screen when the cursor is on the red. This application often uses a tutorial hand icon, explaining the move to the player with a simple animated video clip; it is usually called a ‘tutorial hand’ to prevent confusions for the player. The player can easily apply the tap/tap timing mechanics with a single hand and in portrait mode. If the player can adjust the timing well, the highest score is given to reward them.

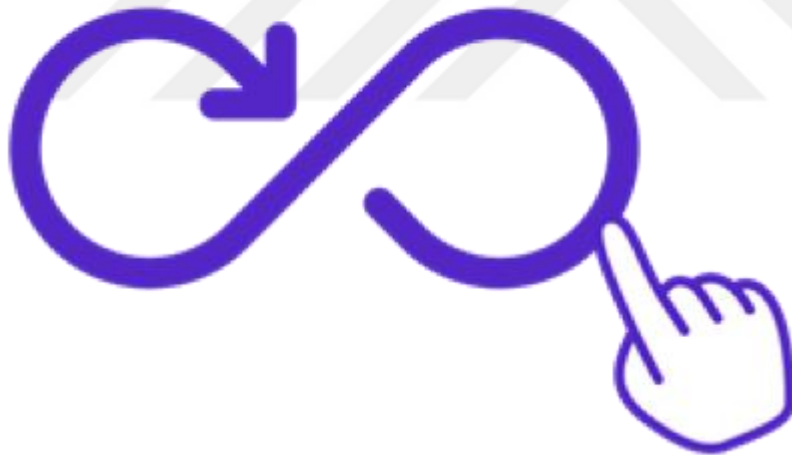


Drawing of tap timing bar showing the mechanics and the tutorial hand icon, (Çil, 2021)

3.2.2. Swerve

Swerve mechanics refer to the player's dragging movement of the object with which they interact by using their fingers. For enemies or dangers that might represent obstacles in the game or may hinder the character's quest, the player advances by moving their fingers in directions, where there are no obstacles, and the previously mentioned ones can be avoided. At the same time, players move through the game by dragging their fingers on the screen when they have to move towards objects that would be of benefit for the main character or the object. In games that involve swerve mechanics, the size of the object with which the player is to interact and the object's speed as the player is dragging it across the screen are very important factors.

The icon below is often used to explain to the player how the swerve mechanic works. The tutorial hand moves through the icon's lines. The player has to follow the tutorial hand's movements with their fingers (Hunter,Voodoo, 2020).



Drawing of swerve icon and tutorial hand, illustrating the mechanics, (Çil, 2021)

3.2.3. Swipe

Swipe mechanics require the player to engage in a dragging move from left to right or top to bottom. Tutorials show the player the right direction for that movement once again. During this process, if any texts are used, the mechanics to be applied are shown within or if tutorial hand is used, an animated clip that shows the movement from left to right or top to bottom is displayed (Hunter, Game Analytic, 2020).

3.2.4. Merge

This mechanic requires the player to combine visually identical objects. In the merge mechanics, two different objects cannot be combined – or merged. At this point, the player, who merges similar objects, develops a particular curiosity as a result of these endeavors. Keeping the player's curiosity alive is crucial for the game. Thus, all new objects that can be revealed to the player at the end of merging endeavors will be surprising (Hunter, Game Analytic, 2020). There is a continuity in the progress of the player, who is excited to level up in the game.

The main motivation in the merge mechanic is to make sure that players merge the objects in the game through solving a particular situation. With such actions, the player completes something missing with the desire to yield one complete object out of the merge. Moving on to the next level; in other words, the wish to level up, is through the successful merging of the objects.

The awarding in the game as well as factors such as visual effects also impact the playing process in positive ways.

The feeling of curiosity ensures that the player spends more time in the game and interacts more frequently with it. This is exactly what the producers expect their target groups to do.



The image is taken from Game Analytics' website. (<https://gameanalytics.com/>, 2021)

3.2.5. Idle

Within the scope of the idle gaming mechanics, the game includes many movements, but the player only interacts with the game by tapping the screen. Thus, many moves, animated clips and situations viewed in the game do not require the direct interaction from the player. At this point, the player is given a task of a small tap and turned into a viewer. The game advances by itself. The important part here is the player's tendency to wait and become curious about what awaits them in the meantime. The player, after leaving the game, comes back the next day to see the level of progress. This way, the game easily keeps the player within.

Since players do not directly interact with the objects in idle games, they do not need to focus. Players can easily run around in the game without focusing on it because the animation, moving on the screen, actually realizes this act of running. This way, the player sees that they are rewarded with their inaction, wanting to be in the game more.

As is mentioned above, the player is rewarded every time they log back to the game. They can hence witness the clear goals in the game and witness the feeling of actual progress. In games that utilize idle mechanics, all players have to do is to click on a button. This area, clicked by the player, produces a currency and moves on by itself with various animations. It is very important for the game setup to prepare the grounds for the player to spend funds. Players tend to stay in the game to make more money and purchase more products. Therefore, games with idle mechanics should provide functional processes for players to spend money (Böcker, Game Analytic, 2020).

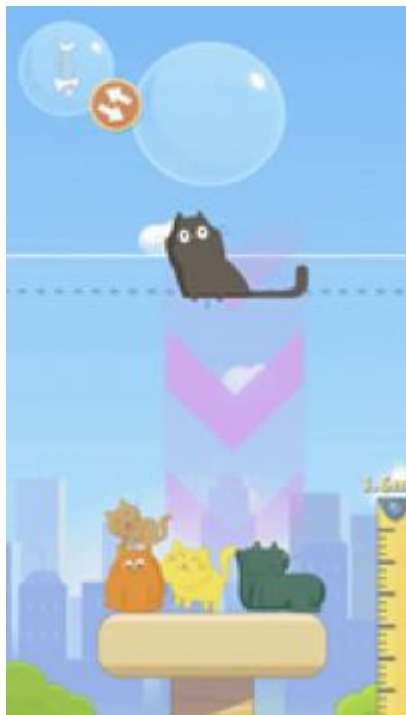
Purchasing behavior during the progress indicates that strategic moves are expected from the player. This way, the player feels excited to see how the game's progress is affected as a result.



This image is taken from Game Analytics' website. (<https://gameanalytics.com/> , 2021)

3.2.6. Stack

This mechanic requires the player to collect the objects in the game and stack them on top of one another. Players set up the stacks by controlling the areas and time on which the objects will be dropped down. The purpose of this action depends on the game's theme (Hunter, Game Analytic, 2020).



This image is taken from Game Analytics' website. (<https://gameanalytics.com/>, 2021)

3.2.7. Turn

The most important action for this mechanic is to actualize a turn at the right time. Games with turn mechanics include sharp areas to turn, which are clearly shown to the player. The game leaves it up to the player to control the direction in which the object or character is to turn as per the concept of the game. This way, players strive to follow the path for the character or the object to be able to estimate the direction in which the game will progress with upcoming turns. The main difference between this mechanism and the swerve mechanism is basically the tapping time. In the swerve mechanics, players direct characters or objects by never stopping to tap the screen or moving their fingers away. In the turn mechanics, on the other hand, the player conducts a sharp move by tapping their finger on the screen only in need of turning (Hunter, Game Analytic, 2020).



This image is taken from Game Analytics' website. (<https://gameanalytics.com/> , 2021)

3.2.8. Rising/Falling

These mechanics reveal a continuously advancing movement. The goal is to acquire the maximum score possible in that particular level. As per the rule of hyper-casual games, players have to keep the phone on portrait mode, protect the main object and advance by watching out for obstacles (Game Analytic, 2021).



This image is taken from Game Analytics' website. (<https://gameanalytics.com/> , 2021)

3.3. Tutorial Content and Applications in Hyper-Casual Games

The relationality between aimed simplicity and entertainment factors in hyper-casual games are attempted to be relayed in rapid and functional manners to players. With such relay, it is aimed for players to quickly grasp the game as soon as they see the main screen. This conveyance is applied via instructional animations, icons or textual

content called ‘tutorials’. These animations, icons and texts are often clear, concise and easily understandable for players.

3.3.1. Tutorial Texts

The goal is stated with a text, positioned in a space that players can clearly and easily see on a vertical screen. This space depends on the position of objects and can be in the middle, at the top or bottom of the screen.

With brief statements, players are explained about what they have to do within the game. The font used here should not be confusing, mix with background colors and sentences should be clear and concise – all of these factors are important for players to make sense of the goal of the game (Gamedevworks, 2020).

For example, let us assume that players have to touch the screen to fill an empty glass with water. At this point, the top of the screen will likely use the text, ‘Tap to fill’. The shortness of the text clearly refers to what the player has to do.

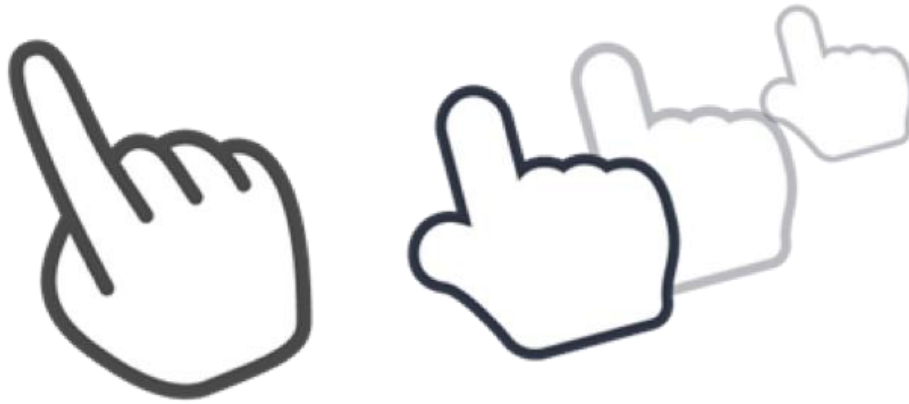
Moreover, the font of the text has to be very clear too. Mixed fonts or those with serif are not widely preferred because it is harder for readers to make sense of or to read per se. Considering the simplicity of hyper-casual games, fonts have to be simple and clear.

3.3.2. Tutorial Icons

A hand icon that is used to show the player the object or necessary mechanics with which they should interact is a very efficient way for players to make sense of the game. As can be seen in the figures below, the hand icon is found above the object with which the players should interact. The player’s attention must be drawn to the area, pointed out by the hand icon. This way, the main object can be clearly shown to the player.

It is very important for this hand icon to not be mixed with any other object or background in the game screen. The hand must be in a color and way of movement, which can easily be seen by the player. The clearer the tutorial is, when conveyed to

the target group, the clearer and easier actions of players in the game will be (Mozolevska, Kevuru Games, 2021).



Drawing of hand icons, (Çil, 2021)

3.3.3. Animations

Referring to moving images, the concept of animation ensures that the actions players are supposed to undertake are shown to them with moving elements, much like the aforementioned texts and tutorial hand icons. During this process, using animations can help players to rapidly focus on the necessary part in the game (Mozolevska, Kevuru Games, 2021).

For example, the enlargement or shrinkage of the text ‘Tap to fill’ or the illustration of the mechanic direction in which the tutorial hand shows the player the right way (left to right, top to bottom etc.), make sure the tutorial to be conveyed is hence more effective. On a fixed screen, the player’s gaze is directed towards these instructive factors which move through animations. This way, the player can see a small preview of the necessary mechanics to be applied.

3.4. Level Design in Hyper-Casual Games

This section of the study includes subjects concerning the elements used as hyper-casual are games are designed, i.e., visual language, color palette, contrast, light and shadow, user interface and user experience.

Hyper-casual games’ levels should be designed with principles of speed and continuity in mind. Images in levels, tutorials, and colors among other factors, should be applied with the characteristics and rules of this particular type. The active

structures, attempted to be preserved in games and for them to be conveyed to target groups, are set up in ways that would reflect such principles (Moloco, 2021).

3.4.1. Visual Language

The principle of simplicity, which is the most important characteristic of hyper-casual games, is adopted in the process of visualization. Everything in the game must be clear and minimalistic for the relationality between hyper-casual games and user experience to serve its purpose. The visual language used in hyper-casual games prioritizes the clear perception of everything by the player as soon as they are introduced to the game.

3.4.1.1. Color palette

The color palette acts as a roadmap for colors to be used in design. It is set up by combining similar colors with each other. The established color palette is quite a common notion that can be used in different fields such as décor, fashion, digital design and gaming. Setting up a color palette that is appropriate with the design and underlying idea of hyper-casual games can actually impact the game in a positive way.

Basing the hyper-casual game on a color palette that reveals harmony with all objects and surroundings also positively impacts how the target group perceives the game. At this point, there should not be too many colors in the game for players to be able to keep focusing on the mechanics of the game (Moloco, 2021).

3.4.1.2. Contrast

Synonymous with contradiction or opposition, the word contrast is approached as the adjustments needed to be undertaken for the game design to be more prominent and for some objects to be more noticeable than the others. Another feature that is crucial in terms of the principle of simplicity is the simple style in designing the virtual elements within the game. All distracting and unnecessary objects in visual elements must be limited without cutting the ties between the game and the player. Each and every element used in the game should be supporting the player's experience. In case that such elements do not serve to this purpose, said objects must be eliminated from the level (Oms, Laizet, Voodoo, 2021).

Studies to be conducted in terms of contrasts are important with respect to their suitability with the main gaming elements. If contrasts are used, players can differentiate contrasting elements and easily and quickly perceive the main element, wished to be conveyed to them. Consequently, players can easily interact within the game.

In order to test whether or not emerging visual elements are in accordance with the contrasts, images must be presented in grayscale snapshots. In this design, colors are only visible in light or dark grey colors. Therefore, elements in the background and with prominence can be noticed. At this stage, elements that need to be more or less prominent can be easily and quickly tested. Setting up a design that is in accordance with the rule of contrast can help in the identification of prominent elements as well as positively impacting user experience (Oms, Laizet, Voodoo, 2021).

3.4.1.3. Shadow and Light

Light can be described as the parts that are used to establish a lit effect in an image, while shadow can be described as the parts, where light is blocked (Demir, Anbarpınar, 2020). The use of shadow and light in functional ways in the established elements are very important for the main object and its prominence.

Using simple shadows help players to focus on the mechanics as well as the main object. However, shadows that appear in the screen in disturbingly intensive or frequent ways lead to a negative circumstance for they would overshadow the main object in the game, thus hindering the player from advancing. One of the fundamental requirements of hyper-casual games, the principle of simplicity must be kept in mind in using shadow and light in the game (Oms, Laizet, Voodoo, 2021).

3.4.1.4. User Interface and User Experience

User interface refers to all the symbols, windows, hypertexts and panels that include the commands, setting up operating system necessary to control machines, and ensure that said command are interacting with hardware equipment (Sakman, 2017). The interaction of any user with the interface leads to the emergence of the concept, user experience.

User experience is crucial for players to continue playing the game. Interfaces should hence reflect the fundamentals of hyper-casual games, simplicity and plainness, rendering user experience as smooth as possible.

Hyper-casual games appeal to a large group of people, which is why their user interfaces must be designed with this in mind. All texts in the design should be easily readable. This is also why simple fonts should be preferred. Furthermore, for players to easily interact with the buttons on the screen, their positions should be adjusted in ways that would simplify access (Oms, Laizet, Voodoo, 2021). Voodoo, a large French gaming company that is very important for the production of hyper-casual games, conducted a test to reveal the interaction habits of target groups with buttons on the screen and presented the findings with the following image.



This image is taken from Game Analytics website. (<https://gameanalytics.com/>, 2021)

The image above shows the easily and quickly interacted areas with the color green; the moderately easily interacted areas with the color yellow and the difficult areas with which to be interacted with the color red. Game producers consider these areas to

put into practice buttons and texts. A significant factor, impacting the players' time spent within the game, user interfaces should be planned over the areas that are the easiest, most comfortable and convenient for players (Oms, Laizet, Voodoo, 2021).

3.5. Marketing Strategies in Hyper-Casual Games

In our current modern and capitalist system, hyper-casual games are marketed to attract the target group's attention in the fastest and most active ways, much like other industries. Such plans continue by changing and improving strategies in accordance with the careful monitoring of target group behaviors.

Developed during the presentation of a game to target groups through advertisements, strategies are planned by considering various notions by game producers. They plan advertisements on what is current and popular. Sometimes images in advertisements can even be deceiving. The content of the game in the advertisement may differ from the real one. The storyline in the advertisement is often planned to catch the attention of the target group. Therefore, what is not in the game can be shown in the advertisement to be easily noticeable (Moloco, 2021). On the other hand, it is an important strategy for the advertisement to influence the target group at first glance. Especially action-packed scenes are preferred to be included in the first five seconds of the video. This is because they want to catch the attention of the viewer and make sure they keep watching the rest. The individual with the desire to see the whole advertisement becomes more curious and is usually motivated to download the game to experience it themselves (Hanicar, Udonis, 2022).

Fail scripts can also be used as strategies often adopted in videos. The video shows the wrong way of doing something to succeed in the game. Thus, the viewer of the video is disturbed by the feeling of failure in the video, thinking that they can do better after downloading the game. At this point, the aim is to create a feeling of competition among the target group. John Berger summarizes this idea with the following statement:

‘All publicity works upon anxiety.’ (Berger, 1986).

Another adopted strategy is conducted by making the main character go through the worst and come out of it, especially in games that have a particular storyline. For example, the character starts from the financial bottom, and acquires a wealthy life

after their choices. The aim is to have a happy ending in the game. Scenarios are set up over situations that cannot be experienced in real life to be more specific. This way, individuals find the opportunity to live vicariously through a representation. Guy Debord explains this phenomenon as follows:

“The images detached from every aspect of life fuse in a common stream in which the unity of this life can no longer be reestablished. Reality considered partially unfolds, in its own general unity, as a pseudo-world apart, an object of mere contemplation. The specialization of images of the world is completed in the world of the autonomous image, where the liar has lied to himself. The spectacle in general, as the concrete inversion of life, is the autonomous movement of the nonliving.” (Debord, 1967).

The individual attempts to satisfy themselves through a world that has become a representation as is mentioned above. The process of self-actualization is carried out over representation. The experience of self-actualization is presented in a rather flashy way. According to John Berger, advertisements aim to stimulate a particular feeling of dissatisfaction in viewers with their lives as a result of which target groups relate strongly with such strategically planned advertisements (Berger, 1986).



This image is taken from Berger, J. Ways of Seeing.

Sexual elements used in advertisements are also important parts of marketing strategies. Their uses are carried out over the clothes of both male and female characters, their actions and their goals. John Berger explains such use of sexuality as follows:

‘Publicity increasingly uses sexuality to sell any product or service. But this sexuality is never free in itself; it is a symbol for something presumed to be larger than it: the good life in which you can buy whatever you want. To be able to buy is the same thing as being sexually desirable; occasionally this is the explicit message of publicity as in the Barclaycard advertisement above. Usually it is the implicit message, i.e. If you are able to buy this product you will be lovable. If you cannot buy it, you will be less lovable. .’ (Berger, 1986).

The ways in which marketing strategies are applied is shaped with the analyses of the target group’s behaviors. Careful examination of data ensures that professions, age and sex among other demographics can be found out. This way, producers can get to

know their target groups well and design the content in ways that would be interesting for their target groups. At this point, acquisition of tangible data would mean that things are not left up to chance (Hanicar, Udonis, 2022).

In addition to target group analyses, popular content at the time are considered, which is an important area, utilized as marketing strategies are planned. Producing campaigns that are in accordance with target group analyses and up to date actions and content makes sure that advertisements can serve their purposes.

4. HYPER-CASUAL GAMES AND SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

Fast consumption of hyper-casual games are also visible in social media. They have wide reach and each individual in the society can simultaneously, rapidly and easily access social media platforms, alongside the ability to determine trends on these platforms. The most viewed videos, most attempted challenges and most rapidly spreading trends on social media platforms also impact game content in hyper-casual game category (Wright, Inmobi, 2021). To be more specific, most viewed content on TikTok, Instagram and YouTube now become themes of hyper-casual games too. Every new challenge, attempted in social media, is offered as mobile game content to masses. This way, what is popular is captured by not only social media to be presented to target groups but also by the gaming industry.

4.1. Social Media Content

The notion of social media refer to all tools, where users are positioned as both consumers and producers in an interactive environment, emerged as a result of using technological networks (Techtarget, 2021). This notion constantly changes, transforms and develops across the changing and evolving world. The concept of social media has to do with the development processes of the internet. Over time, social media changed and developed in relation with temporal conditions and such change and transformation still continues.

The technology that allows social media to exist has created a setting that encapsulates all levels of the societies across the world. In addition to being comprehensive, social media eliminates temporal and spatial limitations, allowing

individuals, who live thousands of miles away from each other, to communicate on a suitable platform (Mosco, Fuchs, 2014).

The rapid communication regardless of any distance can also be linked with McLuhan's concept of 'the global village'. McLuhan argues that in our electronic age, individuals' ideational processes are also changing and transforming, which ultimately turns the world into a village by blurring the borders (McLuhan, 2001).

Communicating with others quickly and simultaneously, individuals can carry out such endeavors in line with the opportunities social media brings about. As social media allows users to constantly form connections, it removes the static structure and gradually leaves behind the passive state (Mosco, Fuchs, 2014). Social media continues to develop with a certain consistency. Many platforms bring about updates over time, fulfilling user needs and aiming to reach new users.

In the age of technology, social media is an inevitable truth. Dating back to a long time ago, it is very powerful today. In turn, this phenomenon has become a business platform, giving employment opportunities to a large number of people. Individuals today carry out their entertainment and business needs via social media. Moreover, great numbers of people take advantage of social media in education and research. Different sectors use social media platforms to serve to their own benefits, aiming to increase their revenues and to rapidly reach their target groups. Social media platforms also provide functional information to producers throughout the analysis process of target groups, which is why such platforms are continued to be actively utilized by many branches of work.

4.2. Game Themes

One of the platforms that was heavily impacted by the technology's speed and simultaneity, TikTok continues to expand its active user numbers with each passing day. Such increase in the numbers of active users is very important for hyper-casual games. Each video, watched on this platform, and each behavior, rapidly spreads throughout masses, being used simultaneously.

For hyper-casual game companies, reaching large groups quickly and actively is a very important goal; thus, these companies concentrate on popular content on TikTok.

Themes on such content are reflected and discussions on the appropriate mechanics to reach players directly are carried out.

During the gamification process of videos that are viewed and shared by large groups, TikTok has become an inspirational and enriched social media platform, feeding hyper-casual games as such (Steinbach, Supersonic, 2022).

All content that is widely known by the majority on TikTok, drives target groups to download that particular game with the particular theme directly to their smartphones or tablets. Whatever content is popular on TikTok at the time has access to an already large number of people, which represents huge functionality for the speed and accuracy in detecting the audience in producing hyper-casual games during gamification. One of the best settings, where active content can be pursued, TikTok offers rich content to game producers (Steinbach, Supersonic, 2022).

4.3. Gamification of Social Media Content: TikTok

A social media platform, where individuals engage rapidly and simultaneously, TikTok is closely followed by content producers. Much like the case with other social media platforms, TikTok removes all differences in time zones or distances. Users can get to know each other's content, come to agreements on any topic, and use various hashtags to share content to serve to the same purposes. This way, millions of people that do not actually know each other properly can act as if they are part of the same group, while their main objective remains as the increasing of their number of followers (Financial Times, 2022).

Popular content on TikTok offers new themes and concepts to game developers. Content on TikTok, much like the case in hyper-casual games, become rapidly consumed instruments of production and consumption. Therefore, when popular TikTok content becomes the theme of a hyper-casual game at the same time, they become equally interesting. Not wanting to miss out on this opportunity, producers keep up with the trends on TikTok. They use the content on TikTok as themes in hyper-casual games they would launch. This way, a content that attracts huge engagement on TikTok reaches large numbers of downloads through a hyper-casual game.

Each content on TikTok is attempted to be adapted into hyper-casual game concepts, while teams, who undertake the responsibility of setting up game concepts, specifically study TikTok to follow up on global trends (Steinbach, Supersonic, 2021).

4.3.1. Impressions

Viewing numbers, or impressions, are quite important in differentiating TikTok content that would be useful for the gamification process. Conditions of the number of views, shares, engagement, and impressions in comments, reveal the actual popularity of the content in question, meaning that such content is found interesting by a large group of people (Steinbach, Supersonic, 2022). To be more specific, wide reach and popularity of content videos on YouTube and Instagram, which have large numbers of users, and the numbers of impressions and engagements on such platforms are crucial for the idea, which is wished to be turned into a game. Thus, gamification is selected when the content does not appeal to a small section, but a huge group that is great in numbers.

Using impression numbers on TikTok as a base facilitates the elimination of content due to the large number of users it has on a global scale. Thanks to the number of impressions, content becomes easily distinguished.

Contents with high numbers of impressions are actively followed by a lot of people across the world. These users continue their production concerning said content, ensuring that this interaction is alive and accessible.

4.3.2. Playability

After finding powerful content with respect to the number of impressions and engagements, gamification process begins. The matter of whether or not said content will be turned into a game or not is something to be thought at length. Especially in the context of hyper-casual games, this matter must be taken into consideration.

It is not always possible to gamify all popular content on TikTok with a particular mechanic. Especially content that is watched and shared by a large group of all people cannot always be turned into games due to the feature of hyper-casual games such as simplicity, plainness and the necessity to play such games in portrait modes and with

one hand. Therefore, it is very important to determine whether or not such content can be gamified within the context of hyper-casual games or what their limitations will be if it is wished to be gamified.

It is quite beneficial to ask fundamental questions concerning the purpose, advancement and mechanics of the game to turn a TikTok video content into a game. That is because not each widely watched content is suitable to be turned into a game. Once answers regarding the purpose, advancement and mechanic for the game are found, then one can move on to the design process of this popular content (Steinbach, Supersonic, 2022).

In the design process, main features of hyper-causal games prevail. This means that the game has to include varying concepts such as a vertical screen, simple mechanics, and a simple user interface. Then, the game's video is planned to be presented to the target audience with a creative setup. The main theme in the video is established through the possibility of being able to download the game and have the chance to become that person as someone who cannot actually experience what is happening in the video.

Established through TikTok content, hyper-casual games offer users the opportunity to become the protagonists in these videos that have large numbers of impressions and engagements. For the target group to be able to taste this experience, it is enough to download the game to their smartphones or tablets. The target audience is then offered a game that they can access in mere minutes, in which they can acquire the experience they were promised in videos.

4.3.3. Testability

Tests are carried out to clarify whether or not videos, after the process of gamification, are really found interesting by target groups. If these tests do not yield positive results with respect to producers' revenues, another advertisement endeavor is initiated, where the game concept may be presented again. However, it should not be forgotten that the most important feature of hyper-casual games is the factor of speed. If advertisements do not attract the attention of viewers, it may lead to missing out on new and popular content since too much time will be spent on one theme that actually may fail again (Steinbach, Supersonic, 2022).

5. ACTORS IN THE PRODUCTION OF HYPER-CASUAL GAMES

This part of the study conveys the gamification experiences of individuals, who work in the production of hyper-casual games. First, duties undertaken by individuals, who contribute to the production of such games, will be explained. Then, pursuant to the questions asked to these individuals, potential situations occurring in meetings and improvised chats, their field of experience during production of games will be explicated.

5.1. Ideation Teams

Ideation teams are teams that ensure an idea is turned into a game. These people conduct research endeavors for content that could potentially become themes for hyper-casual games that derive their power from speed and simultaneity. These research studies are carried out within the scope of games, launched by competitors, and social media platforms such as TikTok.

Argued ideas are also thought about by ideational teams in terms of their themes, concepts, mechanics, visual language and advances. Thus, it is very important for these teams to follow what is current and popular so that they can seize their counterparts. Content that is known by all is often recognized and wondered by large groups of people (Adone, 2022). When ideational teams' ideas are approved, they are conveyed to a product manager, who then continues with the gamification process (the definition of Product Manager will be provided below).

5.2. Designers

Designers create the visual language of the game and undertake the duty of generating a visual world that is in accordance with the concept of the game. Since simplicity and plainness prevail in hyper-casual games, the design process is shaped quite quickly.

Designers usually assume the responsibility of shaping many visual details such as the environment, background, buttons and user interface. Thus, they can also be called UX/UI designers and 3D designers.

5.2.1. UX/UI Designers

An abbreviation for ‘user experience’, UX refers to the experience target groups experience with the offered content. UX focuses on the users’ experiences being carried out as functional as possible. The process, in which the position of each and every element is followed before being interacted with by the users, is also very important for UX.

Target groups often focus on the theme that is wished to be relayed by the production. UX designers hence plan for users to interact with the products easily, simply and functionally.

An abbreviation for ‘user interface’, UI, on the other hand, reveals a tangible design for user interface. While interaction in the background is planned during UX process, UI shows these plans in design. Design elements such as color and fonts are applied during UI design processes (Bootcamp, 2021).

Buttons and areas for users to interact with in hyper-casual games are designed ways to be easily used with one hand. Any mix-ups or visual dispersions might be confusing for users, leading them to quickly leave the game. Therefore, the size, shape and position of the texts in the game must be as quick, simple and effective as possible.

5.2.2. 3D Designers

Ensuring the 3D modeling of objects, 3D designers design characters, settings and special effects. This way, they produce digital representations of any object via computers. Details such as character design, environmental design or effects design in hyper-casual games are, again, designed and planned in line with principles of simplicity and plainness (Böcker, Game Analytic, 2020).

5.3. Developers

Game developers work to actualize the interaction with elements in the game. For game design to be actualized, best technological solutions are sought, and developers write the codes to that end. Developers who work in hyper-casual game projects must consider the principle of speed, and they have to plan to find the most effective way for this purpose (Böcker, Game Analytic, 2020).

5.4. Publishing Managers

Responsible from all content to be published, publishing managers strive to deliver games to users in the most effective ways possible by setting up campaigns. In order to find the most efficient way to reach users, they follow up on current content and make publishing plans by turning such content into campaigns. Throughout this process, publishing managers have to steer marketing artists towards the right way, creating a market for the game by using their knowledge on the industry per se. There are many firms that are active in the industry, solely working as publishers without producing hyper-casual games (Steinbach, Supersonic, 2021).

5.5. Marketing Artists

Marketing artists plan the marketing strategies for the games to be launched. They focus on key aspects that might be interesting within the game, making sure that these points are covered in advertisements and marketing campaigns (Böcker, Game Analytic, 2020). Sometimes, elements and scenarios that are not in hyper-casual games, are used by marketing artists to attract the attention of users. Such marketing strategies are based on being curious about the game in the video before users download the game and start experiencing them on their own.

5.6. Product Managers

Project managers follow up on all the business plans of the game team, while designing game design documents (GDDs) concerning the progression of the game. GDDs include necessary details for the game to be set up (Baldwin, 2005). Thus, planned processes for accepted ideas are also planned in line with the objectives in GDDs.

Many processes including data on the game, videos to be used in marketing, intervals of advertisements to be shown to users in episodes, characters and settings, come to life as per the plans of product managers. Product managers also plan for the daily and hourly tasks of individuals in their teams with the attempt to predict when the game will be completed and launched to be offered to users. Such forecasts are very important for hyper-casual games, in which new things are constantly tried (Böcker, Game Analytic, 2020).

Especially popular content in our present times are often captured by hyper-casual game producing companies. Different companies that pursue similar channels in ideational processes work on quite the same games, content and concepts. Therefore, the factor of speed is especially important. Project managers hence plan the initial phases of games by focusing on this factor.



6. STUDIES IN THE WORLD AND IN TURKEY REGARDING GAMES AND HYPER-CASUAL GAMES

A review of studies on hyper-casual games reveal very scarce resources. This type has become popular especially after 2017; thus, hyper-casual games are relatively new types and the limited number of studies on this topic can be linked with the novelty per se (Yang, 2020). In addition to limited research studies, companies that produce hyper-casual games include articles, research studies and analyses, penned by specialists in the field in their own communication channels, which might be of interest to individuals, who wish to access such information. This section includes all research studies on hyper-casual games upon a comprehensive review. It also includes the articles, written after specialists' research and analysis endeavors in the field. On the other hand, hyper-casual games represent a completely new type; thus, some of the studies on games in general are covered in this section.

A Dutch philosopher and historian, Johan Huizinga published 'Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture' in Paris in 1951 and in Turkey in 1955, focusing on the concept of playing through humanity and society. Huizinga argues in this book that the concept of games exist as the fundamental elements of culture, and they will continue to be so in future. This concept is included in the book with its place and functions in other areas such as law, wars, poetry, wisdom and philosophy. Huizinga states that the concept of homo ludens refers to playing, gaming human beings (Huizinga, 1995).

Bernard Suits, on the other hand, includes content regarding the concept of gaming in his 1995 book 'The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia'. Suits views games as an existential ideal. While Suits' book defines games, it also hosts additional information regarding the various games, played in the society.

The 2001 book 'Man, Play and Games' of French Sociologist roger Caillois, on the other hand, contains information on the concept of games and game sociology. Caillois shares their thoughts on Huizinga's theories, while investigating game forms at length. Games' characteristics are posited to be ambiguous and ineffective, and games are argued to have rules that are imaginary and develop separately from living practices (Caillois, 2001).

Another book on games is ‘Game Studies in Turkey and from Turkey’, published in 2020. With editors Dr. Ertuğrul Süngü and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Barbaros Bostan, this book includes studies on games conducted by academicians. The book contains a total of fourteen articles. Half of the articles in the book include studies conducted in Turkey, while the rest include studies comprising of universal findings. The book argues that digital games have taken the world under their spell and such impact has been also visible in Turkey since the 2010s. The developments, changes and transformation in the gaming world has been increasing with technological developments, which helps game production and consumption reach humongous sizes (Doğan, 2020).

Another book called ‘The Terminology of Digital Gaming Industry’, published in 2019 by Tansu Kendirli, is launched with the endorsement of Masomo and Gram Games, which are prominent mobile gaming companies in Turkey. The book covers in detail the meanings of concepts used frequently in the gaming world (Webtekno, 2019).

Jason Screier’s 2021 book ‘Blood, Sweat and Pixels’, on the other hand, contains information about the background of game development processes, relaying the experiences of people, who pursue or achieved game production purposes.

While studies and surveys on hyper-casual games are limited in numbers since it is a rather novel type, certain content can still be reached. Trey Smith, the founder and CEO of 8cell, a game development studio of over 65 million downloads, wrote a book called ‘Crushing Hyper-Casual Games’, which can be viewed as one of the books specifically written on hyper-casual games in the literature. Trey Smith shares relevant steps on hyper-casual games in this book, in addition to presenting functional tips to make them more popular and preferable. Smith mentions four steps in the book: the idea, the build, the game and the launch. Games that succeeded among other hyper-casual games are used as examples to explicate these steps (Trey Smith, 2018).

Zichu Yang from School of Design and Arts, Beijing Institute of Technology published in 2020 a study called ‘Hyper-Casual Endless Game Based Dynamic Difficulty Adjustment System For Players Replay Ability’. Yang argues that the purpose of the study is to extend the lifespan of hyper-casual games. Yang also focuses on the fact that hyper-casual games are rapidly consumed and played. They

posit in ways that would motivate players to play hyper-casual games over and over again. The playing durations of games and the numbers of launched mobile games are offered in analytical tables in the study. User experience in hyper-casual games occur in 3-to-5-minute sessions. Explaining how to increase play time in hyper-casual games through user experience analyses, this study also offers examples from some games (Yang, 2020).

Published in 2021, the study called ‘Comparative Study of Usability Evaluation Methods on a Hyper Casual Game’ was penned by Alongkorn Charoenpruksachat from the Department of Software Engineering, College of Arts, Media and Technology, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand and Pattama Longani from the College of Arts, Media and Technology, Chiang Mai University. Accordingly, the most functional methods for hyper-casual games are concurrent thinking aloud (TA), retrospective think aloud (RTA), and interviewing, which are offered comparatively (Charoenpruksachat, Longani, 2021).

On the other hand, there are articles that are written in light of the findings from various analyses, acquired by specialists in the field of hyper-casual games. These individuals, much like me, have participated in different processes of hyper-casual games, producing and consuming content by experiencing both positions.

Having been a publishing manager in the gaming industry for long years, Falko Böcker wrote in their 2020 study ‘5 Things to Consider When Designing Hyper-Casual Games’, the five steps that must be considered to produce a successful hyper-casual game. Furthermore, situations that may cause mistakes and time loss as they are encountered frequently during the production of hyper-casual games are stated. Böcker claims that the five important steps in question are production of new ideas, planning the production cycle, utilizing the right products, expanding the idea, and testing the game, in addition to detailed explanations for each heading (Böcker, 2020).

Another publishing manager in the gaming industry with their experiences, Eugen Quiring includes a brief historical overview on hyper-casual games in their 2020 piece ‘The Evolution of Hyper-Casual Games’, before they explicate different phases in hyper-casual game production such as advantages, development and production details (Quiring, 2020).

Another publishing manager in the industry, Chay Hunter wrote in 2020 '14 Best Hyper-casual Gameplay Mechanics', encapsulating gaming mechanics that include all behaviors of players within hyper-casual games as well as information and examples in this regard. Furthermore, Hunter mentions the satisfactory quality of gaming mechanics for players, their simplicity and their duration (Hunter, 2020).

In 'About Profitable Hyper Casual Games: Design Tips, Rates, and Upcoming Trends for 2022' Victoria Mozolevska penned in 2021, hyper-casual games are explained in light of design-related tips and potential topics to become hot topics in 2022. The study states that 77.6% of games launched in 2019 were hyper-casual games. Such data is important to prove the global power of hyper-casual games per se (Mozolevska, 2021).

Matija Hanicar, CTO of Udonis Inc., which is an expert in mobile applications and games, published in 2022 'Hyper Casual Games: Mobile Gaming's Most Profitable Genre?', emphasizes the importance of Flappy Bird in the popularization of hyper-casual games, putting its success in data. On the other hand, the definition of hyper-casual games, hyper-casual game players' expectations, and the crucial concepts for such games are mentioned in this piece by Hanicar (Hanicar, 2022).

A Senior Content Marketing Editor, David Hartery published in 2020 'How to Make a Hyper-Casual Game Successful: Everything You Need to Know', which includes tips for hyper-casual game producers and depictions of hyper-casual game mechanics. On the other hand, 'The Basics of Pitching Your Hyper-Casual Game to Publishers', Rae Steinbach approaches the building blocks of hyper-casual games in their marketing processes. Steinbach reveals tips and tricks that would be helpful for target groups to easily grasp the games by sticking to the principle of simplicity of hyper-casual games.

Written in 2021 by Sarayah Wright, 'How Hypercasual Gaming Can Use Social Media to Fuel Growth' includes information about how social media content can help hyper-casual games to grow.

Aside from the articles and texts of specialists in the field, hyper-casual game producers and blog posts are published on hyper-casual games. Supersonic Studios, which succeeded globally with the hyper-casual games it launched, produces many

content posts on hyper-casual games on its website under the section ‘Knowledge Hub’. Supersonic Studios, the headquarters of which is in Tel Aviv, Israel, has reached millions of users with the many games it launched as a game published and studio (Supersonic, 2020).

Another company that publishes content about hyper-casual games via their website is Voodoo. Founded in 2013 by Alexandre Yazdi and Laurent Ritter, Paris-based Voodoo both produces and publishes games. Voodoo-produced hyper-casual games reached a total of over 6 billion and Voodoo reached over 300 million individuals with their games (Voodoo, 2013). Voodoo’s website also hosts blog posts concerning hyper-casual game contents. Furthermore, there is another section on Voodoo’s website called ‘Academy’, where a training program for those who wish to be trained in hyper-casual game production is available (Voodoo Academy, 2022).

Founded officially in 2015 as a news platform, Turkish Mobidictum also produces content as of 2020, sharing content in a number of topics such as news from mobile gaming industry, updates and data-driven results. Under the heading ‘Reports’ on the website, news from the current situation of the mobile gaming industry in the world are provided as per concrete data, supported by relevant analyses. Mobidictum is in contact with over three hundred and fifty gaming studios and organizes important events in Turkey to bring together companies and persons in the industry (Mobidictum, 2020).

Content on hyper-casual games are usually offered in forms of written texts, penned by specialists in the field about different headings. One of the main reasons as to why I wanted to undertake such a study as this one was due to the limited number of research studies on hyper-casual games and the existence of short contents, written in pieces. My aim hence is to approach hyper-casual game processes in detail as an individual with the means to look at the process from the inside. Brief articles and analyses are still underway regarding hyper-casual games.

7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section of the study covers both the structure of hyper-casual games and the notions and phenomena in the background through various thoughts of different thinkers and theoreticians. Findings from the study are also relayed with links to their theories.

One of the most frequently encountered concepts is the speed factor as mentioned in the discourse of Jay Griffiths. The relationality between speed and hyper-casual games, is explained with the concept FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). McLuhan's concept of global village is also covered in describing the blurring of distances between persons in terms of speed. Deborah Lupton's concept of 'emotional self' is mentioned to exemplify the player's identification with a character or scene in the game. Uses and gratifications theory, posited by Elihu Katz, is linked with hyper-casual game players' desires to satisfy themselves with actions and situations in the game. Furthermore, the documentary 'The Social Dilemma' is used to yield examples in relaying this theory.

In addition, this section covers the links between popular content and hyper-causal games, including LeBon's description of masses and Veblen's definition of conspicuous consumption. The individual's conduct of the same actions by leaving behind all subjectivity is explained with Adorno and Horkheimer, while popular culture is expanded with Herbert Gans and İrfan Erdoğan and explanations regarding the prominence of quantity over quality as posited by Roland Barthes is mentioned in this part. In addition, the concept of quantity and individuals, being mentioned as mere numbers, is supported with Zamyatin's narratives from the novel 'Us'.

In the current technological climate, individuals' heterogenous structure is turning technology into a commercial commodity, as is mentioned with the words of Erkan Saka. Moreover, hyper-casual games' presence in everyday life practices, the selection of their themes from amongst everyday life and even the planning of playability through everyday life practices (hyper-casual game design to be played on the vertical screen and with one hand) means that the concept of casual is quite effective on them. Possessing huge impact on work and said game type, the word casual is explained over Henri Lefebvre.

7.1. Looking at the theories from the perspective of hyper-casual games

The concept of speed, which will be mentioned in findings, is viewed to have a strong effect on hyper-casual games. Speed is defined as the power and violence arising from an act and is derived from the Farsi word ‘to get up, to leap’.

Machester-born English writer Jay Griffiths, who studied English Literature at Oxford University, explains the word speed with the following words:

‘Oxford English Dictionary provides many old meanings of speed, including wealth, good fortune, support and aid. Speed represents the speed of something occurring, while its common use today only refers to promptness. Speed used to mean success too, and today, success is defined through speed. In today’s society, the ones that are ahead need fast medicine; caffeine, cocaine, Prozac or speed – all of them drag you to crueler competitiveness.’ (Griffiths, 1999).

Griffiths expresses that the word speed, as we use it today, is used interchangeably with the state of being prompt. Griffiths also highlights that speed has to do with success (Griffiths, 1999).

The relationality between speed and success as mentioned by Griffiths also applies to hyper-casual games. Achieving success in hyper-casual games is ensured with a fast production strategy (Hartery, Adjust, 2021). Griffiths’ expression that those who are ahead in the race needs fast drugs and them being dragged to races, is important to see the power of the impact of speed. Living in an age, where speed is required for success, is very important to make sense of the system in which we exist. The individual, who first explores and gamifies a new and interesting content to become a hyper-casual game is viewed to succeed as well. Therefore, speed allows success just like Griffiths has mentioned. Content that is new and interesting for the majority becomes more important when it is realized in a particular timeline. In today’s modern capitalist system, capturing the changing and transforming content is only possible through adapting to their speed.

Hyper-casual game producers set up their strategies in link with the speed factor, just like Griffiths has mentioned. One of the main factors that ensures the success of hyper-casual games is speed (Hartery, Adjust, 2021).

On the other hand, the relationality between speed and success can also be linked with Deborah Lupton's description of the 'self'. Lupton mentions here the identification of individuals with objects. They also express that individuals personify financial means to include them in their own routines. Entering into a long-term relationship with the individual, the financial instruments are personified by the individual, being turned into parts of everyday life (Lupton, 1998).

This identification can be linked with individuals' state of engagement with hyper-causal games. The individual can rapidly access a notion thanks to hyper-casual games, which could otherwise take a long time. For example, in a weight loss themes hyper-casual game, the user can quickly reach the body they wish to have by clicking one button easily and rapidly, whereas in real life, it could have taken a year at least. The individual here includes the game, which is the aforementioned means, into their everyday routine, adding them to the identification process and identifying with the character in the game too. Turning the character into themselves, individuals also link the character's success as a result of the action with themselves. This way, they include said success through hyper-casual games into their own routines, turning them into physical realities.

On the other hand, the weight loss example also illustrate the easy and quick action of the individual towards a weight loss, hinting a satisfaction. This process is linked with Elihu Katz's theory of uses and gratifications. Having emerged in the 1940s, uses and gratifications theory states that individuals participate in certain actions to satisfy their needs. According to Katz, individuals have certain social and psychological needs, and they tend to fulfill said needs through different ways. One way to fulfill them is to turn to mass media. Uses and gratifications theory heavily focuses on what people do with media rather than what media does to people (Katz, 1959). This approach is very significant in terms of making sense of the feeling of success that is wished to be conveyed to users in hyper-casual games.

In uses and gratifications theory, individuals assume active roles instead of passive ones (Rodman, 2007). This is similar to what is happening in hyper-casual games. A weight loss themes hyper-casual game, as was mentioned above, is used as a means to satisfy, which ensures active participation of the user. Feeling the need to lose weight, the individual tries to fulfil this need via the hyper-casual gaming mechanics. The

individual hence interacts with the game's mechanic and assumes an active position. They continue being active instead of passive until the gratification is ensured. Moreover, all actions of the individual within the game is carried out to the same end. For example, the money they make within the episode as well as the money they spent on an object are actions carried out to satisfy the main character.

On the other hand, Rosengren, who accepts that in uses and gratifications approach the notion individuals need during their wish to act must emerge as an issue, states that as a result of this issue, individuals react to events (Rosengren, 1974). Going back to the weight loss example, the individual deems the weight as an issue and displays their reaction by participating in the weight loss action in the game. Consequently, the individual becomes satisfied much like the case in uses and gratifications.

The documentary, 'The Social Dilemma', offers significant content for uses and gratifications approach. In this documentary, individuals from within the industry just like I am, are included to offer their perspectives from the inside as specialists in the technology field. The documentary accepts the fact that social platforms must make meaningful systematic changes, in addition to underlining that one must realize that there is more than meets the eye in such cases (The Social Dilemma, 2020).

People's inability to separate from social networks for gratification purposes can also be observed in forms of diseases, old and new. For example, cosmetologist Tijion Esho came up with the disease name 'Snapchat/Selfie Dysmorphia' to refer to the mental disorder brought upon individuals by the filters that can be found on Snapchat. Arguing that this disorder is observed in the disorders on the obsessive-compulsive disorder spectrum, Esho adds that it causes disturbances in the way individuals view their bodies. The individual's desire to be satisfied can even turn into disorder names in the present system.

Conceptualized in The Social Dilemma by Tijion Esho, Snapchat/Selfie Dysmorphia can also be observed in one of the scenes: A young girl uploads an unfiltered photograph to the social media platform, nervously waits for interactions, and when she cannot achieve the expected numbers in interactions and therefore gratifications. She then deletes the unfiltered photograph and immediately uploads the filtered version of the same photograph.

The reflection of uses and gratifications approach can also be observed on hyper-casual games in the words, projected in the screen at the end of episodes and user actions. The user finishes one level and at the end, words on the screen appear: ‘Amazing!, Great!, Beautiful!’ These words can be closely linked with the principles of simplicity and plainness, which are the main characteristics of hyper-casual games. The games are set up in ways that would have lower chances for players to make mistakes. Using the weight loss theme again, the weight loss endeavors of the main character with whom the player identifies is already prepared by the producers in very simple ways. This way, the individual’s process of achieving satisfaction in a hyper-casual game is planned by keeping simplicity and plainness in the forefront (Applovin, 2020).

On the other hand, the factor of speed, which has great impact on hyper-casual games, can be covered alongside the concept of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) as defined by Przybylski. FOMO can be referred to as the individual’s thought that others can experience positive things at any given moment and therefore, they are worried that they will miss out on such experiences. It can actually be linked with speed, which is the common ground in narratives. Przybylski states that the increase in the use of social networks is also related with FOMO (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, Gladwell, 2013). The factor of speed, which is quite impactful for the producers of hyper-casual games, can also be examined through FOMO.

Within the context of FOMO, hyper-casual game producers tend to keep their minds sharp in order to never miss out on anything novel and popular. For example, teams consistently check TikTok, which is a huge social network, to never miss out on new and popular content, looking for new ideas for hyper-casual games (Steinbach, Supersonic, 2022). Producers want to explore the content in such fields themselves first and they want to be the first to produce them. Therefore, they have to be aware of what is going on in social platforms.

Produced content continues to rapidly change by eliminating temporal and spatial limitations. New concepts brought along by speed as well as actions and behaviors cause a particular environment in the gaming industry to emerge.

This speed factor in question allows people to access each other’s content thanks to hashtags on social media platforms even though they live thousands of miles away

from one another. The impact of the speed factor connects distant communities just like Marshall McLuhan defines in the global village. The invention of printing and the advancements brought along by the electronic age, according to McLuhan, have brought along changes and transformations in individuals' cognitive processes, eliminating borders and turning the world into a global village (McLuhan, 2001).

Hyper-casual games can be linked with McLuhan's global village in terms of the speed and simultaneity technology offers. Hyper-casual game content can reach hundreds of countries at the same time. Although they live thousands of miles away from one another, distances are removed and game consumers can simultaneously take action, coming to the same conclusions as a result.

On the other hand, the heterogenous structure of the internet users in today's technological age reveals how technology rapidly turned into a commercial commodity. Therefore, social platforms are important in social and political terms, bringing along new concepts and discourse (Saka, 2015). One of the most important characteristics of hyper-casual games is that they appeal to a wide group of people, which is in accordance with the heterogenous structure Saka mentions. Moreover, individuals' behavior is tracked within games through different data and games are shaped again and again as per such data, showing that hyper-casual games are perceived as commodities for producers too (Hartery, Adjust, 2021).

The persons I interviewed also mentioned the concept of 'popularity' frequently. Heavily encountered during interviews, this concept can also be covered within the scope of many theories, as was the case with speed.

The word 'popular' has its etymological roots in the French word 'populaire', which means 'belonging to the public'. Today, it refers to something that is liked and loved by large masses. The explanations of American sociologist Herbert J. Gans are quite important in defining the word 'popular'.

Stating that the comparison between popular culture and high culture relies on a wide definition of culture, Herbert Gans believes that a culture that belongs only to the majority of the public, i.e., does not belong to only the upper classes, shall not be undermined as mass culture. Gans argues that there are different cultures of taste

within aesthetic plurality and therefore, different popular cultures must be accepted to exist as well (Gans, 2005).

The aforementioned opinions of Gans reinforces the idea that the global-scale reach and impact of hyper-casual games is a fact that shall not be undermined. One of the main characteristics of hyper-casual games, the principle of simplicity and plainness, should not only be deemed as an ordinary notion belonging to mass culture. This type displays its impact across the world, while production continues with incredible speed (Applovin, 2020).

Turkish communication scientist İrfan Erdoğan, in their piece called ‘On What Popular Culture Is’, explicates the concept of popular culture in relation with mass culture. The reinforcement of the concept referred to as mass culture is expressed to have links with 19th century capitalism. They argue that popular culture was manufactured for the working class, and with the increase in the industrial production of popular culture, standardized mass production modes started to need mass consumers more (Erdoğan, 2004).

At this point, it is important to touch upon Le Bon’s definition of the mass to acquire a perspective on the relationality between masses and what is popular. According to Le Bon, masses, at the point where the level of consciousness in one’s mind becomes blurred, is such an interesting notion for the individual’s self is limited by the effects of their physical surroundings. The individual focuses on a single direction, leaving behind all the subjective impulses of their self (Adorno, Horkheimer, 2011).

The similarities between popular content, which are created by millions of people, standardizes the acts of millions of people too, much like the case with masses. Therefore, individuals become masses and conduct the same actions. The production of hyper-casual games is based on standardized production modes as they are carried out to appeal to large masses (Kurtel, 2021).

Actualized by millions of people, the popular content is accepted to be rich with the notion, where, in the words of Roland Barthes, quality is reduced to quantity to save intelligence (Barthes, 2019). This is quite similar to the case with hyper-casual games. Becoming prominent in the production of hyper-casual games, speed causes quality of created work to remain in the background.

The situation in which quantity overshadows quality is very important with respect to discourse as mentioned by Russian author Yevgeny Zamyatin in their novel, 'Us'. Zamyatin states that individuals are referred to with numbers after being separated from their selves. During this process, individuals leave behind their characteristics and their natures, becoming ordinary part of society and being referred to as numbers only (Zamyatin, 1988).

As I have mentioned at length in the third section of the thesis, strategies planned during the content's distribution stage serve to the same purpose. Game advertisements are conveyed to target groups through popular phenomena, if there are any, which prevails the times. It is hence important for publishing managers to be knowledgeable about popular content when promoting hyper-casual games as they are doing research for new markets. Publishing managers collect the popular content, relay them to motion designers, making sure that throughout the marketing process of the game, motion designers prepare the setup over popular concepts. During the delivery of the established video to target groups, strategies to draw the attention of individuals at first glance must be created. Cases where a shown image in the advertisement is not actually included within the game can also be observed in line with the purposes of attracting the attention of target groups and managing their perceptions.

As viewers of advertisements act in ways that would bring in revenues for producers (continuing to watch the advertisement until the end, downloading the game, remaining actively in the game and being active to make purchases within the game if they wish to do so and so on), it is understood that right and goal-oriented strategies are put into practice (Steinbach, Supersonic, 2022).

Similarly, target audience analysis as I have mentioned in the third section of the thesis represents another important factor that makes sure the applied strategy yields desired outcomes. Berger's depiction that the purpose of publicity triggers a particular feeling of dissatisfaction of the status quo is significant in making sense of the emotion underlying the target group's behaviors (Berger, 1986).

Fail scenarios shown in game videos try to give the message 'Download this game and you can do better!' to players.

The feeling of dissatisfaction that is attempted to be evoked in individuals drive them to take action. To become parts of what is popular, they start to share their activities on social media platforms. Such content or actions as they are shared on social media platforms bring to mind Veblen's concept of conspicuous consumption. Veblen posits that individuals consume commodities for status purposes within the scope of conspicuous consumption. Individuals hence share this consumption on social media, challenging their limits (Veblen, 1995).

Individuals pursue what is popular and thus become determinant factors during the production of hyper-casual games. What is popular paves the way for game themes to occur. These themes are relayed to target groups with strategic moves, preparing the grounds for masses to share the same experience.

It is important for hyper-casual games to be designed in accordance with the living practices of individuals with respect to the word, casual. Hyper-casual games are often based on everyday themes. Casual acts such as going to the hairdresser, losing weight or cooking dinner become main themes and topics of hyper-casual games.

Henri Lefebvre describes the concept of casual, which is important for hyper-casual games, as the essential output of modernity and the stage of an organized society, the consumption of which is directed. Lefebvre expresses that everyday life comprises of ordinary repetitions. They highlight that ordinary and overlooked behaviors in everyday life are actually quite significant. Individuals, who notice said importance, try to reach others over the act of consumption. Every ordinary act, according to Lefebvre, can be the setup from an ideology (Lefebvre, 2013).

The concept of casual in hyper-casual games is significant in one more aspect aside from game themes and main topics. This concept makes sure that games are conveniently played within everyday living practices. Individuals can become parts of a hyper-casual game, while they are engaged in a different activity in their everyday lives. For example, someone who is stirring the pot while cooking in the kitchen can simultaneously play a hyper-casual game with the other hand. This is because hyper-casual games are designed on the convenient and simple interaction of users. If the game was designed to be played on a horizontal screen, the person stirring the pot would not have been able to play the game with one hand. Therefore, the vertical design of hyper-casual games is very important for them to include games in their

everyday practices and to experience them easily and conveniently besides reproducing the concept of casual.



8. RESEARCH METHODS

This part of the study includes the position at which I currently work in my professional life as well as detailed information about my experiences and findings consequent to the interviews I conducted.

The study adopts participant observation method. Participant observation is expressed as being part of the observed phenomenon (Baltacı, 2019). Using this method supported my research topic alongside my field and experiences that I continue to acquire.

Due to my professional position, I both produce and consume hyper-casual games, which makes sure that I have an inside look at things. The concept of ‘inside’ can be referred to as the researcher’s filtering of events and phenomena before relaying them (Nahya, Harmanşah, 2018). As can be seen in the majority of the studies in the literature review, I, as someone who has an inside look at things, am conducting studies to explicate the production process of hyper-casual games with its fundamental building blocks. Therefore, I adopted a self-reflexive method for this research study.

Having emerged as a concept in philosophy, self-reflexivity can be explained as the individual, turning themselves into an object of analysis upon objectifying themselves. Therefore, said method distances the individual from their ties to their habits, allowing them to ponder in-depth on their actions and circumstances (Eren, 2018).

The study involved three female and five male respondents over the age of twenty. The research is shaped on the narratives concerning their experiences throughout the production of hyper-casual games, which is a game type that changes and transforms over time. Interviews were conducted sometimes in improvised ways, sometimes during meetings, sometimes during group chats and sometimes in line with the questions I asked.

As a producer and consumer of hyper-casual games, making observations in my surroundings was very exciting and thought-provoking for me. The experiences I acquired and will likely continue to do so made me aware of many notions too.

8.1. My Positionalities in This Research: My Profession and Job Description

For nearly three years, I have been working in the process of hyper-casual game production. I have several responsibilities due to the nature of my position.

Overseeing project management of hyper-casual games, designing social media content, writing content-appropriate texts, experiencing and analyzing competitors' games by playing them and writing reports as per such analyses, coming up with game ideas, and following-up on popular social media content summarize my responsibilities in my position.

Concerning project management of hyper-casual games, my process comprises of identifying the game's flow, generating design concepts, designating duties and responsibilities of software developers and designers in the team, coming up with a timeline for the project including days and hours, preparing game design documents, exchanging ideas with the team, and updating the game in line with the data regarding user experience. Project management requires that time and planning is completed in fastest ways possible, specifically for hyper-casual games. For this reason, when I distribute tasks, I always plan in ways that would take up as little time as possible to launch the game as rapidly as possible too. For my social media duties, I design images for game announcements. To that end, I download the game that I will be writing about before I write the content that would encourage players to play the game by evoking curiosity through the text. When I share the image, I also add fun texts for the target group without any formal or corporate languages that would make players curious and encourage them to play the game. For example, I use statements such as 'If you also want to leave behind your competitors in such exciting races and take your place at the top, download game and come join us!' This way, I aim to come up with situations that would motivate and excite the players and drive them to take action.

I also follow pages and accounts on social media platforms from which I can acquire information about competitor companies and the industry in general. This way, I am always up to date with the novelties in the industry. I also keep a calendar for content to be shared on universally special occasions and keep the accounts active with current content.

As for the store analyst duties of mine, it heavily consists of following up on current notions and cases. Pursuing novelties in the store, exploring current and popular content in both topic and theme, and investigating whether or not there are new hyper-casual game themes or mechanics tried by competitors, I conduct many surveys before I prepare the relevant documents and presentations on my findings. These findings after said research endeavors and followed accounts help me to come up with new game ideas. For example, I am currently in the process of gamifying a video that I recently have been seeing quite frequently on TikTok. On the other hand, I scan new games in the store and if I see that Voodoo launches similar games in recent times, I would direct my attention there and try to find out whether or not Voodoo found out about a newly popular content. I use my knowledge acquired from the field as basis for coming up with new ideas.

I conduct quite a fast and effective work dynamic due to my position as a hyper-casual game producer. Sometimes I think about multiple cases at the same time. While it sometimes challenges me to work in such an active and dynamic work environment, I still believe that there are many things that feed me in this position. As a holder of Visual Communication Design Undergraduate Degree, I enjoy carrying out both the theoretical and research-related processes and preparing documents after detailed follow-ups on the industry, making sure that I am doing two things I love at the same time.

8.2. Method and Research

For nearly three years, I have been working in the production of hyper-casual games and I am a masters student at the Institute of Social Sciences, which is why I decided that participant observation is the most appropriate method for this study. I started to plan how I can offer the production process, of which I am a part, within a theoretical framework. My job raised my awareness in a lot of topics as someone looking from the inside to observe the process. My knowledge of design as I have learned throughout my undergraduate studies, the articles I read during my masters studies, the theories I pondered upon, and many other topics brought me to an exciting point at which I can link all of them with hyper-casual games. In this context, conducting interviews with people, who participate in the production process and work in

different branches, ensured that I have experienced quite a fruitful process as I reflected on the parts they specifically highlighted.

In the modern capitalist system in which we live, there are many areas, the reproduction of which we witness. I thought that one of such reproductions, hyper-casual games, would be an effective choice to study introduce them. Basing the study on a game type, the effects of which we can see all around the world rapidly and trying to make sense of this study in relation with various theories, also made sure that I had a solid foundation to write this thesis.

Before I undertook the research portion, I observed my situation and my environment. Hyper-casual games, in the production process of which I also take place, are quite popular. Thus, I noticed that the actors in the production of such games are also driven to pursue what is popular and up to date among other things. The fast pace in the games presented to target groups cause actors in the production to make their business plans within the framework of the speed factor too.

Individuals pursue popular situations or behaviors, which is a fact that can change the business flow of sectors. Notions that are highly liked and acclaimed by large groups of people can become fundamental concepts in the planning of any business area.

It is up to the current dynamic at the time for business areas to identify a particular situation as the fundamental concept for their endeavors. For example, a concept that meant nothing until a few years ago can become a popular content in today's circumstances with the ability to gather people at substantial distances from one another under the same roof. In an environment, where transformation is carried out such strongly and rapidly, hyper-casual games have become more visible within the gaming industry, which is why I thought they are worth analyzing in this framework. In addition to fields such as music and cinema, the transformation and reproduction of which also influenced the whole world in the past, the gaming industry's analysis, thinking on this industry and surveying it made sure that I also undertook a different perspective towards this type of which I am also a producer.

8.3. Respondents

Respondents in this study are individuals, who have an inside look at the hyper-casual game production processes, as well as actively producing them. These individuals put

forth their production, carried out as per their areas of expertise. Thus, they are needed for any hyper-casual game production to be completed. Their positions and their production in coming up with a hyper-casual game, are quite important.

Respondents comprise of three female and five male interviewees. All of the respondents work at companies that produce hyper-casual games. Respondents also carry on with their production of hyper-casual games at different positions. Various questions were asked to interviewed respondents and their answers were noted down in detail.

In cases when it was observed that questions of answers were not obvious, content was attempted to be clarified with exemplifications. Interviews were recorded with a sound recorder and later transcribed in detail. Aside from the questions, some answers were collected in meetings, improvised conversations or group chats. In these cases, they were noted down as well. Respondents' demographics can be found in the table below with their names changed due to confidentiality reasons.

NICKNAME	GENDER	AGE	TITLE
Ayşe	F	26	3D Artist
Ahmet	M	28	Developer
Selim	M	25	Developer
Özge	F	23	UX/UI Designer
Deniz	M	25	Product Manager
Derya	F	29	Product Manager
Berk	M	27	Product Manager
Batı	M	29	Marketing Artist

Ayşe is 26 years old and works as a 3D Artist at a hyper-casual game company. They make designs for hyper-casual games and regularly play games launched by other companies to shape their designs.

Ahmet is 28 years old and has been working as a game develop for the last 3 years at a hyper-casual game producing company. They work on various formulae that would accelerate the coding process. They hold regular meetings with other game developers within the company. In such meetings, every week a game developer provides information about the codes they have been writing for the game they are currently

working on as well as the methods they are using. Ahmet also manages and plans these meetings.

Selim is 25 years old and has been working as a game developer at a company that produces hyper-casual games for the last 3 years.

Özge is 23 years old and has been working as a UI/UX Designer for 2.5 years at a company that produces hyper-casual games. They regularly play games to follow up on the different methods competitors are adopting and prepare presentations on them.

Deniz is 25 years old and has been working as product manager at a company that produces hyper-casual games for 3 years. They regularly follow TikTok and YouTube accounts and pages with great numbers of followers to collect new ideas to attract the attention of target groups more quickly during the finalization of projects.

Derya is 29 years old and has been working for 3 years as product manager at a company that produces hyper-casual games. They analyze hyper-casual games that were launched by competitors in the past and succeeded. To that end, they regularly play these games. They also carry out studies on how the observed mechanics and content can be adapted to a project they are assigned. They base their plans on these observations.

Berk is 27 years old and has been working as product manager for 3 years at a company that produces hyper-casual games. They frequently play hyper-casual games and follow up on the new games of significant companies.

Batı is 29 years old and has been working for three years as marketing artists at a company that produces hyper-casual games. They work on the items that would attract the attention of target groups at first glance in planned game videos. They regularly follow up on social media content with large numbers of impressions, while paying attention to using popular music in videos too. Thus, they observe popular content quite often with respect to the music and production aspects.

Responses and statements of these persons were noted down during both interviews and improvised conversations.

Moreover, I thought that in addition to the narratives of the aforementioned individuals with nicknames, opinions of other hyper-casual game producing friends of

mine, which were collected in improvised ways, would contribute to my thesis due to the nature of my workplace too.



9. FINDINGS

For the study, in which the structures in the background of hyper-casual games are attempted to be explained, individuals, who take place personally in the production processes are very important because they are crucial parts of these structures. This section covers the phenomena, revealed as a result of the interviews conducted with persons, who actively undertake roles in the production of hyper-casual games. The situation, in which individuals, who contribute to the production of hyper-casual games find themselves, is impacted by their perceptions and mental processes. The mental processes, underlying hyper-casual games, are quite effective in their production. Thus, the ways in which game producers perceive the world is also important on the production per se.

Hyper-casual game producers carry out production in organic solidarity, much like Durkheim's definition of division of labor (Durkheim, 2014). With hyper-casual games, new technologies develop and give way to new branches in the market. These branches exist with divisions of labor, consequent to which, hyper-casual games become visible. Experiences of persons, who take part in the creation of a hyper-casual game, are attempted to be explained here. The ways in which game producers perceive the world and how they look at the concept of time will be attempted to be relayed in light of the findings from the interviews. As a person, who takes place in the production and consumption of hyper-casual games, I should note here that the narratives in this section are collected from meetings, improvised conversations, group chats or answers to directly asked questions.

9.1. Speed: Time is Money

I chose this title because the motto 'Time is money' belongs to neoliberal policies. This motto indicates that such discourse is embedded also in hyper-casual games. One of the frequent answers I have heard from the respondents was the factor of speed, which directly corresponds

with the main objective of the games in question.

When I asked Berk, who is a Product Manager, about the most important phenomenon in hyper-casual games, they smiled and said: "Speed is of utmost

importance.” When I asked why, they said it was because I already knew the answer, but was still asking, and that is why they smiled. They also mentioned their planning throughout product management process as follows:

“I save time by identifying the fundamental needs for each project when I divide tasks. Once the game is quickly launched, I would then make time for more detailed parts according to the results. What is important is to launch the game before our competitors and before it goes out of fashion. Thus, anything that would make us lose time would come last in planning.”

Producing as a 3D Artist, Ayşe answered the same question with, “I avoid a lot of details to be able to quickly finish designing the characters.” I also observed that Ayşe was a bit sad about it. When I asked why, they said that the uniformity of the designed characters sometimes felt like it was blunting them and added the following after thinking briefly: “Launching products rapidly stops me from adding the details to the characters I designed. But I know that the first rule of hyper-casual games is speed. That is why I constantly remind myself that I knew before coming here that that is what I am here for.”

In a project I was managing as the Product Manager, Ahmet, who is a software developer in my team, said the following to me as they were coding: “Right now, the game works, but the codes are really messy and complicated. Let’s launch the game quickly and I will rearrange the codes if we have more time.” What Ahmet meant was if they started to code from scratch in accordance with the rules and in orderly fashion, we would be late to launch the game.

In the production of such a game type, where speed means everything, encountered problems are attempted to be solved with the most practical ways possible, while accumulated problems are solved by prioritization. The purpose here is to solve problems on macro levels without missing out on what is popular, rather than completely eliminating the problems. In other words, if players do not have any obstacles before their interactions with the game, issues such as visual details of aesthetic concerns can be overlooked. The problems here may be qualified as micro, but any issue that would prevent the user from interacting with the game or negatively impact their time playing the game, would require immediate solutions. The problem in question manifests itself as a macro level issue because the lack of interaction

between the player and the game means that the game fails to be conveyed to target audiences.

Someone, who started to work as a Marketing Artist, wanted to quit after the twenty-day trial period. Consequent to my observations, I figured that the main reason for this was the very important factor of speed. I would also like to point out that the previous company in question was not a producer of hyper-casual games. When I went to say goodbye to them, they stated the following:

“I love it here, but I just cannot get used to the pace. Where I used to work, we were not working with such a tempo. Honestly, it wore me out. Constantly trying to make a deadline and work fast is stressful for me. I really wanted to spend time and work here.”

A very successful name in their field, this person quit because the routine was too fast for them since they did not work at a hyper-casual game producing company before. On the other hand, what I have heard from those who were interviewed for a job had to do with speed. Interviewees sometimes said they did not want to work for a company that produces hyper-casual games and turn down the job offer on grounds of wanting to be included in a long-term project.

Such a course impacted the way our studio worked, where I used to work too, just like many other companies. Over time, a team was established on producing long-term games instead of solely focusing on hyper-casual game production.

Another point I observed about hyper-casual games and speed was the statements from individuals, who liked and were fed by speed. Selim, who was working as a software developer, stated that the speed factor generated a positive impact on them and added:

“Most of the time, you don’t get great codes, but being fast makes me challenge myself. I like to compete with myself on how many games I can produce in a week. I see it as my personal score. But if I wasn’t coding hyper-casual games, I would definitely encounter the disadvantages of speed. Right now, I code for hyper-casual games, and I see speed as a challenge for me and I really enjoy it.”

Although the content of narratives appear to evolve into different directions from time to time, the gist of it was always focused on speed.

My observations on the importance speed was that producers render their mind and actions more functional to manufacture hyper-casual games. As I covered at length in the literature review section, many of the specialists also wrote about the factor of speed. Moreover, a substantial portion of what I have gathered as a result of my observations were on speed. This way, one can see the importance of the title of this section and the words uttered by Berk, “Speed is of utmost importance”.

9.2. In Pursuit of the Popular: Quantity over Quality

This title was taken from the answers from one of the respondents, Batu. During the interviews, a common theme I encountered was ‘popularity’.

‘We fall behind in the sector unless we follow up on what is popular.’ (Batu, 29,2022)

Batu expressed with great resolution that failure to follow the popular content in the industry would prevent them from advancing and developing in the industry. They seemed quite sure of themselves as they said that everything popular can evolve into a hyper-casual game and missing out on such content would simultaneously mean missing out on great achievements.

Consequent to my observations, some statements that were mentioned in our meetings about this topic were as below:

“Is there a popular video you have been seeing lately?”

“Have you encountered any popular content?”

“Squid Game is quite popular on Netflix; I have a couple of game ideas about it.”

“The toy called Huggy Wuggy became very popular on Amazon and their sales numbers increased too. Maybe we can think about a similar concept.”

“Scary costumes have become more popular with Halloween approaching, so I thought about a game with a similar theme.”

“I have seen this video so many times on TikTok. It has huge impression numbers.”

Similar to the statements above, Ayşe stated the following words about it in a meeting:

“Competitors quickly gamify popular content. Whoever acts the first would be at the top.”

Özge, whose opinion I wanted to hear in this matter, stated that unless the popular content is gamified immediately, it may be too late to succeed.

Capturing what is popular and generating content over it requires producers to also act quickly. Producers follow up on current content, explore the popular ones, and plan their potential gamification. The process of gamification is adapted in ways that would be suitable with the rules identified by hyper-casual games in the study.

A game that is based on a popular video content is designed by putting forth the sounds effects, music, camera angles and characters from the original video. As was mentioned in detail in the third section of the thesis, strategies planned during the distribution of content serve to the same purpose. As the content is delivered to the target audience, plans are made first to catch people’s attention with a popular content. The game is turned into an advertisement with popular content and offered as such, producers show actions that would generate revenue (continuing to watch the entire advertisement, downloading the game, remaining in the game actively and so on), indicating that a goal-oriented strategy is applied. Furthermore, the third section of the thesis also states that the analysis of target groups is one of the most important factors to ensure that applied strategies yield goal-driven results as well. Displaying mostly popular content in videos to promote games allow videos to quickly receive engagements.

10. CONCLUSION

The main focus of this study is the reproduction of games, which is analyzed over producers' narratives on hyper-casual games and their reproductions. Narratives were acquired in meetings, questions asked and sometimes improvised chats. Due to my profession, I am both a producer and consumer of hyper-casual games, which allowed me to relay my experiences as I was writing this thesis. Findings consequent to the analyses were investigated in the study in relation with the concepts posited by different thinkers, who shed light on many valuable topics in social sciences.

We have experienced many fields such as music, cinema and advertising, the reproduction of which we experiences, and we continue to experience them. Hyper-casual games reflect a tangible version of the gaming industry that possesses the power to take the whole world under its spell. I thought initially that the settlement of the gaming industry on such a strong structure with powerful change and transformation was a topic worth studying. Especially pondering upon the narratives that I have encountered during the research ensured that I was able to look at the gaming industry's reproduction from the perspectives of many significant thinkers.

These ideas, which were posited within the context of temporal and spatial practices from years ago, found a place for themselves today, which is important to make sense of the actions and thoughts around us. Analyzing and finding relations of this hyper-casual game type, of which I am a producer, was exciting and awareness-raising for me.

It is an inevitable truth that the change and transformation in production practices are still underway in rapid ways. Individuals continue to undertake similar actions by taking place in a systematic circularity. The process of producing similar actions have influenced many areas in the past and continues to do so today. All notions and situations that may generate differences among individuals have become blurred, while the emerging fundamental behavior has become the collective behavior. Despite the differences in many characteristics of people such as their personal background, age, gender, and status, they do not matter at all in hyper-casual games the reproduction of which keeps on.

Popular content is followed up regularly and practiced in similar ways by large groups. Despite the fact that people have different experiences in their respective communities and have different living conditions, they tend to fulfill a popular act simultaneously with others around the world. Thus, ignoring what is popular means that the game, which could have yielded huge revenues, is lost already. To avoid this risk, all hot content must be followed regularly. It is very important to do this on a daily basis, considering that content changes quite rapidly and keeps appealing to huge groups of people. Even one day can make all the difference as a brand-new content may become popular in one day.

Various hashtags are used on social media platforms, collecting significant numbers of people under a word. This way, a collective action can be taken alongside individuals with whom one can never get together in the normal course of life.

Each popular content is rapidly perceived by the target group. Individuals perceive what is popular and then they carry out the popular act in question. It is often received with great surprise when a popular content is not known in a particular community these days.

So then, what makes a popular content popular? Human beings.

Humans have the potential to turn any content or action more powerful. Once the content becomes more popular, it snowballs and becomes more noticeable by a lot more people. What is popular continues to reinforce its place in today's modern capitalist system, because what is popular also becomes a power itself that generates funds. Popular notions that ensure revenues also allows the system to actualize itself.

As is mentioned in multiple section of the thesis, for selected topics within content production in hyper-casual games, the daily life is an unlimited resource. Everyday situations and simple acts in our everyday routines, encountered individuals and even different everyday activities such as shops are solid grounds for hyper-casual games. Especially for the gamification of such everyday actions, the wide range of age and diversity in the target audience yields positive results for producers. The daily routines in question are not limited with particular age intervals, gender, country, age or profession, which is why target groups are not strangers to them. For example, a sixty-five-year-old can shop from a supermarket in the USA, while in Turkey, a

fourteen-year-old can do the same. This is exactly what is meant by the blurring of temporal and spatial limitations, which is one of the main goals of hyper-casual games.

Individuals have become parts of the same acts, actors in other words, despite the fact that they experience different times and spaces. From the perspective of games, we can see that hyper-casual games are widely preferred by the target audience. The principle of simplicity and plainness eliminates all differences between persons and assesses everyone by only their capability to put the in-game mechanics into actions. Such process must be actualized smoothly and quickly. On the other hand, bringing together individuals with no links with each other at a single action requires the necessity of meticulous work. The detailed analysis of target groups, following up on what is popular, analyzing user behavior, designing game levels in line with hyper-casual games' main objectives in visual and mechanic senses, and applying all colors, shadows, lights and content within the limitations of said game type require substantial amounts of work that includes many details.

The extension of commodities into conspicuity by being shared on social media can be explained with Veblen's term 'conspicuous consumption'. Veblen argues that in conspicuous consumption, the individual's status is valued over the money they spend and the commodities they consume (Veblen, 1995).

Veblen was of the opinion that such consumption reveals a particular conspicuity, which can also be observed in social media settings, where conspicuous consumption is carried out through financial concerns. This way, Veblen unveils the limitlessness social media platforms today generated on private spheres. Individuals in today's society are viewed to act with the desire to be parts of the actions that are conducted by the majority. Many situations that become joint actions spread rapidly day by day. These situations may quickly change, while individuals can also learn to easily adapt to such changes.

Jay Griffiths's statement, 'In today's society, the ones that are ahead need fast medicine; caffeine, cocaine, Prozac or speed – all of them drag you to crueler competitiveness,' is very important at this point, in my humble opinion, because fast medicine is also needed in hyper-causal games. Hyper-casual games give such medicine to people through gamifications. In their everyday living practices,

individuals may reach the body they want in a year perhaps, whereas in a hyper-casual game, this merely takes seconds. The simple creation of hyper-casual games leads to an ideal world for those, who want to acquire said experiences with a single tap.

On the other hand, the success of hyper-casual games that influenced the whole world in a very short time, cannot be undermined. A significant number of companies, business branches and new concepts emerged along with the goal of producing hyper-casual games. In our current modern capitalist system, we are witnessing many changes and transformations with the impact of technology; refusing them, in my humble opinion, would also limit the way in which we view our world. Thus, it is important to both accept the existing power of the hyper-casual game types while recognizing its underlying processes.

We witness changes and transformations with every passing day and will continue to do so. Still, I believe that we must assume an investigative perspective for all that surrounds us in order to become healthy individuals through our cognitive processes. What Immanuel Kant said in the 17th century, 'Never let your mind be guided by someone else,' can summarize all that has been mentioned so far. Each message that is attempted to be relayed to individuals' subconsciousness, must be questioned within the framework of their values, perceptions of life, thoughts and experiences, within a skeptical light. Humanity finds its strength through the awareness that consecrating anything except for reason and consciousness is but dogmatizing and societies exist only through reason and consciousness.

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