



Relating to how otome games affect female players' perceptions of mate choice

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Abstract. Female gamers have increased significantly in recent years, and female-focused otome games (also referred to as maiden games) are quickly taking hold of the market. Otome games are unique from other types of mobile games. It employs the plot, audio, and visual components as additions to change and advance. Otome game players are also becoming more prevalent. However, there is little theoretical study on female-focused mobile games or female players' emotional and psychological behaviors. More attention is being paid to game industry development in the current studies. Through case study methodology and literature reading, this dissertation investigates the impact of otome games on female players' perceptions of mate choosing and consumerism in Otome games. The article concludes that otome games have little effect on female players' perceptions of partner choice and that these perceptions are expressed explicitly in otome games. Women's opinions of partner choice are more influenced by the situation of women's standing in society. The marriage concept of the otome game will be influenced by female players' preferences and their socially modified views on selecting a spouse. Additionally, female players implicitly accept the marriage concept communicated by the otome game while playing the otome game, and the two are interchangeable. Female gamers can tell the difference between reality and the virtual world, and they will grow from the game. Some of their consumer behavior shows self-serving, but they are highly aware of their wants and will communicate those demands to the officials so that they can provide the best service possible for the players.

Keywords: Otome games, Female gamers, perceptions of mate choice.

1 Introduction

Otome games are a subgenre of video games designed specifically with female players in mind. In these games, women serve as the primary character while men serve as the raid's target. It is a B.G. (abbreviation for boy and girl, representing heterosexuality) romance-raising game with the theme of love^[1]. And it's a favorite of many ladies since it has beautiful scenes, famous voice actors dubbing, and a strong sense of immersion in the plot. Female cabaret was the first manifestation of the idea of femininity during the Meiji Restoration period. The phrase "female-oriented" originated in Japan, where

women had long faced discrimination in traditional Japanese culture. The Takarazuka Opera Company was established in 1914 to perform cabaret shows exclusively for female groups, which also helped women become more aware of their rights. The first female-focused game was an otome relationship simulation game called the "Angelique" series, which was released in 1994 by the Japanese business Glorious Co. This was followed by the release of several games known as the New Romance series [2]. Female-focused games also emerged in this setting. It was created to dispel the preconceived notion that, at the time, "male-only games" were the norm and to kickstart the trend of female-focused games. There are currently numerous domestic otome games available. Some of the more popular ones include "Mr. Love: Queen's Choice", "Light and Night", "Tears of Themis", "For All Time" and the original "Orange Light Game". According to market forecasts, China's female mobile gaming users will total 317 million by 2020 and keep expanding at 10% annually [3].

In contrast to the market trend, there are not as many studies on female-focused mobile games in Asian nations, and the ones that do tend to focus more on the emotional and psychological behaviors of female players than anything else [4]. As female players have particular traits and psychology, it is necessary to study them [5]. According to some academics, otome games provide companionship in response to the loneliness of women and compensate for their emotional requirements [6]. However, some studies contend that the game has given female players unrealistic expectations of real-world romantic relationships [7]. This negatively affected their perception of mate choice and even corrupted their morals [8].

The literature analysis reveals that otome games are becoming more popular, and female customers are gradually expanding in the market, but there is little study on female players. It makes sense to perform an in-depth analysis of female players to determine exactly what impact otome games have on female players because current studies also differ widely in their conclusions about the impact of otome games on female players' conceptions of mate selection. At the same time, it is also necessary to consider how otome game consumption differs from consumption in general.

Using a case study approach and a literature reading procedure, this article considers female players' emotional and psychological activities. It considers if and what influence otome games have on women's views of partner selection and the reasons for these influences. The article additionally explores the game's commercialization and suggests ways to stop these games from influencing how women choose their spouses. Doing that will give the players' dedication to and handling of actual intimacy and marriage relationships the experience and justification for the ensuing in-depth investigation.

2 Love Mode in Otome Games

Female characters have historically belonged to the object that is selected, defined, and gazed at in traditional mobile games [9]. The otome games, on the other hand, have produced a previously unheard-of setting in which women rule the game, and the male characters inside become the focus of their attention [10].

Women experience much loneliness in their single, fast-paced, and busy lives ^[6]. To overcome this loneliness, they must invest a lot of time and energy in socializing with others, which may fall short of expectations, making it difficult to find a viable solution. The emergence of otome games is a good solution to this issue because they offer a companionable reaction to female loneliness and allow players to interact with the game's male characters whenever and wherever they like. The game's realistic mode enables players to immerse themselves further. Even in some episodes, the protagonist and heroine will collaborate to find solutions to issues that are eerily similar to those in real life, such as choices related to employment, social interactions, and confusion. Many players have commented that this feature comforts them to the extent that their confusion is addressed. Otome games also positively satisfy women's need for love, allowing players to immerse themselves in the experience and providing an alternate means of addressing women's inner loneliness ^[6]. Intentionally blurring the lines between the secondary and tertiary worlds, otome games emphasize that "love and existence are not in conflict" and aim to break the next-generation wall right away by allowing the game's characters to enter the players' real-life experiences. The social interface of "Light and Night" and "Mr. Love: Queen's Choice" is built up like a true social communication tool, creating a highly replicated social experience. For instance, the male protagonist and other in-game characters can call you, text you, and become friends with you. Through certain stages, you can even make anonymous web chats ^[6]. The otome games carry the idea of "companionship" to the highest level, and the studio's content is based on everyday life. Additionally, the daily surroundings are infinitely realistic. Players will be reminded to prioritize their work and rest, and at night, the daily phone calls will change into stories about how to deal with and overcome challenges in life. This will encourage players to try to be authentic versions of themselves, and on special holidays like Chinese Valentine's Day and New Year's Day, real phone calls will be made to players. Many female players indicate that their real-life lovers are not as intimate as these virtual communications from the game. The game world is highly overlapping with the real world, making the whole game more realistic and more immersive to the players. The game creates a private and exclusive comfort circle that allows players to momentarily escape reality and find psychological comfort while also efficiently avoiding the issues of occupied private time and mutual accommodation brought on by real sociability ^[6].

3 Women's Perceptions of Mate Choice When Otome Gaming Conduct is Included

3.1 The User Profile Analysis of Otome Games

According to data for "Mr. Love: Queen's Choice," the majority of its users—91% of women—live in first- and second-tier cities, are more educated, have a certain level of financial means, and pursue a certain level of quality of life and spirituality. Additionally, 43.6% of its female users are between the ages of 20 and 24 ^[7].

From an ideological standpoint, women are increasingly willing to achieve social worth recognition via their efforts as they become more aware of their independence and economic and social position. Instead of relying on men to satisfy their emotional needs, they are more likely to find fulfillment through entertainment and other activities [11]. Women now regard marriage as being equal between men and women rather than being dominated by men. Women gradually come to understand their right to pursue happiness actively, that marriage and love are not necessary for survival, and that they do not have to rely on actual men to satisfy their emotional needs [10]. And the importance of the adage "Love yourself, be yourself, and live for yourself."

Economically, domestic otome games currently have an upper age limit of almost all 16 years old, and most female users between the ages of 20 and 24 have much fragmented free time because of work, study, and other life constants [11]. They also have some degree of economic aptitude, a more open concept of consumption, and a greater willingness to spend money on self-improvement, self-realization, and self-satisfaction. These consumer groups are more inclined to take care of their essential daily requirements, study spirituality, find spiritual fulfillment, and constantly better and please themselves.

3.2 Female Players of Otome Games and Their Perceptions of Partner Choice

According to some researchers, the male characters in otome games have outlandish appearances and physique types, contributing to the current aberration in women's conceptions of pursuing a romantic fit. They contend that otome games cause women's internal standards to loosen and that female players will stop considering women's lack of education, skill weakness, and lazy fashion as obstacles to selecting a good partner. They urge female players to commit to marriage and family authentically and sincerely [8]. However, as an otome game created, developed, and run primarily for female players, the game symbolizes women's views on mate choice, and the personalities of the game's male characters are tailored to appeal to women's preferences. The male characters in otome games represent the ideal mate in women's minds, and it can be said that their existence is a dream medium that holds women's expectations of an ideal relationship. The character features of the female protagonists in otome games are also constructed with the preference of women, just like the male characters in those games. For instance, as women's social status has improved, female protagonists of otome games have evolved from initially presenting some traditional Japanese female traits of shyness, meekness, and dependence on the male protagonist to a blend of male and female personalities, with the female protagonist's persona presenting characteristics of independence, resistance to inequality, and even power, to a more determined and independent character in the later games. The early cold, violent, and selfish male characters in otome games evolved into soft, delicate, and thoughtful male persona. The entire process demonstrates how the development of otome games was influenced by the shift in mate preference brought about by women's affirmative consciousness. Additionally, female players unwittingly accepted the freedom and equality of marriage that the otome game implied while playing the game. It is possible to say that female gamers and the girl game have a similar relationship.

Many female players declared they prefer to understand one another better, have common interests and receive more support and attention in personal relationships ^[12]. This is also connected to the current social idea that more and more women are choosing alternative forms of emotional support over marriage. Some players consider that the attractive characteristics that draw them to the male characters in otome games will not alter ^[10]. According to many female players, the two sides in the relationship in the otome game are equal and respect one another. Female players can decide how the relationship will progress according to their own will, using reason and judgment to reach a decision ^[12]. Even in the game, female players prefer female protagonists to be independent and self-assured. They want to rely on their own efforts to solve problems rather than depend on male characters ^[12], only waiting for men to rescue them or even through their efforts to rescue male characters. This is true even within the context of video games. For instance, the female protagonist in "Tears of Themis" can carry out a kidnapping in order to save herself and can rescue the male character Artem Wing from the dilemma. When she encounters a crisis situation, she can also rely on her attempts to go unnoticed to find the suspects.

4 The Perception of Female Players in the Otome Games

Some researchers argue that female gamers have disregarded and undermined their allegiance to their marriage partners by grafting the virtual world onto their real existence ^[8]. However, the research found that many female players indicated that while the male characters in the otome games' persona are a little too perfect, this perfection creates a sense of unreality so that the players wake up to realize that those virtual characters only exist in the quadratic element and are also only suitable for the player's fantasy of good that cannot be realized in real life ^[13]. The majority of players grasp the difference between virtual reality and reality, are highly aware of the distinction between life and games, and believe that games can be a part of life but not the entirety. They do not, therefore, attach the virtual world to real reality.

The study discovered that many female players do not view the game as a simple romance game; rather, they are more likely to engage with the plot of the game while gaining more power and exerting their own efforts to develop into individuals who can truly stand shoulder to shoulder with those characters because of the game's protagonist's positive and independent image. Even many players don't assume the role of the female protagonist. Instead, they communicate primarily about whether the male protagonist's persona in the game is pleasing enough, whether the game's plot is compelling enough, and whether the painting style is exquisite enough. Rarely do they discuss love as the topic after taking on the role of the female protagonist ^[10]. However, senior players are less likely to believe and pursue idealized love out of blind faith than players with fewer than two years of gaming experience, yet some do ^[14]. Many female players claim that while engaging with the game's plot, they developed a strong sense of identity and increased their self-awareness. For instance, the heroine in this new episode of "Light and Night" by Charlie has to interact socially, hook up with people, and put up with them to get money. Because they are immature, after learning that everything will

turn out differently than they had planned, they start to doubt their abilities and feel frustrated and self-destructive. However, Charlie is adamant that the heroine not give up because "even if you are blocked, even if you are different from everyone, you have to believe that what you do is right." and will join the protagonist in all of the "childish" activities. Many players commented that this time's narrative is relatable to their current state of pain and even bewilderment. By reading this plot to make themselves feel firmly believed and firmly selected, more players were able to clear up their confusion and become confident in themselves.

The culture of independence and freedom of marriage that the game intends to depict will also be felt by female gamers as they play. The cultural connotation that the game aspires to convey will also attend to the psychological needs of women and the player's current state of concern, and it will attempt to calm them in order to reduce tension.

5 Consumerism in the Otome Games

People are more aware of the commercial potential for female players and female-oriented games due to the success of otome games, and they have a better awareness of the preferences and habits of women. In general, women like games with detailed illustrations that can satiate their emotional demands^[15]. The Otome game clearly fits this description. Female players of otome games can satisfy all of their desires and become better at the game due to the exquisite painting style, the ideal and varied male characters, and the superb voice acting. Some ardent female players would think of the game characters as their "boyfriend" or "husband" because of the growth of the game's plot and the great loyalty and other qualities of the male characters in the game^[16]. Many players will pay for the game to learn more about the role of the plot and access beautiful card faces^[17]. This behavior has led many female players to realize that they can also express their love to the game character, and some female players will spend much money for their favorite male character's birthday. For instance, female players who favored Victor, "Mrs. Li" pooled their money to purchase the LED screen of the Shenzhen Jingji 100 skyscraper at the start of 2018, on the occasion of Victor's birthday, the male character in "Mr Love: Queen's Choice." The developers of the otome games will also create recharge cards, character card faces, and in-game activities like birthday cards for each male character and limited cards for Chinese Valentine's Day. Each card has a unique, limited plot that encourages female players to spend money. Female players will spend money because they adore the male characters in the game. Outside the game, the official will also release certain tangible accouterments for sale through the game's official flagship store, such as character stand-ups, badges, and star pieces containing components related to the game character products. The player's sentiments for the character played a significant role in motivating people to purchase these peripheral products because of the peripheral, card face, and other gorgeous painting styles, as well as the game's character-related features^[11]. In addition to launching some limited peripherals and offline activities like the "Light and Night" and KFC co-branding activities and exclusive package launches, the official will also organize an exhibition of offline activities to draw players to the card. Players will also go to buy and punch cards

because of their feelings for the character, and at the same time, offline can meet more friends, friends to communicate with each other can make the players more sticky.

In addition to the official, some players may produce fan works, such as comics, anime, and novels, and publish them on social media platforms like LOFTER to get the attention of many other players. Some gamers also create tangible accessories to sell for no profit or a marginal profit, like the cotton dolls that have steadily gained popularity in recent years. Each otome game has a large number of fan works and accessories thanks to players who love the male characters in the game and the encouragement of their fellow players. Players communicate their feelings about the game with each other and discuss the features of male characters, improving player participation. Players devote a lot of time and energy in the process to demonstrate their affection for the characters in question ^[18].

Many people have criticized these behaviors, and many non-players of video games have stated their difficulty in comprehending this new consumption model, claiming that paying money for fictional characters is an irrational form of consumption. However, many female players think buying male game characters is a way to express their love. Buying game authorities also show love because they start new activities or peripherals, perpetuating the loop ^[10]. And many female players think spending money on their favorite male characters makes them happy and is a way to please themselves. At first, some players may even be perplexed by this kryptonite spending pattern because they haven't played any Otome games. However, they gradually comprehend it once they do and begin to exhibit kryptonite behavior.

Otome game players are keenly aware of their own demand dominance, and they no longer merely accept the output items; rather, they have their own expectations for the output products. When presented with an output that doesn't satisfy their expectations, they will concentrate on communicating this under the official social media platform so that their wants as users can be met as fully as possible ^[11]. For instance, in "Light and Night" players will collectively stop paying because they find the quality of the card face that is revealed to be too flimsy. Through these actions, they expect the official to make changes to it, and if the outcome is frequently unsatisfactory despite these efforts, some players will also choose to uninstall the game.

To sum up, the game's penchant for male characters and purchasing official and unauthorized male character-related knickknacks are both rather logical and a way of pleasure for themselves. Female gamers are extremely self-aware, aware of their requirements, and will make decisions based on their needs and judgments about whether to continue or stop playing.

6 Conclusion

The rise of otome games has solidified women's perceptions about mate selection. Male characters in otome games are also a concretization of the ideal partner in women's imaginations, and their existence is pinned on women's expectation of a perfect relationship. Both the character traits of the male character in the game and those of the

female protagonist will be created according to women's preferences. Women's perspectives on choosing partners are also more influenced by society; as women's standing and the economy have improved, so have their perspectives. While otome games have little impact on how female players interpret mate choice, there is still interaction between otome games and female players. While playing otome games, female players implicitly accept the vision of marriage transmitted by otome games, which is affected by the change in women's mate selection impacted by society.

This article finds that: female players have a firm understanding of the distinction between virtual and reality and rarely bring the virtual to reality through analysis of their perception and consumption of otome games. Through intense real-life drama and problem-solving with male characters, many players can develop, broaden, and strengthen themselves in the otome game, which also helps them clear up some real-life misunderstandings. Additionally, otome game consumerism is distinct from general consumerism in that female players will purchase official outputs and create their own fan works. These actions are motivated by female players' feelings for the male characters in the game and serve as both a means of self-expression and self-gratification. Additionally, female athletes have a strong sense of power and will lobby the officials for adjustments based on their ideal demands.

This article, which focuses on the emotional and psychological behaviors of female gamers, concludes that society has ignored the demands of women and is ignorant of new consumer trends and female self-gratification. This article has benefits in raising awareness of women's self-pleasure and modern women's needs, but it does not provide a detailed examination of women's self-pleasure methods. It is suggested that future research could focus more on how to create more means to satisfy one's own desires virtually and how women currently satisfy their own desires virtually, a subject that also needs to be thoroughly investigated.

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