

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

People have many activities to enjoy in their leisure time. Some love to play outdoor games like soccer, golf and tennis, but others like to play indoors playing cards and board game. However, nowadays, one kind of game that people, especially the youth, love to spend more and more of their leisure time on is a videogame and playing videogames is one of the most favorite activities in the world.

According to Oxford advanced learner's dictionary (2000, p. 1501), a video game is "a game in which you press buttons to control and move images on a screen". A television is most commonly used as a screen device, but other inventions with a display device such as a personal computer and a mobile phone can be transformed into a videogame as well. Therefore, the system from which a videogame is operated, a platform, is broad. It can range from a coin-op game to a handheld game.

With the variety of platforms, videogames can be seen everywhere: houses, internet cafés, the malls and schools. In the USA, thirty-three percent households were reported as having one videogame console such as PS2 in their house (Entertainment Software Association, 2007, p. 4). Other than in the house, playing PC games is also popular among students at internet cafés. In the malls there are mostly coin-op games, and in school, students bring their portable game consoles like a handheld game console and a mobile phone game to play with friends.

Previously, videogames in the early 1970s were very far from today's appealing version. In the beginning, videogames started with very simple graphics appearing on a single screen – players can see all of the background at once and move object only between the screen boundaries. A game such as *Asteroids* in 1970s allowed players only to move its picture-of-a-spaceship object out of one side of the screens to reappear from the opposite side. It was like a maze where the player could not go anywhere. By contrast, most videogames in the age of technological advancement has

become very attractive with beautiful 3D graphics, no boundary background – allowing players to discover the places beyond the appearing screen, a larger amount of memory space making the games more complex and so on. (Newman, 2004, pp. 32-33)

With the attraction of videogames today, gamer populations have been increasing ceaselessly during the past ten years, proving research into computer and video game sales growth during 1996-2006 in U.S. reported by NPD. (as cited in Entertainment Software Association, 2006, p. 11, 2007, p. 11) From 74.1 million units in 1996, U.S. computer and video game sales were about three-times more at 240.7 million units in 2006. Although the sales growth dropped a little bit during 2004-2006, NPD group reported that the U.S. game industry is expected to earn 16-18 billion dollars by the end of 2007 (Thorsen, 2007).

Moreover, the attractiveness of videogames makes people especially the youth spend a lot of time playing it which can lead to the problems of videogame addiction. Even admitting that playing computer games can come along with many negative effects, according to ABAC Poll Research Centre (“Thai Youth,” 2007), 26.3% of Thai youths aged 10 to 15 play computer games everyday or almost everyday. The average 10 to 15 year-old plays two hours and 44 minutes a day while the average 16 to 20 year-old and 21 to 24 year-old plays three hours and 13 minutes a day and three hours and 21 minutes a day respectively. Such behavior may leads to videogame addiction if it is not monitored carefully by parents. In the article, *Parents' Manual for Taking Care of Children from Game Addiction* (สถาบันสุขภาพจิตเด็กและวัยรุ่นราชนครินทร์, 2550), from the Centre for Game Addiction Prevention at the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Rajanagarindra Institute, it was reported that playing games for more than three hours each time was in the list of children’s activities that parents should be concerned about as it might create a tendency for game addiction.

The videogame addiction behavior was reported in many studies as having negative effects - i.e. violent behavior, health problems, both in physical and psychological illness, and so on. Over the past few years, many Asian men were

reported dead as a result of an online game addiction. In 2005, Lee, a 28-year-old South Korean man, died of a heart failure at an internet café after having played an online game for almost 50 hours at one time. (“S Korean,” 2005) Similarly, in China, which boasts the world’s second highest number of web users (“Chinese online,” 2007), two men were reported of dying after a marathon online game playing session in March and September 2007 (Thomson, 2007; Williams, 2007).

Additionally, in Thailand, it is even worse when one’s game addiction behavior affects other’s lives. On May 23, 2007, Thai people were frightened by the shocking news of a twenty-year-old man carrying a gun and firing on people at a market. After shooting 3 people dead and injuring 7, he was killed by the police. Later, the police found a lot of evidence in his room such as weapons, gun firing manuals and the combat computer games. The games, especially Counter-Strike in which gamers play the role of an assassin team member carrying weapons or bombs to kill bad guys, were believed to be particularly influential over his terrifying behavior. (“จาก "เกม" ถึงของจริง,” 2550; “ตายเกลื่อนตลาดไท,” 2550)

The negative aspects of videogame playing also affect young people, from ABAC poll’s survey, (“Thai Youth,” 2007) besides admitting that there is a negative side to play computer games, the respondents (10-24 years-old) also stated that they wasted money (89.4%) and time (64.7%), had problems with eyesight (82.9%) and were performing poorly in their education or at work (50.6%) because of computer games. Similarly, American youth have problems with this behavior as well. Martin and Oppenheim (2007) found that American youth aged 8-to18-years-old who spent more time playing videogames were more likely to perform badly at school, have a fight with others and/or gain more weight.

However, other than negative areas, videogame playing was also found to have many beneficial aspects. One of the advantages of videogames is its interactive aspect. The videogames were used as simulation games and the simulations allow players to be in the realistic life-like situations. This game is very helpful and is used in many training programs in education, business and military areas. Additionally,

videogames were believed to be able to help develop children's valuable skills like strategic thinking, planning, communication, etc. (Kirriemuir & McFarlane, 2004).

Moreover, in Sutthiporn Nirapath's study, *The Relationship between Playing Computer Games, Academic Achievement and Aggressive Behavior of Senior High School Students*, she did not find a relationship between playing computer games and academic achievement (สุทธิพร นีราพาธ, 2547). Therefore, playing videogames is not always a bad thing. If gamers can control their videogame playing behavior appropriately, e.g. limiting playing time and choosing to play only suitable games, they will absolutely gain only the beneficial parts of playing videogames.

In the world of digital technology, to forbid youth from playing videogames may be impossible; moreover, not only can videogame playing produce many problems, it can create many benefits as well. Therefore, parents should guard their children properly so that their kids can enjoy only the beneficial aspects of playing videogames. The information obtained from this study will be helpful for parents to understand their kid's behavior in videogame playing. It will provide parents with the reasons why their kids love to play videogames and how this behavior affects their children's lives, social activities, their health and their school performance.

This research will study the behavior of young people who are studying in Mathayom 3 at a private boy's school located on Pramuan Road and a government boy's school located on Charoenkrung Road. This study will focus on male gamers only because most gamers at present are male (62%) (Entertainment Software Association, 2007), and they mostly started playing videogames since they were young so this information may be used as a reference for the first part of their behavior before they become extreme gamers in the future. Moreover, students in these two schools are different in terms of average family income which can cause a difference in their behavior. Therefore, this information can be useful for parents and for future study.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Not only do videogames bring problems for kids, they also bring some benefits to kids as well. Therefore, there is a need to determine how youths can be made to play videogames properly so that they can enjoy only the benefits. Parents need to understand their kids' videogame playing behavior first so that they can take care of their kids appropriately and be a good guide in tuning their children's game habits.

1.2.1 What are the gaming habits of the youth?

1.2.2 What are the reasons that make the youth love playing or not playing videogames?

1.2.3 What are the youth's attitudes toward videogames?

## **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1.3.1 Main Objective

To study videogame playing behavior of Mathayom 3 students at a private boy's school, located on Pramuan Road and a government boy's school located on Charoenkrung Road.

1.3.2 Sub-Objectives

1. To examine the characteristics of Mathayom 3 students at a private school and those at a government school in terms of their videogame playing behavior.

2. To identify the reasons that make kids love to play videogames; and

3. To explore the attitudes of youths toward videogames.

## 1.4 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Definitions of the terms of this study are as follows:

1.4.1 **Family Income** refers to the average income of the videogame player's family per month.

1.4.2 **Allowance** refers to a sum of money earned or given to students at regular intervals.

1.4.3 **Gamer** refers to a student who is a videogame player.

1.4.4 **Non-Gamer** refers to a student who is not a videogame player.

1.4.5 **Gaming Habit** refers to the behavior which a person often demonstrates regularly when playing videogames.

1.4.6 **Videogame Systems/Platform** refers to a game in which a player controls moving pictures on a screen by pressing buttons.

1.4.7 **Videogame Genre** refers to a type or theme of a game which a player choose to play the game to his/her own preference

1.4.8 **Computer Game** refers to the videogame platform on which players have to play a game, i.e. one which uses a computer. This system allows players to play both online and offline.

1.4.9 **Videogame Console** refers to the electronic device which needs a video display device and videogame media such as a game cartridge, a DVD game and a card game to complete its playing operation. The display device which is used for this purpose is a television. This system, like a computer game, allows players to play both online and offline as well.

1.4.10 **Handheld Game** refers to a pocket-size videogame platform. Some advanced handheld games allows players to change game cartridges so that players can play more than one game.

1.4.11 **Coin-op Game** refers to a videogame platform for which players need to drop a coin to operate it.

1.4.12 **Mobile phone game** refers to a game which players can play it via mobile phone.

1.4.13 **Action and adventure game** refers to a type of game allowing players to control the characters' actions in the adventure world; for example, the player can make the character jump, fire, fly and swim to get a point or to fight with the enemies in order to pass to the next stage.

1.4.14 **Driving and Racing game** refers to a type of game allowing gamers to take the role of a driver in a particular situation such as in a racing tournament. Players have to use their driving ability to control their car in order to, for example, reach the highest rank in the competition or catch the fastest speed.

1.4.15 **Shooting game** refers to a type of game which gamers play as one person in the game trying to shoot others and avoid being shot.

1.4.16 **Role-playing game** refers to a type of game in which players take the role of an adventurer in a virtual world where they interact with other players in order to develop their ability throughout the game.

1.4.17 **Strategy game** refers to a type of game which requires that players use their abilities to plan with careful and skillful thinking in order to achieve victory.

1.4.18 **Simulation game** refers to a type of game in which the aim is to put players into a virtual situation which is simulated from reality. Players have to use their skills and their abilities to plan in order to solve the problems in such situation.

1.4.19 **Sports game** refers to a type of game which is designed according to existing sports such as soccer, basketball and American football.

1.4.20 **Beat-'em-up game** refers to a type of game allowing players to control an object or a character to have a fight with his/her enemies.

1.4.21 **Education/ Learning game** refers to a type of game purpose of which is to provide knowledge to gamers. This kind of genre allows gamers to enjoy their lessons thanks to its design as a game.

1.4.22 **Casual Game** refers to a type of game which a player can understand and play easily. Players can advance their scores through each game level starting from the easiest level to the hardest one. This type of game allows gamers to play both online and offline. The examples of this type of game are Puzzle, Tetris, Card game, Word game, etc.

1.4.23 **MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game)** refers to a kind of role-playing genre in which a gamer assumes a role as one character of the game to interact with a large number of other characters in the virtual world.

1.4.24 **Videogame Usage** refers to an amount that a person plays videogames.

## **1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This research studies the videogame playing behavior of Mathayom 3 students studying at a private boy's school located on Pramuan Road or a government boy's school located on Charoenkrung Road. The sample of this study consisted of 150 students, 75 of which were from each school.

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Because this study discloses the videogame playing behavior of male students in Bangkok, the findings of this study would be useful for parents, teachers, kids and many organizations as follows:

1. This study will provide useful information for parents and teachers so that they can understand their kids' and their students' behavior with regards to videogames. The findings will help parents and teachers to find an appropriate way to take care of kids and to keep them from over playing videogames which be associated with many problems such as poor school performance and health problems.

2. The findings will also be useful for kids. After discovering how people of their own age behave with regards to videogame playing, they will be more aware of their gaming habit. This will lead them to play videogames more sensibly or even to find other pastime activities other than gaming.

3. The government and all parties concerned can use these findings about high school students' behavior with regards to videogame to substantiate a new policy to solve the problems caused by videogames. For instance, schools may add some activities to their class schedules that attract their students and keeps them from overplaying videogames.

## **1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

This research, "A Study of the Videogame Playing Behavior of Mathayom 3 Students at a Private Boy's School, Located on Pramuan Road and a Government Boy's School Located on Charoenkrung Road," is divided into five chapters. The first chapter includes seven parts; the background, the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, definitions of terms, the scope of the study, the significance of the study and the organization of the study. The second chapter covers a review of the literature and previous similar studies while the third chapter covers the research methodology regarding subject of the study, materials or the instrument used in this study for data collection, the procedures to collect the information and data analysis. The fourth chapter includes the results of the study and the last chapter consists of the conclusions and discussions of the study, followed by the recommendations for further research.