Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies Volume 10 Number 2 © 2018 Intellect Ltd Article. English language. doi: 10.1386/cjcs.10.2.247\_1

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# The impact of digital practices on the perception of risks and benefits of digital gaming

## ABSTRACT

1. This study introduces a new multivariate framework around a set of digital 2. practices such as entertainment-oriented uses, information-oriented uses, social-3. connection uses and e-commerce uses, and shows that these digital practices are, 4. in fact, important predictors of the positive and negative perceptions of digital 5. gaming. We developed two multiple regression models on a representative sample 6. of the Spanish population. After controlling for socio-demographic factors (age, 7. gender and level of education), our models reveal that gaming-related perceptions 8. of benefits and risks are associated with people's concrete personal experiences with 9. digital games and, interestingly, to the greater or lesser development of their digi-10. tal practices. We show that the perceptions of benefits with regard to video games 11. are related to more developed digital practices. Conversely, the perceptions of risk 12. are higher in the case of individuals who lack exposure and experiences regarding 13. digital practices. 14.

# KEYWORDS

digital games game culture media effects media perceptions digital practices video games

15. 16. 17. 18. 19.

#### INTRODUCTION

In a context of ubiquitous play (AEVI 2016; Asociación para la investigación 3. de medios de comunicación [AIMC] 2018; Kerr 2017; Muriel and Crawford 4. 2018; Zimmerman 2015), the debate about the effects of playable media 5. emerges with force, and it has implications at many levels, from cultural to 6. legislative, from creative to industrial. In this article we show that percep-7. tions of benefits and risks of digital gaming among the Spanish population 8. are directly related to how often the respondents play digital games, as well 9 as to the frequency and characteristics of other everyday digital practices in 10. which individuals engage. For this purpose, we carried out a survey as part 11. of the World Internet Project (WIP) Spain study,1 and, in order to ascertain 12 the variables that determine the perceptions of risk and benefit of playing 13. video games, we constructed a multivariate framework around entertain-14 ment-oriented uses, information-oriented uses, social-connection uses and 15. e-commerce uses. 16.

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In short, given that digital gaming is increasingly ubiquitous and is distributed among practically all age groups and across a diversity of sociodemographic characteristics (Eurostat 2016; Kerr 2017; Mäyrä 2017), we investigated the subject using a multivariate approach that analyses perceptions of risks and benefits of video games beyond socio-demographic differences such as age, gender or level of education. In the following section, we examine the theoretical bases and methodologies used in recent studies that justify our multivariate approach. After that, we propose a set of research questions that seek to deepen the relationship between perceptions of risks and benefits, socio-demographic characteristics and digital practices of the Spanish population. Then we explain the method followed to carry out the fieldwork and analysis, and finally, we present the results and discuss them.

#### THEORETICAL CONTEXT

A huge volume of literature has explored the effects of the media and also the perceptions that people have about these effects. For our approach to the perception of the risks and benefits of digital gaming, we will summarize the scientific contributions that guide our research in two groups: the literature on the effects, that is, on the risks and benefits of digital gaming; and the literature on society's perception of those effects.

#### Effects: Benefits and risks of digital gaming

There is a huge body of scholarship focusing on the negative aspects of digi-41. tal gaming, such as psychological disorders (Chappell et al. 2006), aggres-42. siveness (Anderson 2002; Gentile and Gentile 2008) and racist and sexist 43 behaviour (Burgess et al. 2011; Dickerman et al. 2008; Leonard 2003). As 44. Griffiths (2016) asserts, there is some research that shows evidence that 45. excessive video game playing may lead or be related to both negative 46. psychosocial and health or medical consequences such as sacrificing of work, 47. education, hobbies, socializing, time with partner/family, and sleep, increased 48 stress, lower psychosocial well-being, poorer social skills, epileptic seizures, 49. auditory and visual hallucinations, and wrist pain, neck and elbow pain. 50.

Bushman et al. (2015), in a study on the views of media psychologists, 51. mass communication scientists, paediatricians and parents, state that there is 52.

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 some consensus on the causal relationship between playing video games and suffering from the negative effects that they are supposed to have. However, Bowman (2016: 32) points out that new data are challenging some findings related to factors such as isolation or lack of physical fitness among gamers, mentioning that a survey of 7000 *EverQuest II* players found players to have lower body mass index scores than the general population, and that a major motivator for their continued play was for social interaction.

8. Thus, in the study on negative effects of video games, such as aggressive-9 ness or negative psychosocial consequences, there is no real consensus among 10. scholars: only 10.1 per cent of researchers recognize a relationship between 11. the effects of digital games and aggression (Coulon and Ferguson 2016: 70). 12. In fact, the study by Quandt et al. (2015), which examines the opinions of 13. researchers working in game studies, evidenced that there is no clear consen-14. sus on the negative effects of video games, but there is some consensus on the 15. benefits of gaming.

16. In this positive vein, some other research draws attention to how digital 17. gaming - but also gaming in its broadest sense - has beneficial or favour-18. able effects in the context of culture, socialization, active participation or 19. skills. Some research explains and describes how people obtain pleasure and 20. fun as a fundamental tool for cultural reproduction (Huizinga 1955; Sherry 21. 2004); others conducted research into how creative participation is promoted 22. through video game fan communities (Consalvo 2007; Hills 2002; Wirman 2009), or into the ways players socialize and strengthen bonds with their 23. 24. peers and at the same time generate exchange networks (Dondi et al. 2004; 25. Jansz and Marten 2005; Taylor 2006; Zagal 2010; Muriel and Crawford 2018). 26. In relation to skills, some research shows to what degree video games are 27. good tools for situated learning or beneficial practices that promote dialogue 28. and creation (Gee 2004a, 2004b; Lacasa 2011; Mitchell and Savill-Smith 2004; 29. Whitton 2009, 2014).

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# Perceptions: The public debate on digital gaming

33. As stated before, researchers have not reached a consensus on the effects
34. of digital gaming, and there is even more debate among the general public.
35. While the scientific debate is driven by the analysis of *evidence* of risks and
36. benefits, public debate on digital gaming is often driven by *perception* of
37. risks and benefits. The general public's perceptions of the effects of digi38. tal gaming emerge through moral panic, third-person effects and social
39. distance effects.

40. Put briefly, moral panics (Cohen 1972; Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994; Hall
41. et al. 1978; McRobbie and Thornton 1995; Thompson 1998) are disproportion42. ate reactions to perceived threats or fears that are not rooted in science. As
43. stated by Cohen,

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45. Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral
46. panic. A condition, episode, a person or group of persons emerges to
47. become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is
48. presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the
49. moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other
50. right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diag51. noses and solutions.

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(1972: 9)

Critcher points out that moral panics are 'reaction to changes: bad things are happening which didn't used to' (2006: 7). On the other side, the third-person perception phenomenon (Davison 1983) states that negative perceptions vary 3. with social distance. In this sense, Davison asserts that

We are all experts on those subjects that matter to us, in that we have information not available to other people. This information may not be of a factual or technical nature; it may have to do with our own experiences, likes, and dislikes. Other people, we reason, do not know what we know. Therefore, they are more likely to be influenced by the media. (1983: 9)

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In relation to social distance, Ivory and Kalyanaraman (2009) state that the 13. research on perceptions of negative effects points out that social distance 14 plays also an important role: the relationship with, or the knowledge about, 15. a concrete social practice may have an impact on how it is perceived. In the 16. case of video gaming, Przybylski (2013) states that those less experienced with 17 video games are more likely to fear them. The study by Przybylski shows that 18. perception of violence is not due merely to individual defensiveness or social 19. identity bias caused by moral panics (Critcher 2006; McRobbie and Thornton 20 21. 1995) or the third-person effect (Davison 1983). Instead, the author states that 22. 'those who grew up in a world without electronic games, or lack experience 23. with games, are most likely to endorse the idea that violent games are a material source of society's ills' (Przybylski 2014: 233). 24.

25. Taking into account the research by Ivory and Kalyanaraman (2009), we 26. can establish that one of the main factors that influence perceptions, and thus 27. our judgements, is the abstraction in the content. The perceptions of nega-28. tive media effects vary depending on the closeness or vagueness in terms of the available information we have in practice (Cohen et al. 1988; Hoffner et 29. al. 2001; McLeod et al. 1997). As a general rule, the less a person plays video 30. games or is in contact with others who play them, the more likely s/he is to 31. perceive video games as risky. To put it another way, the lack of knowledge 32. of a specific practice has implications for the perception thereof, especially as 33. regards the risks and benefits that the practice entails (Holtz 2014). 34

In summary, there is a great number of studies that examine perceptions 35. of the risks and benefits in digital gaming. Many studies (Bushman et al. 2015; 36. 37. Chappell et al. 2006; Griffiths 2016; Quandt et al. 2015; Aranda et. al. 2017) have identified relationships between perceptions of risks and benefits and 38. socio-demographic variables such as gender (male-female), education (low vs 39. 40. high education levels) or age (young vs adults).

Other studies (Ivory and Kalyanaraman 2009; Przybylski 2014) go further 41. and show that these perceptions vary according to people's personal expe-42. 43. rience or abstract knowledge of video games and not only because of basic socio-demographic variables. As stated by Przybylski, knowledge of video 44. games, or thinking about games in purely theoretical terms, is associated with 45. the perception of risk in the playing video games (2014). From this point of 46. view, we can consider that what unifies a group in terms of their perceptions, 47. abilities, skills, tastes or practices relating to digital culture and video games 48 are not only the classic socio-demographic factors such as age, level of educa-49. tion and gender, but also 'certain attributes and experiences related to how 50. they interact with information technologies, information itself, one another, 51. and other people and institutions' (Palfrey and Gasser 2008: 246). 52.

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# 1. **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

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The aim of this article is to analyse the relationship between some digital practices and the perceptions of risks and benefits of playing video games. To do so, our study is guided by three research questions (RQs):

- RQ1: What perceptions does the Spanish population have about video games in terms of their risks and benefits?
- RQ2: What is the relationship between the perceptions of risks and benefits of video games and the participants' socio-demographic characteristics?
- RQ3: What is the role of related digital practices (entertainment, information, social connection and e-commerce) in the perceptions of risks and benefits of video games apart from the socio-demographic differences observed?

16. In order to answer these questions, we have designed a construct to define the variables orbiting around digital experience or competence, bearing in mind that they are all part of a wider social practice that could be defined as 'digital practice', according to the definition by Reckwitz:

A routinized type of behaviour that consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.

(2002: 249)

28. The definition of variables around digital experience, and not necessar-29. ily around playing video games, enables us to investigate whether there is 30. a significant relationship between this digital experience and perceptions 31. of risks and benefits, bearing in mind that that perception can be observed 32. not only through the information available on the specific practice, but also 33. through the context of which the practice is a part. Based on the adminis-34. tered questionnaire, we have determined that entertainment-oriented uses, 35. information-oriented uses, social-connection uses and e-commerce uses are 36. directly related to individuals' competence in the digital context, and have a 37. direct impact in terms of playing video games. 38.

#### 39. 40. **METHOD**

## 41. WIP Spain

42. The source for the data used in this research is the Spanish chapter of 43. the WIP, an international project that originated at the UCLA Center for 44. Communication Policy (now the USC Annenberg School Center for the 45. Digital Future) and was founded with the School of Communication Studies 46. in Singapore (Nanyang Technological University) and the Osservatorio Internet 47. Italia at Bocconi University in Milan, Italy. The WIP Spain is working with data 48 from a biennial survey of a representative sample of the Spanish population. 49. In our research, we specifically considered the data for the year 2013, with the 50. overall aim of producing a diagnosis of the use, knowledge and assessment of 51. the use of the Internet in Spain, at a time when the use of new technologies is 52. increasing in all areas of society.

#### Sample

2. This article uses data gathered through a survey using a nationally representa-3. tive random sample of 1600 people aged 16 and older in Spain. The sampling 4. procedure followed a three-stage selection process with proportional alloca-5. tion to avoid biases: (1) primary sampling units, municipalities, were randomly 6. selected taking into account the population distribution of the seventeen 7. autonomous communities in Spain; (2) secondary sampling units, households 8. from all the provinces belonging to each Autonomous Community, were 9 randomly selected by phone number; and (3) individuals within households 10. were selected taking into account the population distribution regarding sex, 11. age and size of the municipality. Data were gathered by computer-assisted 12. telephone interviewing (CATI) in December 2013. The margin of error for 13. the total sample is  $\pm 2.45$  per cent. Table 1 shows the almost even distribution 14 between men and women in the sample (47 per cent of the respondents were 15. men) with an average age of the respondents of 45.18 years and a standard 16. deviation of 17.61, and an average level of education close to completion of 17 post-secondary education (M=1.83, with a standard deviation of 1.03). 18.

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#### Measures

#### Socio-demographics and individual-level information

Participants were asked to provide socio-demographic information regarding gender, age and educational level. Age was recorded using a six-level ordinal scale (i.e., 16-18, 19-24, 25-34, 35-49, 50-64 and 65 and over) in order to provide a meaningful interpretation of the observed effects and to being able to compare different life stages. The highest level of education successfully completed was recorded according to ISCED 2011 (UNESCO 2012), using a four-level ordinal scale that includes primary education, secondary education, post-secondary non-tertiary education and tertiary education (i.e., Bachelor's, Master's, doctoral or equivalent degrees).

#### Digital practices

The participants in the research provided information about the frequency of their Internet use for thirteen activities. To that end, an ad hoc Likert scale was used with the following six response alternatives: 'never', 'less than once a month', 35. 'every month', 'every week', 'every day' and 'several times a day'. The activities 36. involving the use of the Internet were divided into the following four areas: 37.

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) showed an acceptable four-compo-38. nent structure for these thirteen variables (KMO=0.837 and a significant 39. Bartlett's test, p < 0.001), explaining 65.56 per cent of the total variance. The 40. Oblimin rotation method with Kaiser normalization provided component 41. loadings ranging from 0.730 to 0.868 (Entertainment-oriented uses), from 42. 0.631 to 0.864 (Information-oriented uses), from 0.712 to 0.862 (Social-43 connection uses) and from 0.750 to 0.795 (E-commerce uses). Finally, the reli-44. ability analysis of the compounded factors showed a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.745 for 45. Entertainment-oriented uses, 0.708 for Information-oriented uses, 0.830 for 46. Social-connection uses and 0.676 for E-commerce uses. 47.

#### Frequency of video game playing

Interviewees provided information about the frequency of their use of video 50. games. This was measured using an ad hoc Likert scale according to the follow-51. ing three levels: 'never', 'sometimes' and 'habitually'. The question specifically 52.

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<ul> <li>looking for the definition or meaning of a word,</li> <li>looking for or checking a fact,</li> <li>finding information about a product (a car, a book, technology, etc.)</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>posting messages or comments on social media,</li> <li>posting user-created content (videor photos, text, etc.),</li> <li>re-posting and sharing links and conter (videos, photos, text, etc.) created b others,</li> <li>posting messages and comments i discussion forums</li> </ul>
<ul><li>online banking,</li><li>paying bills,</li><li>shopping online</li></ul>

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27. included the possibility of playing video games using various types of digital devices. The question in the questionnaire was therefore, 'Do you play or have you played video games on a console, computer, or mobile phone, or games on social media?'.

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# 32. Perceived benefits and risks of digital gaming

Interviewees reported their level of agreement on a Likert-type scale with five 33. levels ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' with eight statements 34. related to the benefits and risks of digital games. Four of these statements 35. presented perceived benefits including 'video games stimulate memory and 36. attention', 'learning through play is a natural way to learn', 'video games can 37. release stress' and 'useful things are learned with video games'. Another four 38. statements presented perceived risks including'video games cause anxiety and 39. nervousness', 'video games make players isolated', 'video games cause addic-40. tion' and 'violent video games make those who play them behave violently'. 41.

11.PCA showed an acceptable two-component structure for these eight items42.(KMO=0.785 and a significant Bartlett's test, p<0.001), explaining 62.09% of43.the total variance in perceived benefits (25.84%) and perceived risks (36.25%).45.The rotated component solution (Varimax with Kaiser normalization) provided46.component loadings ranging from 0.665 to 0.816, and from 0.690 to 0.890,47.respectively. Both components also showed an acceptable reliability, with a48.Cronbach's α of 0.718 and 0.845.

#### 49. 50. **Analysis**

51. In order to answer the research questions, we began with a descriptive analysis

52. and by exploring the correlations of our measures. To that end, we calculated

various indices based on the scales of the constituent items and the meaning 1. of its theoretical construct. Various tests of statistical significance were used 2. depending on the scale of the variables considered in the analysis: Pearson's 3. r for continuous variables, Spearman's rho (rs) for ordinal variables and pairs 4. of continuous and ordinal variables, the point-biserial correlation (rpb) for 5. continuous and dichotomous variables, and phi (r) for dichotomous variables 6. and pairs of ordinal and dichotomous variables. These correlation coefficients 7. are shown in Table 1. 8.

9. We then carried out two multiple linear regressions in order to determine the relationship between the perceptions of benefits and risks of video games, 10. as dependent variables, and the other independent variables considered in the 11. models. The ordinal variables were recoded (dummy coded) for inclusion in 12. the models. Table 2 shows the results, and presents the regression coefficients 13. (B), standard errors (SE), t-tests of significance and their corresponding stand-14 ardized versions (Beta), which are useful for determining the relative impor-15. tance of the different variables in the models. F-tests and  $R^2$  values served to 16. evaluate the significance and the overall fit of the two multiple linear regres-17 18. sion models.

#### RESULTS

#### Descriptive and bivariate analyses

Table 1 shows that Spaniards appear to have a fairly neutral opinion regarding the benefits of video games (M=3.10, with a standard deviation of 0.95) and appear to be in slight agreement as regards their risks (M=3.81, with a standard deviation of 1.04). As regards digital practices, most respondents use the Internet several times a month, although they do not do so weekly, for Information-oriented uses (M=3.41, with a standard deviation of 1.03), followed by several times a month for Entertainment-oriented uses (M=2.84, with a standard deviation of 1.33) and for Social-connection uses (M=2.51, with a standard deviation of 1.35). Finally, E-commerce uses are performed in a frequency of slightly less than once a month (M=1.97, with a standard deviation of 0.91). Moreover, Spaniards generally play video games, although they report doing so sporadically or infrequently (M=0.64, with a standard deviation of 0.73).

As for relationships between pairs of variables, we first observed that the 35. socio-demographic variables have no significant relationship with the perceived 36. benefits of video games. On the contrary, the other variables considered in 37. the study present significant positive correlations in all cases. Specifically, 38. Entertainment-oriented uses have the highest association (r=0.21, p<0.001), 39. which is higher than Information-oriented uses (r=0.11, p<0.001), Social-40. connection uses (r=0.10, p<0.01) and E-commerce uses (r=0.09, p<0.01). In this 41. regard, the frequency of playing video games has the same relationship (rs=0.21, 42. p < 0.001) as digital practices oriented towards consuming media content. 43

All the variables considered in the analysis show a statistically significant 44. correlation for the opinion on the risks of video games. The most risks are 45. therefore perceived by older people (r=0.21, p<0.001), a view that is shared by 46. the women interviewed (rpb=-0.16, p<0.001) and those with a lower educa-47. tional level (rs=-0.10, p<0.001). All the other variables have values that indi-48 cate that the lower the frequency of Internet use, the greater the sensitivity to 49. the risks of video games. In specific terms, the frequency of Entertainment-50. oriented uses has the strongest association (r=-0.28, p<0.001), which is 51. stronger than Social-connection uses (r=-0.18, p<0.001), E-commerce 52.

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	Μ	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(2)	(9)	(2)	(8)	(6)	(10)
Benefits of video games (1)	3.10	0.95	C C									
Risks of video games (2)	3.81	1.04	-0.13***	Ι								
Digital practices Entertainment-oriented uses (3) Information-oriented uses (4) Social-connection uses (5) E-commerce uses (6)	2.84 3.41 2.51 1.97	$ \begin{array}{c} 1.33 \\ 1.03 \\ 1.35 \\ 0.91 \end{array} $	0.21*** 0.11*** 0.10**	-0.28*** -0.14*** -0.18***	0.44***	0.35***	0.20***	1				
Frequency of video game playing (7)	0.64	0.73	0.21***	-0.33***	0.43***	0.19***	0.31***	0.06*	I			
Gender (8)	0.47	0.50	0.05	$-0.16^{***}$	0.16***	0.06*	0.01	0.11***	0.08**	I		
Age (9)	45.18	17.61	-0.04	0.21***	-0.52***	-0.32***	-0.44***	-0.05	-0.41***	-0.04	I	
Education (10)	1.83	1.03	0.02	$-0.10^{***}$	-0.04	0.17***	0.04	0.32***	-0.02	$0.06^{*}$	$-0.11^{***}$	I
<i>Notes</i> : Benefits of video games (1)={1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree}. Risks of video games (2)={1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree}. Risks of video games (2)={1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree}. Entertainment-oriented uses (3)={1=Never, 2=Less than once a month, 3=Every month, 4=Every week, 5=Every day, 6=Several times a day}. Information-oriented uses (5)={1=Never, 2=Less than once a month, 3=Every month, 4=Every week, 5=Every day, 6=Several times a day}. Social-connection uses (5)={1=Never, 2=Less than once a month, 3=Every month, 4=Every week, 5=Every day, 6=Several times a day}. Frequency of video game playing (7)={0=Never, 1=Sometimes, 2=Habitually}. Gender (8)={0=Female, 1=Male}. Agrees, 1=Never, 1=Sometimes, 2=Habitually}. Age (9)={0=16-18 years, 1=19-24 years, 2=25-34 years, 3=35-49 years, 4=50-64 years, 5=65 and over}. Age (9)={0=Primary, 1=Secondary non-tertiary education, 3=Tertiary}. *p<0.001; ***p<0.001; ***p<0.001.	sames (1)= ={1=Stron uses (3)={ ss (4)={1=. 5)={1=Nev Never, 2= = naying ( 1=19-24 ) ury, 1=Seco 0.001.	<pre>{1=Stroi gly disag gly disag l=Never, 2: ver, 2=Le Less thai 7)={0=N vers, 2=' rears, 2=' rears, 2=' rears, 2=' </pre>	ngly disagr pree, 2=Disc , 2=Less than =Less than on n once a m ever, 1=Soi ever, 1=Soi :=Post-seco	ee, 2=Disag agree, 3=Ne an once a m once a month, onth, 3=Eve netimes, 2= s, 3=35–49 y indary non-	cee, 3=Neut utral, 4=Agt nonth, 3=Every nth, 3=Every mc 3=Every mc 3=Every mc Habitually]. Habitually]. ears, 4=50- tertiary edu	trongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree}. sagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree}. ver, 2=Less than once a month, 3=Every month, 4=Every week, 5=Every day, 6=Several times t, 2=Less than once a month, 3=Every month, 4=Every week, 5=Every day, 6=Several times than once a month, 3=Every month, 4=Every week, 5=Every day, 6=Several times than once a month, 3=Every month, 4=Every week, 5=Every day, 6=Several times then once a month, 3=Every month, 4=Every week, 5=Every day, 6=Several times there, 1=Sometimes, 2=Habitually}. 2=25–34 years, 3=35–49 years, 4=50–64 years, 5=65 and over}.	, 5=Strongly gly agreel. =Every weel, ivery week, 5=E k, 5=Every di k, 5=Every di tiary}.	agree}. <, 5=Every day, 5=Every day, 6= very day, 6= ay, 6=Severa	ay, 6=Severa 6=Several ti Several time 1 times a day	l times a imes a da s a day}. v}.	day}. y}.	
Table 1: Means, standard deviations and correlations between the observed variables in WIP Spain 2013 (N=1600)	viations ai	nd correlt	ttions betwe	en the observ	ved variables	in WIP Spain	n 2013 (N=1	600).				

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uses (r=-0.16, p<0.001) and Information-oriented uses (r=-0.14, p<0.001). 1. Meanwhile, we also found that people who play video games are less aware of 2. their risks (rs=-0.33, p<0.001), as are those with positive perceptions of their 3. benefits (r=-0.13, p<0.001). 4.

The analysis also shows some other interesting relationships. Men have 5. more highly developed digital practices related to Entertainment-oriented 6. uses (rpb=0.16, p<0.001) and E-commerce uses (rpb=0.11, p<0.001). Age 7. also seems to be a determining factor with regard to digital practices, as the 8. 9. youngest respondents consume more entertainment (r=-0.52, p<0.001), use social media to a greater extent, make more Social-connection uses (r=-0.44, 10. p < 0.001), and more Information-oriented uses (r = -0.32, p < 0.001). Similarly, 11. they also report playing more video games (rs=-0.41, p<0.001). As regards the 12. level of education, a higher educational level is associated with the develop-13. ment of more advanced digital practices in terms of E-commerce uses (rs=0.32, 14 15. p < 0.001) and Information-oriented uses (rs = 0.17, p < 0.001).

Finally, taking into account the interrelationships between digital practices16.and the use of video games, high values were observed for the correlations17.between all the variables ranging between 0.19 and 0.43 (p<0.001), except</td>18.for the relationship between E-commerce uses and the use of video games19.(rs=0.06, p<0.05).</td>20.

#### Multivariate analyses

Table 2 shows the result of the two multiple linear regression models considered in this investigation. It includes model (1), in which the dependent variable analysed is the perceptions about the benefits of using video games, and model (2), which uses perceptions about the risks of using video games as the dependent variable. The two models are statistically significant (*F*=7.445 and 15.280, p<0.001, respectively), although they have different overall levels of fit. The model developed to study the perceptions of the risks shows a greater explained variation with an  $R^2$  of 0.164, while the model analysing perceptions of the benefits has an  $R^2$  of 0.088.

32. The first model of the perception of the benefits of using video games 33. shows no significant effect in relation to gender or the level of education 34 attained. Some of the levels show a statistically significant effect for age, with 35. adults aged between 35 and 49 years (Beta=0.147, p<0.05) and people aged 36. over 64 years (Beta=0.138, p<0.01) having a greater perception of the bene-37. fits of using video games. Likewise, and as would be expected, people who 38. play video games most frequently also have a positive opinion of their benefits 39. (Beta=0.091, p<0.05, and Beta=0.221, p<0.001, for people who play sometimes 40. and habitually, respectively). Interestingly, after statistically controlling for all 41. these effects, Entertainment-oriented uses (Beta=0.161, p < 0.001) have an effect 42. that is to a certain extent comparable to the frequency of use of video games. 43.

As to perceptions of the risks in the use of video games, the level of educa-44. tion does not shows any statistically significant effect either, but it is possible to 45. observe a significant relationship with regard to gender, which means that after 46. controlling for other effects in the model, women (Beta=-0.111, p<0.001) have 47. a more sensitized opinion on the risks of using video games. Age also shows 48 some statistically significant effects, with those aged between 35 and 49 years 49. (Beta=0.153, p<0.05) and between 50 and 64 years (Beta=0.155, p<0.01) having 50. the most sensitive perception to the risks of using video games. By contrast, 51. and as seen above, people who play video games more often observe fewer 52.

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	Benefits of video games			<b>Risks of video games</b>				
	В	SE	Beta	t	В	SE	Beta	t
Intercept	2.294	0.196	_	11.727***	4.286	0.201	_	21.367**
Gender								
Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Male	-0.009	0.053	-0.005	-0.169	-0.223	0.055	-0.111	-4.020**
Age (years)								
16–18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
19–24	0.165	0.137	0.061	1.205	0.164	0.141	0.056	1.16
25–34	0.156	0.134	0.071	1.166	0.210	0.137	0.088	1.53
35–49	0.297	0.136	0.147	2.177*	0.339	0.140	0.153	2.421
50–64	0.172	0.146	0.071	1.179	0.409	0.150	0.155	2.726*
65 and over	0.416	0.156	0.138	2.665**	0.288	0.160	0.089	1.80
Education								
Primary	_	_	_	-	-	_	_	
Secondary	-0.115	0.112	-0.049	-1.020	0.120	0.116	0.048	1.03
Post-secondary non-	-0.071	0.106	-0.037	-0.668	-0.027	0.110	-0.013	-0.24
tertiary	0.002	0.108	0.001	0.022	-0.067	0.112	-0.032	-0.56
Tertiary								
Digital practices								
Entertainment-	0.112	0.027	0.161	4.143***	-0.092	0.028	-0.122	-3.296
oriented uses	0.027	0.030		0.881	0.032	0.031	0.032	1.00
Information-oriented	-0.017	0.023	-0.024	-0.720	0.001	0.024	0.002	0.0
uses	0.046	0.032	0.045	1.413	-0.134	0.034	-0.121	-3.969*
Social-connection uses								
E-commerce								
Frequency of video								
game playing	÷	· -	_	_	_	_	_	
Never	0.173	0.062	0.091	2.796**	-0.322	0.064	-0.156	-5.006*
Sometimes	0.519	0.081	0.221	6.408***	-0.616	0.085	-0.239	-7.251*
Habitually								
Model summary								
R2 (Adjusted R2)	0.088 (0.0	)76)			0.164 (0	153)		
F for the model	7.445***	,, 0)			15.280*			
Sample size	1.173				1.187			

40. Notes: \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001.

41. Table 2: Models of the perceived benefits and risks of digital gaming in Spain.42.

risks (Beta=-0.156, -0.239, *p*<0.001 in both cases) than people who play sometimes and habitually, respectively. Finally, after controlling for all these effects in the model, Entertainment-oriented uses (Beta=-0.122, *p*<0.01) and to a lesser extent E-commerce uses (Beta=-0.121, *p*<0.001) show a statistically significant inverse relationship: the lesser the use, the greater the perceived risk.</li>

# 49. **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

50. As we have reviewed previously, scientific research on the perceptions of risks

and benefits of digital gaming is frequently controversial and most of the

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times related to social-demographic variables. In this regard, there is plenty1.of research focusing, for instance, on age, where young people are perceived2.as a population at risk, or male individuals are seen as having more racist and3.sexist behaviours through playing video games.4.

Instead, we offer an approach to the study of perceptions that provides us with a more complex perspective and gives us the initial framework for interpretation that we have organized according to three research questions.

For RQ1, 'What perceptions does the Spanish population have about8.video games in terms of their risks and benefits?', we found that although the9.Spanish population has a neutral opinion regarding the perceived benefits of10.video games, they agreed to a slightly greater extent about the risks.11.

We found contradictory opinions that could give us clues about where to12.look in order to clarify what activates both negative and positive perceptions.13.To that end, we asked RQ2: 'What is the relationship between the perceptions14.of risks and benefits of video games and the participants' socio-demographic15.characteristics?'.16.

In overall terms, and comparing the results obtained, it is possible to estab-17 lish some differences according to the analysis carried out. A bivariate analysis, 18. which only gives us an initial and most common approximation, shows that 19. 20. there is no statistically significant relationship between individuals' age and 21. level of education and their perceptions regarding the benefits of using video 22. games. However, the multivariate analysis shows a different situation. After 23. statistically controlling for the effects of each variable considered in the model, we find that people aged 35 and above perceive video games as having some 24. 25. degree of risk but also as having some benefits. While there is no significant relationship between the perception of risks or benefits among those under 26. 27. the age of 35, both perceptions are higher among those over 35 years old in comparison with the reference group (i.e., 16-18 years old). Meanwhile, the 28. bivariate analysis shows a significant relationship between having a lower 29. level of education and perceiving a greater risk for video games, although this 30. 31. relationship is not observed in the multivariate analysis.

In the bivariate analysis, the variable of 'playing video games or not' 32. provides data that confirm the results obtained in other studies (Ivory and Xalyanaraman 2009; Przybylski 2013, 2014): contact with video games is directly related to a lower perception of risk and vice versa. 35.

Regarding the multivariate analysis, we found that the Entertainment-<br/>oriented uses have an effect that is comparable to the frequency of use of<br/>video games. To sum up, not only playing video games but also entertain-<br/>ment-oriented practices such us watching videos, downloading or listening to<br/>music, and searching for amusing and entertaining content are directly related<br/>to a lower perception of risk.36.37.<br/>38.<br/>39.39.40.<br/>41.

Regarding RQ3, What is the role of digital practices in the perceptions of 42. risks and benefits of video games apart from the socio-demographic differ-43. ences observed?', the bivariate analysis shows significant relationships 44. between the increased development of the different digital practices consid-45. ered in this study, and the perceived benefits of video games. However, the 46. multivariate analysis shows that after statistically controlling for the inde-47. pendent effects of each of these digital practices, the relationship is limited to 48 Internet uses oriented towards entertainment and playing video games. 49.

In relation to the perception of risks, the bivariate analysis associates the 50. perception of risks with a lower level of digital practices oriented towards 51. entertainment, information, sociability and e-commerce, in contrast to the 52.

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results of the multivariate analysis, in which the less people are immerse in
 Entertainment-oriented uses (and E-commerce uses as a secondary practice)
 the greater they perceive risk. These results are consistent with the results
 obtained by Cohen et al. (1988), Hoffner et al. (2001) and McLeod et al. (1997),
 who argue that the perception of risk is directly related to the information
 about a particular practice we have at our disposal.

As we have explained in the results section, the significant achievement of
 the analysis carried out is that after controlling for the effect of socio-demo graphic variables, the differences in the digital practices studied (use oriented
 towards information, entertainment, social connection, e-commerce and the
 practice of playing video games itself) significantly affect the perception of
 risks and benefits of digital gaming.

13. What is relevant, therefore, is that the perception of risks and benefits 14. is influenced not only by the frequency of playing video games, but also by 15. other uses and digital practices. Thus, this study supposes an initial empir-16. ical verification of the idea of Palfrey and Gasser (2008) or White and Le 17. Cornu (2011), when, discussing the concept of digital natives, they affirm 18. that perceptions, abilities and skills related to digital culture are not defined 19. strictly by socio-demographic characteristics, but by attributes and experi-20. ences related to how people interact with information technologies. What 21. these authors state for digital culture in general, we confirm in relation to 22. digital games. The fact that entertainment-related practices affect the percep-23. tion of risks and benefits of digital gaming would suggest that the act of 24. playing (or, in general, the game culture) should not be seen as something 25. isolated, but as part of a system of practices. In this sense, Muriel and 26. Crawford (2018: 19) have pointed out that game culture is a system of mean-27. ing and a set of social practices located within a wider social and cultural 28. context. This study is a first step into how game culture has to be understood 29. in context. This approach implies that not only the people who study digital 30. games must embrace other entertainment practices to fully understand game 31. culture, but also researchers and policy practitioners connected to media 32. literacy must integrate digital gaming or ludoliteracy into their programmes 33. and proposals, as it has been previously suggested in other works (Aranda et 34. al. 2015, 2016).

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#### FUTURE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS

38. The study of the impact of digital practices on the perception of risks and 39. benefits of digital gaming has to take into account many variables that have 40. not been analysed in this research. This situation needs to be improved in 41. future studies by adding new variables to the current digital practices studied, 42. such as skills for managing new digital tools and frameworks, digital identi-43. ties, finding experts, trust in digital resources, using and identifying of power 44. existing in different agents, reusing digital content, understanding political 45 actions, using avatars and interactive media and transmedia, and in liminal 46. physical/virtual spaces/places and times/moments.

47. From another more conceptual point of view, one limitation of this 48. research has to do with its low statistical significance (explained variation of 49.  $R^2$ ). Nonetheless, it is important to note that this research is related to social 50. sciences, where there are many interconnected variables and it is impossi-

51. ble to try to always have high statistical significance in exploratory studies.52. Furthermore, the main focus of the research model was not the prediction, but

trying to explore, find and show some of the main variables that are important for benefit and risk perception of digital games.

3. Moreover, this research only considers digital gaming in general, which means that further research must take into account different genres and plat-4. forms such as mobile, PC, console and different styles of gaming such as 5. casual and hard-core. It is reasonable to think that each of these different 6. gaming conditions will influence the perception of risks and benefits of using 7. video games. Taking into account the specific conditions of the gaming will 8. 9. further reveal complexities in how experience is related to the perception of risks and benefits. 10.

In addition, this exclusively quantitative study needs a qualitative complementary study to provide more nuanced results and complement the results obtained here. In this sense, focus groups and personal interview should improve the current study, by using its results.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research presented in this paper is part of the project LUDOLITERACY – Ludic Culture, Digital Literacies and Learning: CSO2014-57302-P, funded by the Spanish Government (Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad).

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# SUGGESTED CITATION

- Aranda, D., Sánchez-Navarro, J., Martínez-Cerdà, J-F. and Meneses, J. (2018), 'The impact of digital practices on the perception of risks and benefits of digital gaming', *Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies*, 10:2, pp. 247–64, doi: 10.1386/cjcs.10.2.247\_1
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