

Mobile usage shows gender split

Gender differences are beginning to appear in the content men and women are downloading to their mobile phones.

Games are mainly downloaded by men, while women are leading the current craze for ringtones.

The findings form part of a quarterly survey of mobile usage commissioned by mobile marketing firm Enpocket.

The research also found that 3G video is slowly growing, though services are only being used by a small proportion of UK mobile phone owners. Less than 3% use 3G, up from just 1% a year ago.

Young audience

Mobile gaming is proving more popular, with 1.9 million people (5.8%) downloading a game to their phone in the last three months.

It is predominantly men - 58% - that are keen to play games on their phones, with the majority being under 34.

Young women on the other hand are getting into ringtones. They make just more than half of the 5.9 million people who downloaded a ringtone to their phone in the previous three months.

Most pop hits are available as ringtones, costing between £1.50 and £3.50 per download.

It is estimated that £70 million worth of ringtones were sold in 2003.

They are becoming so popular that accountancy firm KPMG is to release a fortnightly chart on the 20 most popular ringtones.

The fact that people are prepared to spend money and time downloading content to their mobiles is great news for mobile firms.

"Mobile owners are getting to grips with the more advanced features on handsets, beyond SMS," said the chief executive of Enpocket Jonathon Linner.

There are some things for companies offering 3G services to ponder though.

As well as the low number of people using existing services, the survey found that less than 40% of those that own a 3G handset were actually using 3G services.

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