

Twitter board gamers: What do they like?

Jacci Ziebert

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To board game store owner:

As you know, popularity has been skyrocketing over the past decade and I see you are keen on advertising games you sell. I would like to assist you in examining board gamers in the Twitter world to help you gain an understanding of this audience. Through an analysis, I found what games are more popular, how Twitter gamers compare to Reddit gamers, and the preferential game categories and mechanics.

So, to start, I collected tweets over a one week period from April 24-April 30, 2020 using REST API, which is essentially a Twitter data collection app. I wanted to track what games people played and tweeted about playing. Hashtags in my query included #boardgames, #eurogames, #gamenight, and #bggplay, so this query is a bit specific to the gaming crowd. I did not include any Kickstarter hashtags nor any retweets. In addition, I collected statistics on the top 1,000 board games using Board Game Atlas API. In total 1,303 tweets were collected. Of these, I found a matching game title for 759 games with 285 unique game titles. Reasons for not having a match were either: 1) Game titles were not in the 1,000 game list or 2) No board game titles was found in the tweet.

To start, Figure 1 shows the top games mentioned in Twitter. What's surprising is that people still play Monopoly, and even tweet about it. However, the other games mentioned are very popular in the board gaming community, as you know, but surprisingly Catan did not make the top 10. This signifies that Twitter gamers are pretty typical in their behavior; not many niche games are played.

Figure 1. Monopoly is the 3rd most Tweeted game

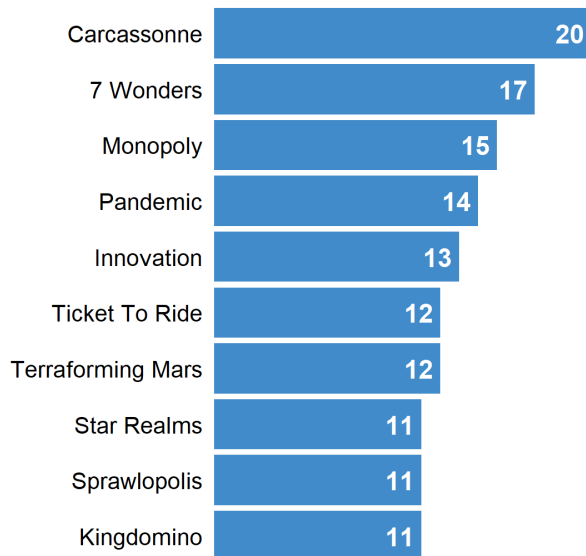


Figure 2. Twitter and Reddit gamers share similar game preferences in game lengths

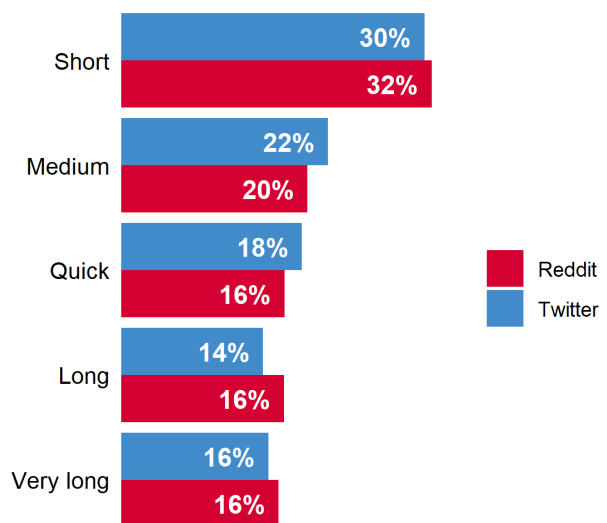
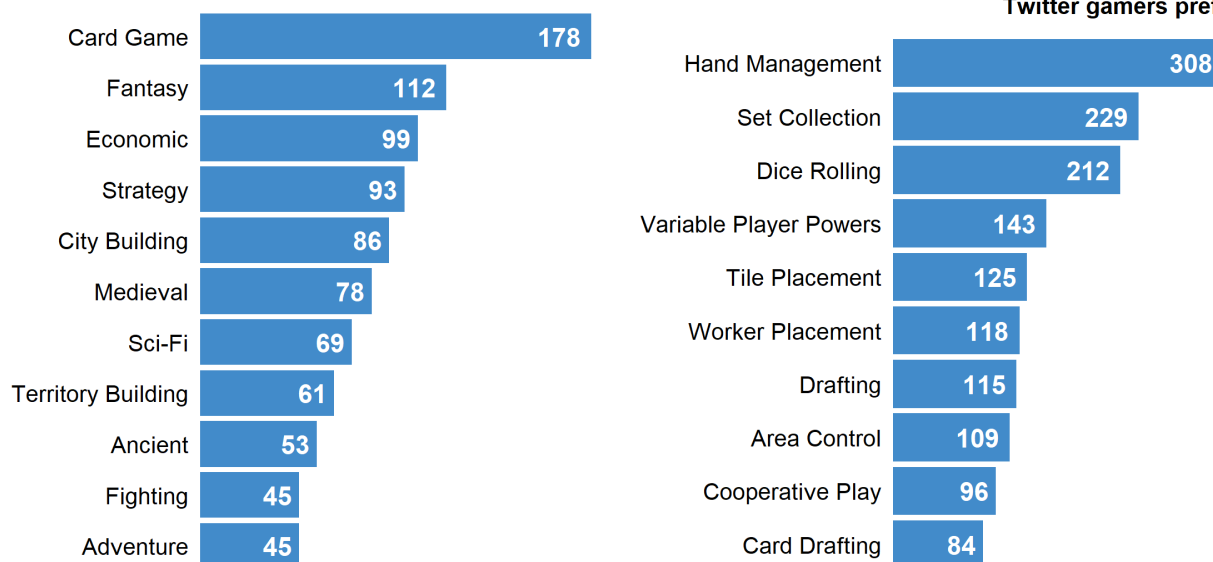


Figure 3. What categories do Twitter gamers prefer? Figure 4. Hand management is the top game mechanic Twitter gamers prefer



We know certain games are more popular than others. But delving deeper, do Twitter gamers prefer to play more or less complex games? I divided each of the 759 games into five categories based on maximum play time ranging from short games (1-30 minutes) to very long games (121 minutes and greater). In general, longer games are typically more complex. I found that the sweet spot for game length is 31 - 60 minutes. However, longer games shouldn't be taken out of the picture for you to promote. Games longer than 90 minutes do represent 1 out of 3 games played.

Furthermore, I compared these distributions to Reddit (r/boardgames) to see if you could use Reddit as a proxy to understand current board game trends. These counts were included in the data I collected in the Board Game Atlas API which collected the total number of times a game has been mentioned since September 2018. I conducted a chi-squared goodness of fit test to compare if the distribution of game lengths for Reddit and Twitter are comparable, as shown in Figure 2. With a p-value of 0.2069, there is evidence to suggest that Twitter and Reddit gamers share similar game length preferences or complexity.

Finally, I looked at common game categories and game mechanics. As shown in Figure 3, games that involve cards or have a fantasy theme are the top two most common categories. Comparatively, Figure 4 shows that hand management and set collection are the top two mechanics; these are mechanics that usually involve cards. This could demonstrate the game market is a bit saturated with these types of mechanics so advertising a game that may fit outside of this realm may make the game pop out more. Same with a game that has a non-Fantasy or non-Sci-Fi theme. Wingspan, for example, really shined with its unique bird theme, despite having cards as a primary game mechanic.

Overall, Twitter gamers do represent common gaming trends as is reflected by the top 10 most played games, except for Catan. Many of these popular games are shorter in game length, about 31-60 minutes, though longer games still make about a sizeable portion. The distribution of game lengths or complexity are comparable to the distribution found in Reddit, so you could use it as a tool for gaming research. Overall, games that use cards as a primary mechanic are quite common, so my suggestion would be to sway away from that and promote a game with slightly more niche mechanics or niche theme. Anyway, good luck with your gaming store endeavors!