

Video games: From zero to marketing hero.

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Treball Final de Grau, 3r trimestre, 2017

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Resum:

No fa masses anys que els videojocs s'han popularitzat fins arribar a les grans masses. La indústria dels videojocs ha superat amb escreixos el volum d'ingressos d'altres sectors de l'entreteniment audiovisual, com la indústria cinematogràfica i la música.

Degut a aquest increment, la indústria ha pogut evolucionar i expandir-se cap a nous públics i noves possibilitats. El món dels videojocs viu una situació de constant innovació. I per tant, també apareixen noves maneres d'incidir als potencials jugadors.

Juntament amb la evolució i progrés dels propis videojocs, es desenvolupen noves tècniques de màrqueting. Aquestes tècniques varien segons la mida de l'empresa, el tipus de videojoc i l'audiència a la qual es volen dirigir. Per aquest motiu es mirarà d'analitzar i descobrir quines són les diferents execucions de màrqueting que es duen a terme avui en dia, i quins són els processos més adequats depenent de les variables anteriorment esmentades.

Abstract:

In recent years video games popularity has noticeably increased and has reached the mass audiences. The videogame industry has surpassed other audiovisual entertainment industries when it comes to revenue volume. For example, the cinematographic and musical industry.

Due to this increase, the video game industry has evolved and expanded to new audiences and new possibilities. The video game sector is in a process of constant innovation. Therefore, new ways to target and appeal the potential players have appeared.

Alongside the evolution and progress of videogames itself, new marketing techniques are developed. These new techniques may vary depending on the size of the company, the type of video game and the targeted audiences. For this reason, I will try to analyze and discover which are the different marketing approaches executed nowadays, and which are the most adequate processes depending on the variables recently mentioned.

Acknowledgment:

First of all I would like to thank my professor and advisor, Óliver Pérez Latorre. He was willing to take my project forward since the very beginning and believed it could be an exceptional topic to research. He has advised me and put me in contact with people within the video game industry, which has undoubtedly helped me to get access to valuable information for my research. I would also like to mention my professor during my stay in Boston College, P.J. McNealy. He is responsible in being my inspiration to pursue a career in the gaming industry. I appreciate the passion that he transmitted in every class and his drive to make all his students to think one step further.

In addition, I want to thank my journey companions during this year. Claudia, Marga, Sergio and Alberto. Their kindness and patience helped me go through to delicate times and move forward towards my personal goals. I would not want to forget Tayson, the unique and caring dog that brings peace and unconditional love to our house.

I want to appreciate all the people from the video game industry that has been willing to help me and selflessly offering me their time. Pedro Rodriguez at 8 Bit Studio, Daniel Akinbola at King and David Castaño at BadLand Games.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family for their huge support during my entire life. My parents Marta and Rafel, and brother Oriol have always trusted in my capabilities and have pushed me to study what I enjoy. They have believed in me and have driven me confidence to successfully complete my education.

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1.Introduction:

The general perception of video games and its players has changed throughout the years. The standardized common understanding profile of what a gamer is used to be young male with a “nerdy” background. This wrong perceived image is far from reality. Nowadays the average player is around 37 years, and can be either a female or a male. The profile of what a gamer is radically different from what most of the people believes. In fact there are multiple kind of gamers and video games out there.

The video game industry has turned into one of the leading sectors within the entertainment industry, drawing a lot attention to investors and general public. Video games themselves have evolved radically in a relatively short period of time (if compared to other kinds of entertainment products that have had a lot of time to mature and develop, i.e. music and movies). The industry is still transforming from a subculture to a mainstream phenomenon. Indeed, the movie industry has evolved a lot since they first appeared. Early films were just experiments about motion capturing and bizarre scenes. It wasn't until the 40`s that films started to have a similar structure and became a medium in their own right.

According to Tim Cross (2011), *“Over the past two decades the video-games business has gone from a cottage industry selling to a few niche customers to a fully grown branch of the entertainment industry”*

Not only video games have evolved rapidly, gaining the right to be considered a medium by its own. The profile of target player is now more diverse than ever. Video games appeal to a wider range of people. People from all ages, sexual identities, and backgrounds. Companies are aggressively expanding their public target, regardless of culture, sex and age. Marketing techniques within videogames are developing accordingly to this increase of customer pools.

Apart from the customer pools expansion. Video games can now be un unfolded and played in multiple platforms. Some of these platforms were not even created when video games first appeared. Currently we can game not only on consoles or computers, inside our houses and in front of a TV or monitor. Video games can be

played in smartphones, tablets, social networks, portable devices, smartwatches, VR headsets, etc. Games have crossed the display frontier and the warmth of our houses; nowadays games can be played even interacting with our real surrounding.

The video game industry has a lot of growing potential and is attracting huge capital investments. It's certainly an enormous impact in many global economies around the world. A great number of small video game developing companies are created every year, growing exponentially in number. In addition, big publishers and companies are expanding their offices internationally and absorbing other companies to keep growing. A good example of this expanding industry is happening Barcelona. I will be focusing my investigation on companies established in Spain, and especially Barcelona. Where we can experience the video game industry growing during the last years.

A growing market also implies a fierce competition for everyone. Therefore it's more difficult to effectively reach the target. Companies have to get creative and exploit new marketing methods to be effective in this hyper mediated and over informed world. In order to draw people's attention, and transform it to a purchase action.

In this project, I will compare 3 radically different companies and their approach on the marketing process. I will be setting objectives, investigate and compare different ways to carry out the marketing phases to sell a product to the user, and draw the lines of what a good marketing approach is.

Although in this fast paced industry everything is constantly evolving. I am willing to be able to abstract some conclusions considering what these 3 different companies have done during recent dates and try to predict how future companies will promote their products in the following years and how the video game industry might be in the near future.

1.1 Objectives:

- To identify trends in the marketing techniques for each targeted audience or video game type.
- To understand which marketing methods are more suitable for each target customer type.
- To compare marketing techniques in different kind of video game companies.
- How does the game marketing change as it is targeted to millions of non-traditional gamers?

2. Theoretical framework:

What is a game?

“A **game** is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome”.

Salen & Zimmerman, pg. 31 *Understanding video games*

Humans are social animals, and in consequence we naturally gravitate to games and entertaining activities. Johan Huizinga suggested that the human species is actually *homo ludens*. We learn and socialize via games; we create bonds with other individuals by playing. Creating and playing games is an essential activity action that the *Homo sapiens* individuals have been doing for generations.

Games used to serve for many different purposes, to compete, educate or entertain. If we consider this game definition as correct, we can conclude that video games are the natural heir of board games evolving into the digital era, interactive digital games. Therefore, even though video games are in a relatively young age, the predecessors (table games) have been among humans since we exist.

The philosopher Ludwig Wittengenstein was not able to find a single definition that could fit all different kind of games. Arguing there was not a single relative characteristic among different kind of games. He could only find slight similarities between them. It is really difficult to arrange an exact definition for what a game is or should be.

2.1 Video game characteristics:

“Video games are the future. From education and business, to art and entertainment, our industry brings together the most innovative and creative minds to create the most engaging, immersive and breathtaking experiences we’ve ever seen. The brilliant developers, designers and creators behind our games have and will continue to push the envelope, driving unprecedented leaps in technology impacting everyday life for years to come.”

—Michael D. Gallagher, president and CEO, Entertainment Software Association

We have short vague description of what a game is. Is it possible to find a definition that defines what is a video game?

According to Peter Zackariasson and Timothy L. Wilson:

[A video game is] “*Specific kind of digital entertainment in which the gamer interacts with a digital interface and is faced with a challenge of various kinds, depending on the plot of the game*”

The Video Game Industry: Formation, Present State, and Future.

Martí Parreño (2010) argues that there are sets of characteristics that define a video game. These set of characteristics that many experts agree on are: Interactivity, entertainment, playability, simulation/virtuality, immersion, and multiplatform. On the following lines I’m going to try to decompose and describe the characteristics of a video game. In order to be able to build up a general idea of what makes a video game, a video game.

Interactivity:

Other types of entertainment don’t require a constant interaction. Video games need human interaction to keep the action and progress moving forward. According to Crawford (Crawford, Interactivity, Plot, Free, Will, Determinism, Quantum Mechanics, and Temporal Irreversibility. Journal of Computer Games Design, vol.8, 1994) there are different types of interactivity depending on the video game. Resulting in different levels of complexity. In the first level there is the simple version. It is a linear plot with a clear beginning and end, for example labyrinth video games, 2D platformers etc. On the other hand, there are multiple plot lines interacting between them

simultaneously, for example GTA V (Rockstar Games). Between these two extremes mentioned, there is an infinite variety of different plot developments that configure the level of complexity of the interaction in every video game.

Entertainment:

There is a huge variety and genres of video games that imply and encourage being competitive against other players; or the challenges that the game itself can offer. This challenging experience often leads to a flowing state. This flowing state is engaging and challenging for the user keeping him/her hooked in. That excitement or pleasing feeling is “entertainment. According to Martí Parreño, video games are the most entertaining activity far superior to other audiovisual entertainment types. The core value of video games is to entertain the players.

Playability:

Playability is the system that inter-relates the player, the system itself, and the video game. A game with a good playability is a game in which any action of the user results in the desired consequence inside the video game or character itself. A good usability depends on the point of view of the player and the level of accuracy of the representation. A video game is considered to have good playability if beating its levels represent a challenging experience, but not impossible to accomplish, to the extent that generates frustration on the player making him/her want to quit.

There are many games that push this frustration tolerance to the limit, for example the Dark Souls franchise, Bloodborne, etc.

Simulation & virtuality:

Simulation is a representation of the reality. In the video game aspect, this refers to a virtual reality (opposite to reality). For example, in a driving video game, if the player has an accident he/she will never experience the consequences.

Immersion:

Psychological process by which the user starts conceiving the simulated reality as the current reality. The subject stops perceiving the natural environment, and focuses the attention to the object, narration, game, etc. that submerges the subject

in an artificial environment. It's a conscious process. The subject is fully aware that the artificial environment is not real.

Even so, the subject is affected by it in a similar way that it would be felt if it were real, specifically if the stimuli are related with feelings. Video games are considered to be the audiovisual entertainment media that has a bigger grade of immersion.

Example: Horror games have an impact to the players.

Multiplatform:

The ability to be consumed in multiple supports (PC, console, TV, smartphone, etc.) Characteristic that makes many authors believe that video games are a genre and not just a medium.

Multiplatform is both advantageous and detrimental when it comes to marketing. Having such a huge variety of platforms and audience can be even a good or a bad fact. Multiplatform allow for great potential marketing possibilities. But it can also be a big problem for smaller companies, making the right decision is crucial when it comes select the platform for the targeted audience.

Video games share similar characteristics that define them across the board. As it has just been briefly exposed. But they can also be classified in numerous different genres. Most common video games can be classified in the following genres: FPS (first person shooters), sports, adventure, fighting, MMO (massive multiplayer online), RP (role-playing), platform, puzzles, racing, retro, simulation, driving, shoot 'em up, strategy and horror.

2.2. Economic impact and current situation of the video game industry:

The video game industry keeps leading the entertainment industry year after year in growth and sales. According to the Newzoo 2016 report, the global video game market generates sales revenue of 91.8 billion during 2015.

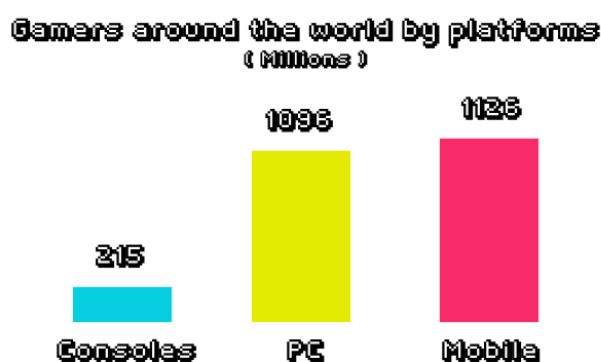
This digit overcomes the film market by about 2.5 times (The film industry generated 38,3 billion dollars of revenue during 2015, according the Motion Picture Association of America.) and about more than 6 times the amount of earnings produced by the music industry (15 billion dollars in accordance with IFPI).

The game revenue growth maintains stable. The global video game industry is predicted to grow around a 6,6% every year. Reaching 118,6 billion dollars of global income by 2019.

The player base is also considerable. The DFC Intelligence affirms that there are 1,5 billion players across the whole world. Even though only a fraction of the total users of that digit, around 300 million people, generates the biggest part of the total revenue in sales.

The majority of players play in PC and mobile platforms. According to DFC Intelligence 75% of people that plays video games do it on a mobile platform, and a 73% play on PC. Only 14% of the total amount of gamers plays on consoles.

According to Newzoo's report, in 2016, the biggest sector within the video game industry will be related to PC, generating around 32 billion dollars. The mobile sector (smartphone + tablet) has the biggest growing potential and will represent a third part of the total revenue in 2019.



Source: DFC Intelligence

We can clearly notice a big difference in the different player base sizes of the different platforms and the revenue they produce. Therefore, the open platforms like PC or mobile attract a bigger audience but have a very small ARPU (Average Revenue Per User).

2.2.1. Global video game industry situation

There are three big markets nowadays Asia, North America and Europe. Asia is by far the market that generates more revenue, around a 47% (46,6 billion dollars) of the total income. China itself is responsible of half of that amount (24,4 billion dollars). The second biggest market is the United States with 23,5 billion dollars.

The following 4 countries that spend more money in video games are located in Europe: Germany, Great Britain, France and Spain.

On the one hand we have volume of sales. But the amount of spending is not the only variable. On the other hand we have how much money does a single person invest each year on video games. Japanese and South Korean users are the most lucrative players for the companies. The average spending per user is around 300\$ per year. The North American audience (USA + Canada) did an average spending of 200\$ per user last year.

On the other side, Chinese users are reported to spend the lowest amount of money per year on video games. If we take into consideration the huge population, the amount of players compensate for the lack of video game related purchases. Demonstrating the huge potential of Chinese market.

The market in the US really polarized in terms of sexual demography, 59% of the players are male and 41% are female.

It is interesting to analyze the United States case as an example of mature market in the video game industry. According to a recent report from ESA (Entertainment Software Association), the US market total spending is distributed in: 70% games, 21% hardware and 9% accessories. The US has a mature digital market, around 56% of the sales are through digital distribution.

Newzoo reports that out of the 185 million players in the United states, 110 million spend money on their hobby (59%). ESA confirms that spending is spread equally in all the age gaps.

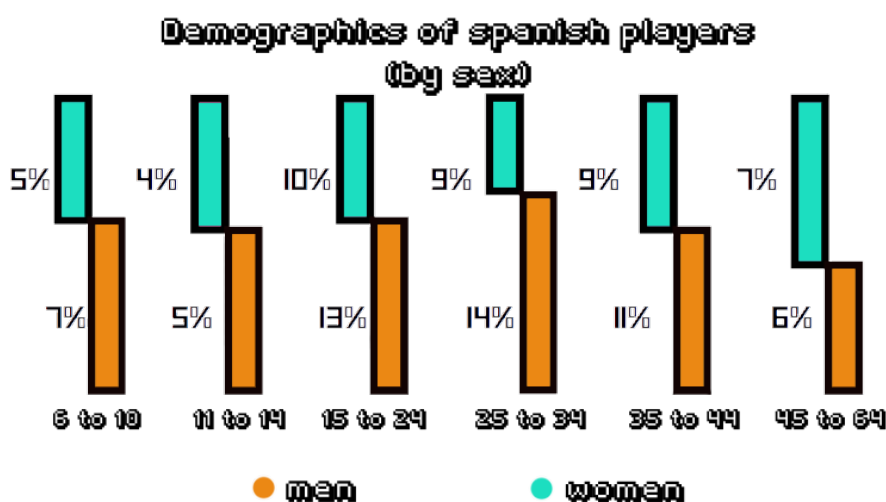
2.2.2. Spanish video game industry situation:

As we have seen before, Spain represents the top 4 country in Europe in terms of video game spending, and the top 8 country in the whole world. In accordance with predictions, the Spanish audience spend 1,81 billion dollars during 2016. A 15% of that total volume was spent in mobile video games.

The Spanish industry billed around 510,7 million euros during 2015. An increase of 24% regarding the previous year.

In contradiction to the common believe, more than half of the total Spanish population (52%) plays video games. That is close to 24 million players. 1 out of 2 Spanish people play video games. That represents a huge growing potential for companies. The big player ratio and the ARPU makes great room and potential to develop a successful industry. Trying to reach the point where Spain becomes not only one of the top video game consumers in the world, but also as one of the content producers.

The demographic situation of the Spanish audience is spread really equal when referring to sex and age



Source: GameTrack (ISFE/Ipsos Connect)

The video game sector is rapidly growing in Spain. In 2016 there were 480 registered video game companies. That represents 80 more companies than the year before, which supposes a 20% increase growth. 95% of these corporations have less than 50 employees.

The “Comunidad de Madrid” and “Catalunya” are the 2 main nests. Holding half of the video game companies of the country. These areas are where I will focus my investigation and where the selected companies are located.

Most of this business (85%) did not even exist 10 years ago. We can deduct that is a really young and fast expanding sector.

But even though we can clearly see a proliferation in video game companies, there still is a divergence between the size of the market and the maturity of the producing network. The value of our industry is not as important as our consumer spending. There is still work to be done to make our video game industry to catch up with the consuming reality.

2.3. Marketing in the video game industry:

Marketing and promotion tend to be confused as the same thing for the general customer. If we accept both terms to be the same concept, we will get a misconception of what marketing really is.

On the one hand and according to the American Marketing Association (AMA), marketing is “an organizational function and set of processes creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders”.

On the other hand AMA defines promotion as “various communication techniques such as advertising, a personal selling, sales promotion, and PR, product publicity available to a marketer that are combined to achieve specific goals”. In other words, promotion techniques are tools for marketers to achieve something else (objectives). At the end of the day, marketing main goal is to create as much revenue and sales as possible.

The objective of video game marketing is, not only the intention to create a need on the consumer, but to generate thrill and excitement. Popularly known as buzz or hype. The media is an important part of the marketing plan. To tease and generate conversation between the members of the community helps to spread the knowledge of your product prior to the release date. Companies usually tease their products one or two years in advance to generate hype (excitement and expectation for a new product). Big publishers have the potential to exploit this phase of the marketing process over the smaller publisher companies and video game studios that don't have as much muscle and media attention to achieve this kind of expectations in their smaller scale games.

Big third party publishers like EA, Activision-Blizzard, Ubisoft, Capcom, Take-Two, etc. invest a lot of money in the marketing, a big percentage of the total budget, to ensure the visibility and awareness of the games. These companies invest in big production video games, therefore facing big financial risks in case of failure. Maximizing and optimizing the exposure is key for the success of the video game. There are big video game events along the year are used to present to the media and players new projects and games in development. E3 and Gamescom would be examples global scale events, and Barcelona Games World in a more local level.

There are also actions in online media to generate the same kind of feeling in the communities, generating interactions among the agents and retro feeding themselves in a way. The video game community tends to go after information.

What we see as customers is just a small fraction of the marketing process of any company.

Before the mouth to ear used to work, but nowadays, with a broader poll of potential customers. Companies need to rely on marketing techniques to generate revenue.

Marketing is implemented in the budget to develop any video games. Bigger corporations tend to have a noticeable percentage of their already bigger budget dedicated to promote and advertise the product.

Marketing has also developed alongside the evolution of video games. A great example of marketing is Nintendo. The Japanese company targeted a broader variety of customer with the Nintendo DS. Like Nintendogs, running away of the usual marketing for video games at the time.

According to Chris Ko, owner of "This Game Company" (2016) On one side, console games marketing cost tends to be from 10 to 20% of the total revenue. The life span of this kind of game is an average of 7 months, but usually take 12 to 60 weeks to market them. On the other side, mobile games tend to have more than a 30% of the total budget dedicated to marketing. Lifespan of this kind of games tended to be around 3 years, for example Angry Birds from Rovio. But now a days it has shortened to around 14 to 18 months at its best. Candy Crash Saga from King is one of the exceptions. Whic

Console games need to sell at least 2 million copies to be rentable. In a 60\$ game, 15\$ are used to Marketing.

<u>"Average Game"</u>	<u>ASP \$</u>	<u>% of ASP</u>
Revenue	\$60.00	100%
Returns/Allowance	2.40	4%
Retailer Margin	12.00	20%
Distribution	0.60	1%
Royalty	7.00	12%
R&D	18.00	30%
Marketing	15.00	25%
G&A	2.40	4%
Developer	\$2.60	4%

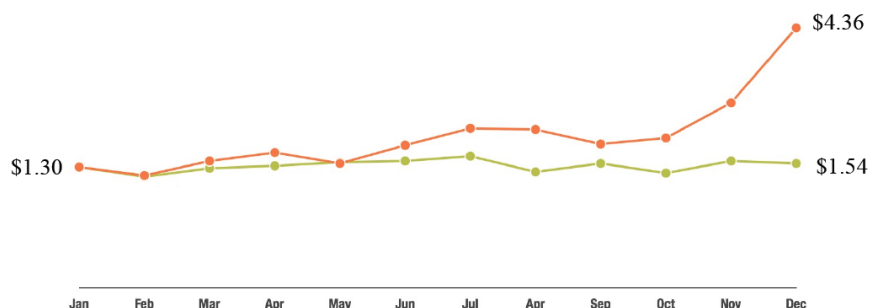
Notes from Chris Ko (CEO of This Game Company) 2016

Mobile games development are cheaper to develop and faster to market. The exposure of this kind of games depends a lot on the distribution platform. The goal is to be featured by Apple or Google. Discoverability is hard, the cost per install (CPI) is much higher than the average revenue per user (ARPU). It went to almost equal to about three times as we can see in the following graphic. The CPI will continue to grow, but ARPU is increasingly difficult.

80% of all the games don't reach meaningful revenue levels. Therefore the profitability level is decreasing.

It's all about the funnel system. It's important to get as many users as possible, therefore install numbers. Then you have to retain those users and try to monetize them. At last, there is a need to maintain those paying users by offering a good customer service, events and new content to keep the game alive.

Top 1 mobile video game has a 12% of the market share. The games outside of the Top 10 combined have less of the 1% of the total market share. A few games have the biggest part of the market share. According to Chris Ko's predictions, only the Top 3 companies in each segment will survive. He affirms that smaller indies will need a new distribution platform to survive or team up with larger publishers. Developers out of the top 50 will not survive without help. Competition is increasing, reaching the consumers and audiences is getting harder and top titles are increasingly getting more and more share of the market as times goes by.

F2P Mobile – CPI vs. ARPU

Source: Superdata 2016

Even though we are talking about a software product, physical appearance it's still relevant for consumers. The retail distribution of shelves is still an important issue to take into consideration.

Digital distribution is also rapidly transforming the video game industry. It became stronger when the technical capabilities were widely available. For example: the internet connectivity, bigger memory, better hardware, etc.

According to Paul John McNealy (2016) there are multiple factors that can help a video game be more successful. He affirms that there are multiple advantages in going cross platform. Advertising once allows you to multiple target audiences. This is now a reality in the multiple games sectors out there, because most games are now developed in two or more platforms. Take the aggregated potential buyers and cross market with a new title. The next game coming from the same company will be much easier to market. There is the opportunity to refer to previous success and recall brand recognition. The biggest cost variable is marketing, customer costs acquisition is very high.

Video games are a creative product, but the marketing to promote them is rather following an uncreative pattern. Marketing is the main mechanism for publishers to exploit a product and get as much ROI as they can possibly can. Getting as much revenue as possible allows the publishers (or developers itself in case they don't

work with a publisher) to re-invest money to develop the next video game. Marketing is the circle that helps to close the circle of production.

There are so many different games to compete against, that video game companies have a hard time to stand out from the rest in overpopulated platforms as Google Play, Steam or Apple Store. It is hard to gain visibility and sales because of the fierce competition. It is close to impossible to stand out without an important investment in marketing and PR.

According to Newzoo's investigation, the top 25 companies were responsible of generating 61,6 billion dollars in 2015. Which means that they hold two thirds (67%) of the global market. One of this big companies is Activision Blizzard, that last year bought the world wide famous developer King for 5,9 billion dollars.

2.3.1 Business models:

There are different major business models that publishers/developers can follow to sell their product. The business model will define the method by which the income will be received. It will also determine some marketing methods to align with the selected business model.

Packaged Game Software Sales:

From the cartridges used in many Nintendo devices to the CD format used in the Play Station 1 and the original Xbox. The game is packaged in a physical product, with no downloadable content and no extra content apart from the original game. What you get is what you see. It usually means a certain amount of gaming time through a story line. It has been the most used model by gaming companies for years due to its simplicity and effectivity.

Nowadays companies that use this method normally combine it with micro transactions to maximize the potential to gain revenue as much as possible. In addition, some players may end spending more money in a single game after the initial purchase.

The logic behind this business model is very straightforward and simple. The user pays the fee upfront and has right to use that copy for ever.

Physical shops gravitate around the essence of this model. Furthermore, it's what makes a software product as a video game feel like something tangible and measurable when retailed as an actual touchable product. Digital distribution is catching up the physical distribution, and with digital distribution other business models surface to the marketing field.

According to a research by ESA, the physical copies have decreased considerably in favor of digital distribution in the recent years. Therefore the trend will be more noticeable in the following years.

DLC:

Downloadable content, or more commonly named DLC's are additions to the packaged game exposed before. This business model has been more frequently used during the last years. DLC's are downloadable expansions for future content

after the game launch. These expansions usually have to be paid. DLC's are really popular for big productions (AAA). This business model has been vastly criticized by the community, arguing that it splits the player base and that the user is getting a fraction of the game at launch instead of the full experience. The positive side of this business model is extending the short life of videogames, from a few months to maybe years. Keeping the player base active and a constant stream of content makes the game live longer.

Recently more companies are starting to offer a free DLC model. Every new content is free for every user as long as you have the original game. Therefore, every player can get the same base experience as anyone else. Instead of earning money for DLC's, some publishers have introduced cosmetic items, for example skins for your character or gear. In order to still have a post launch source of revenue without damaging the community. A good example of this updated DLC model is Titanfall 2 published by EA.

Subscription:

This business model is suited for a certain kind of games, for example an MMORPG, which requires a big budget to develop the game, maintain servers, future development of new content and other services.

The life cycle expected is longer than the average game; therefore, there is a need for a stream of constant revenue to keep the machine working. In order to deliver new expansions or end-game content for the players.

The subscription method is advantageous to generate profit instead of having to face a license payment fee in advance. It's normally based on monthly payments.

Subscription games are normally video games that require constance and a lot of practice, therefore the subscription model is more suited to target players that consistently invest more time in a video game.

A great example of this is World Of Warcraft.

Free to Play:

Free to Play is a business model for games have no cost to acquire. Therefore, making the game accessible for more people as long as they have a device to

support it. In addition, games that are having social network aspects help spread the player pool taking advantage of the social behavior of casual gamers. This kind of user is less willing to pay an upfront fee or a subscription for the game. Free to play games are often really easy to master and have a low level of complexity.

On the other hand it has been proved that players are more willing to pay for in game assets as power boosts, better gear or cosmetic items to enhance the player experience, than to pay for the actual game itself. There are also in game transactions for time reductions on casual games or virtual goods.

The main source of revenue for free to play video games are the in game transactions. A small percentage of people spend real money on free to play games, but the ones that do are responsible of the biggest part of the revenue. Income can also come from in game advertising. The people that do spend a lot of money on video games are called **whales**.

According to PJ McNealy (2016), the success of this model totally depends on the Funnel model.

Acquire customers who download the game, get as many installs as possible. Convert a fraction of them to paying users. Maintain the daily revenue and extend it along the time by feeding content within the videogame.

For example: casual games in mobile platforms or games in PC.

Freemium:

The freemium model is widely used in software and apps. The developer offers either a free trial for a limited time or a very limited service of the full product. Then the user decides if they want to pay the price for the full product, like a demo. The free version of mobile apps are often loaded with pop up ads. In the gaming industry distributors often apply the limited time trial of the full product, for example ADOBE with their image editing software 30 days trial.

According to Erik Kain, freemium games have paying gate to unveil the full experience. In many games there is the free version that let you go through major part of the story line, but won't let you access to the full game features that the paying version has to offer. This barrier is often less than 5\$, to make it easier for the user to decide.

A good example of this model is World of Warcraft, giving free services until the character reaches level 20 (maximum is level 90.)

This business model is very useful to attract an inflow of new users to the product, but the benefits on getting final users after the free app or software is still in doubt.

2.4. Video game classification:

There are different video games types depending on the audience they are targeted to. To clarify, the type of video game does not refer to the genre. Genres have been mentioned and explained in this theoretical framework.

Video games could be classified in these three major groups: **Casual games**, **Indie games**, and **AAA games** (big productions). This classification is just an orientated definition of the different games regarding their characteristics, and the kind of user that plays these kind of games. Therefore, there can be games and developing companies that might be have characteristics of more than one type of video game at a type. It is really difficult to set a hard limit. There is no intention to label any individual or game by its traits, these are general definitions. Each of them should be studied individually to do so.

2.4.1 Indie Games:

Indie games are on the rise thanks to the popularization of video games to broader audiences. They are starting to dominate the mainstream game platforms. A good example of this is the nintendo eShop. Big companies start to offer indie games developer popular platforms to develop.

Not every video game is targeted to the mass consumer. But at least now the average consumer has far more access to an indie game, thanks to big platforms. The film industry has an infinite variety of author creations and constant experimental productions, apart of the worldwide popular blockbusters. The video game industry is experiencing a similar case. Indie games have in common this experimental spirit, artistic distinction and original essence.

Indie games are based on creativity and experimentation. There are no limits to imagination. They cost a fraction of the development cost in bigger productions, they are not as visible to the general consumer because they can't afford to spend as much money on marketing and promotion.

Steam is an online platform created by VALVE in 2003, which is considered to be the agent of change in the indie industry. It offers a great selling channel for developers to distribute their creations, and bring customers and developers closer. Steam isn't

just a distribution platform, it has also created a huge community of people that maintain the Steam machine moving.

Indie developers follow the “Do It Yourself” philosophy. Where self-production, self-promotion and self-distribution is the norm for most of the companies doing indie video-games, regardless of the platform the game is targeted to.

Indie games have advantages and downsides. They have the possibility to embrace storytelling in a way that has not been approached before. They are able to develop freely, and adopt infinite creative paths at their own risk of success or failure. Indie companies develop video games under their own criteria. They make what they want and commonly have to answer nobody, being the last responsible of their output.

They are usually independent to big publishers that might demand some kind of results or can restrict some aspects of the development in favor of a more conservative and secure video game model. They take risks both in design choices and business models.

Some indie developers reach agreements with publishers to promote and retail the video games. The developers need to establish a business relationship since the beginning to set the terms between the different parties.

In the mobile sector, we can find Appstore and Google play store. Around 500 games a day are published in this digital distribution platforms, making it cheaper, reliable, and direct to the consumers hands.

2.4.2 AAA games:

Big publishers are huge corporate companies that produce big budget video games called as AAA. The AAA video games are the big productions of the video game industry. The name of triple AAA comes from the grading method used in Anglo-Saxon countries. Where an A is considered the top grade (a 90% or above). Triple A is a concept that refers as getting a 90% or above in different aspects of a game. For example, graphics, soundtrack and playability. AAA does not stand to an specific acronym.

These kind of video game have multiple-million dollars on the total budget for marketing. The main goal is to sell as many copies possible. In addition, the success of a game is measured in the total amount of copies sold. Publishers and investors expect a big return of investment out of this big productions. Therefore publishers tend to have less risky game designs and strategies for AAA games. Furthermore, these kind of games are usually developed on the platforms that have a greater amount of players, for example PS4, XBOX and PC. In order to make as much profit as possible.

Big platforms can also pay for the exclusivity of the game for their platform, in which case the console company will try to gather players that might be interested in that specific game. Which will force them to buy their hardware to be able to play it. AAA games are developed by huge development teams, some of them even more than one hundred people. Sometimes even more than a studio work in a single game working in full production. They are targeted to mass audiences, from hardcore gamers to sometimes casual gamers. It's suited for the average video game consumer.

Well known examples of a AAA game are: Call of Duty franchise, Overwatch, Destiny, GTA, FIFA games, etc.

A good comparison would be to put side by side a AAA game with a "blockbuster" of the film industry. Big budget productions that cast popular actors, backed up by a big studio or producer with a huge investment to promote it.

2.4.3 Casual Games:

Casual games have basic rules and require a low skill level to master the playing system. There is no complex system within the game. They are mainly targeted to casual gamers. Casual games are designed to satisfy the player in a short time and offer a brief gaming session, for example on the public transportation time. Casual games don't require much skill, and have mostly basic commands, for example a cursor or your finger. It offers a short playing experience and a really shallow learning curve. They require smaller teams to develop and usually take less time as well.

Casual games are familiar to the user. The most common genre within the casual games are puzzle and card games.

These games are designed to encourage impulse purchases within the app. In fact, there are several different business models suitable to this kind of game that encourage micro transactions from the user. The business models can be free to play, freemium, etc.; discussed previously on the theoretic framework. On the recent years, casual games are tightly related to mobile devices and social networks. The majority of people have one of this devices capable of running a video game. Therefore, each phone or pc owner is a potential user for casual video games.

Digital distribution has impulse and skyrocketed the popularity of casual video games. They are easy to acquire, easy to play and offer instant satisfaction for the casual gamer in a short period of time.

A good example of casual games is *Tetris*, *Candy Crush* and *Solitaire*.

2.5. Gamer profiles:

From the marketing point of view the whole market is segmented into two major groups. It has been detected that it's not effective to segregate the target in demographic parameters. It is more useful to classify gamers with their gaming habits. According to José Maria Parreño in the book *Marketing and Video Games*, there is an academic and industry market quorum on classifying gamers in two major groups. I consider this polarized classification to be inadequate. It defines every player as one thing or another.

There are multiple different kind of player types. Any user can have (or not) traits of one or more gamer profiles. We are going not going to refer to them only as: **Casual gamer** and **Hardcore gamer**. Nowadays the frontier between hardcore and casual gamers is getting more and more blurred. This opposite definitions creates a huge middle ground between these two concepts, the frontier between the two concepts is getting blurred. A gray area that contains a huge range of diverse users, including people that does not consider themselves a neither a casual or a hardcore gamer. We will refer this intermediate profile as **Midcore Gamer**.

Following this categorization, I'm going to define each gamer following this order: Hardcore, Midcore & Casual. Going from more to less intense gamers. To simplify the idea and make it easier to understand, they will be compared to different sport user profiles. All of them have different consumer habits and buying behaviors. After interviewing all the 3 companies, they didn't exact information of the demographics of each group, even about their own player base.

2.5.1 Hardcore gamers:

Players that dedicate a significant part of their time to play video games. They play games that require a bigger amount of time to master and to complete. The hardcore gamer enjoy complex video games with steep skill learning curves that require huge implication and time. This profile takes part or are profoundly interested in video game competitions (e-Sports), events and conventions. In addition, the hardcore gamer is really interested in the news and media related to gaming and is the perfect target for pull strategies carried out by the publishers or developers. They are

passionate about anything related to video games, merchandise, Easter eggs, fan made content, etc.

Video games are not just a hobby, it becomes the core of their lifestyle. Hardcore gamers are considered a subculture with their own identity. The subculture is reluctant to give out part of their identity to the mainstream audiences. This exclusive world of pertinence. According to the DFC Intelligence, hardcore gamers represent from 10 to 20% of the total gaming market. Hardcore gamers tend to gravitate around PC as the main platform to play video games. Furthermore, they tend to have long gaming sessions almost every day. This type of gamer usually spends considerable amounts of money on video games and related items. Either on hardware, micro transactions, cosmetic items, expansions, etc. Many of the merchandise and marketing strategies are targeted to the more hardcore gamers. Collectible editions, figurines, etc. They are inclined and willing to spend considerable amounts of money in their passion. Hardcore gamers are a big source of revenue for video game companies.

The equivalent to this profile would be that subject that loves sports. A person that watches consumes every content related to sports; analyses the plays; does sport several hours a week and watches matches, videos or other people playing. Sports is their lifestyle. They feel passionate about it and surround themselves with stuff related to it.

2.5.2 Midcore gamers:

This kind of player is the person in between a hardcore and a casual gamer. On the one hand, the midcore gamer would be considered a casual gamer by other hardcore gamers. On the other hand, a casual gamer would consider the midcore gamer to be much more into games than they are, so it would be seen as a hardcore gamer.

Many midcore gamers don't consider themselves to be neither casual or hardcore gamer. This kind of user plays and enjoys video games as a hobby. In addition, they are interested in some of the news of the specialized media and can occasionally be part of communities of players that perceive and enjoy games like they do. This kind of player usually plays on console as the main platform. They might occasionally be interested in the competitive side of e-sports but usually just as a viewer. A midcore

gamer tend to play a big variety of different games, from all genres. Depending on the personal taste of each individual. From casual games, to more hardcore oriented games. Video games are just one of their multiple hobbies to enjoy on the spare time. The midcore gamer usually has several moderate gaming sessions along the week. Their consuming habits are not as high as hardcore gamers'. They but are inclined to regularly spend some money on gaming.

The midcore gamer could be compared to a person that regularly enjoys sports. This person has a sports routine and regularly goes to do some sport. In addition, they would usually watch matches with friends and enjoy watching other people play. They have a noticeable knowledge on the topic and tend to follow the media when they are interested in any of the news. This profile is not, and does not intend to be an elite athlete. He or she just does it for fun and personal interest.

2.5.3 Casual gamers:

Players that invest a short time on playing video games. According to IGDA the casual gamer is between 35 and 65 years old. Women play around 9,1h a week and men up to 6.1h each week. Gaming sessions tend to be a few minutes long. This kind of gamer is interested in the social aspect of video games, and usually share results or tokens through social media. The most played games for casual gamers are Puzzles, card games, etc. An average casual gamer only plays when the subject does not know what to do, for example on the public transportation. He or she is not really informed on the video game industry and has a low knowledge. A casual gamer tends to have short gaming sessions. In addition, this kind of user won't be playing every day and can even take long periods of time without playing a video game.

The most frequent platform used to play by casual gamers are mobile devices. The casual gamer doesn't usually spend money on video games, and when they do are small transactions.

As we did on the previous gamer profiles, the casual gamer could be compared to someone that plays sports once in a while. Doesn't watch sports on TV frequently or in a daily basis, maybe an important match from time to time. The individual has superficial knowledge of the sports, mostly basic rules or players and tend to follow popular sports. He or she just does sport once in a while. The subject does not

identify him/herself as a sports person, but he/she enjoys sport casually. According to the Casual Games Association, 3 out of every 4 casual players are female. Casual gamers do not regard themselves as gamers or video game fans.

The market holds a creative potential even greater than TV and movies. The industry is experiencing a metamorphosis in their audiences and video games itself. And so have to change the marketing and communication strategies to adapt to this new context and evolving audiences. The video game industry has reached a point where it has to adapt to a more mainstream market. It's reaching an industry transformation point. Preventing the fracture of the community in to complete different profiles.

The expansion is already made, but the industry has to evolve to be much more socially accepted with no prejudices. Video games have to adapt to the new changing situation, and so does the marketing.

3. Methodology:

The methodology carried out for reaching the conclusions are:

- Analyzing the related bibliography and previous academic projects on the matter.
- Selecting different case studies to compare the diverse marketing techniques in the different approaches promotion and marketing within the video game industry. All of the selected companies are currently settled in Spain and two of them in Barcelona.
- I will compare different business models approaches to same activity, which to promote and to market a video game. I will interview marketing employees of each company.
- Qualitative analysis of the information gathered.

3.1 King:

King is currently present worldwide. They are located in many big cities in the globe. Barcelona being one of them, more precisely, the second biggest King's settlement after Stockholm in Sweden.

They are responsible of one of the biggest hits in the mobile gaming industry during the first years, with Candy Crush Saga. They were one of the companies that lead the way of the huge expansion that the video games in the mobile platform environment experienced in recent years.

This company was founded in 2003. Their games were originally only available through their own site or portals like AOL or Yahoo. Their first game was launched Facebook the year 2011 and one year after they released their first production on a mobile platform. Their biggest game that still is profitable nowadays is Candy Crush Saga. It was launched in November of 2012 and is still one of the most popular games of the casual field of gaming.

During 2016 King was acquired by one of the biggest video game publishers in the industry, Activision Blizzard. Which is the second largest video game publisher after Electronic Arts. Activision is a leading global producer and publisher of interactive entertainment, including franchises such as Call of Duty, Destiny and Skylanders. Activision has produced four of the top 10 titles on next gen consoles, the #1 console franchise in North America for seven years in a row, and the biggest new video game franchise launch in history.

Blizzard Entertainment is a premier developer and publisher of entertainment software renowned for creating some of the industry's most critically acclaimed games such as *Heroes of the Storm*, *Diablo*, and *StarCraft*. Blizzard Entertainment's track record includes nineteen #1 games and multiple Game of the Year awards. There are King studios in Stockholm, London, Barcelona, Bucharest, Malmo, Berlin and Seattle. And also offices in San Francisco, Malta, Tokyo, Seoul and Shanghai. King employs over 2000 people internationally.

3.2 BadLand Games:

The Spanish publisher BadLand Games is one of the most important video game companies in Spain. They support smaller studios and their ideas to bring indie games to the more mainstream audiences. They want to be a reference point for developers and indie studios. BadLand Games function is to be an intermediate between small studios and the final user, and also produce their own games. Interceding in the manufacturing and distribution part of the process. Nowadays it's easier for a studio to develop and digitally distribute their games, but some developers find it easier to rely on an external producer.

BadLand Games was born in the year 2011 under the wing of Luis Quintans and David Santos. Their main goal was to cover the niche market that big distributors weren't paying attention to. Potential titles that weren't considered profitable or with a low predicted return of investment.

They started to gain the trust from clients, editors, audience and press. And after a short while they were in the top 10 Spanish video game companies. Growing from that point to what they are today.

BadLand Games work with an immense variety of genres and games. They believe that diversity is key to keep on progressing and to reach many target audiences. This distributor has gained the trust in them by their own right.

According to them, BadLand games does the job that bigger producers don't want to do. In addition, they want to create a firm video game spanish industry in Spain. One of their final objectives is to bring back talent and reinforce the national product. They produce either for PC, PS4, Xbox and Nintendo.

3.3. 8 Bit Studio:

The creators of Skara is 8 Bit Studio, a small developer settled in Barcelona. The 8 Bit Studio team is formed by a group of 12 people in total. The game is totally independent and has been financially supported by themselves, family and friends, and a crowdfunding Kickstarter campaign in 2014. The game they created is Skara and is in an Alpha phase in current dates. It's available through Steam Early Access.

The game is targeted to a broad audience, from mid to hardcore. I had an interview with Pablo Rodriguez, CEO of the company and author of the original idea behind Skara. Alongside his friend César Ortega they decided to bring the idea to life.

He mentioned that the only way to financially support a project from scratch is generating interest on the product and showcasing a solid idea with potential. Crowdfunding was also an important part, Pablo argues that Kickstarter has evolved when it comes to fund a game and now it requires to have a project that has more work in it than just an idea.

Skara is a Free to Play fighting video game. There is a noticeable grade of personalization and has a surprisingly treated graphic level, sound and playability. It is a Multiplayer Online Versus and has been hardly influenced by games like Dark Souls.

According to Pablo, any person that has ever played a third person action game like Zelda or the Witcher will find a familiar playability in Skara.

They were to a free to play model in order to be able to obtain the biggest player base possible. Users can still spend money on cosmetic items, but it will not affect the gameplay in any way. The cosmetic items is a similar model used by games like Overwatch.

The selection of the business model depends on the developer objectives and the way they want to reach the audience.

They have not spent money on marketing for the moment. But they are looking forward to get close to the industry of around a 30% of the total budget in the future.

Pablo and César decided to go with unconventional marketing strategies. Keeping in mind that financial support is not infinite, they decided to go through alternative ways to reach the audience and the media.

The potential of the game is the huge expandability and potential content that can be added, for example single player game, card game, books... The lore of the game is also a big part in the depth of their project. 8 Bit Studio main goal is to develop and push the same world as far as they can.

Pablo Rodríguez has been interviewed by multiple specialized video game sites as IGN, devuego, monsterjuegos and many others.

4. Results:

The results of the different interviews carried on during this period of time and the different answers given by the different parts are the following. There are key takeaways that are going to be later compared, keeping in mind the difference between all the factors involved.

4.1 King: Person interviewed: Daniel Akinbola – Content Marketing Executive

King games are mostly casual games, but are pivoting to more midcore experiences with new upcoming videogames in the future. These games are executed in mobile platforms as smartphones or tablets, or internet browser and social media pages. The main business model for their products is free to play video games based on micro transactions.

These games are targeted to an immense and diverse group of people. The main audience of King games are female users. According to Daniel, they have segmentations for different kind of players depending on the age, sex, paying behavior and purchase behavior. Which help them internally classify their users in different categories. There is no average King gamer, many different people play King games in many different stages of their live. The active player base is enormous. Over 300 million active players.

King has the financial possibilities to invest in marketing for their games. They heavily relay on aftermarket studies and measuring each change and implementation to make it the most efficient and successful possible. Everything is double tested before it's released. Their goal is to keep being number one in the mobile market. King has an experienced and talented team of more than 2000 people spread worldwide.

They mainly produce push strategies. In other words, they output the content to the user. But also create content for the current users to keep them informed of new events. The main goal of their marketing strategies is to make visible the game mechanics and make current or potential users familiar with them and the brand. Pushing the content to the outside world through social networks, advertising and even a new TV Show for Candy Crush (launching summer 2017). Which represents

half an hour of advertising each week. They also do innovative stuff but many times on the more technical level.

Their strength is the huge active community and power in the mobile video game industry, King has a strong community and relays in the interrelation between users to keep it ongoing. Furthermore, their focus on customers is noticeable. King has their own platform for their community, which is King Care.

King is willing to create new gaming experiences and try to expand to new audiences, and also extend and expand current successful brands and IP's.

4.2 BadLand Games:

Person interviewed: David Castaño – Marketing Director

BadLand Games works in different parts of the process of the production of a video game. They distribute 3d party games only in Spain and also develop games for international and national markets.

When it comes to developing games, a team decides if it's worth it or not to develop it. They strive for a quality standard and an attractive hook that can make that game successful and interesting to make.

Their function is to make easier for indie developers to reach the consumer by externalizing marketing and distribution processes. Which they might not be prepared or as used to successfully execute.

BadLand Games has already a great network and business skills and are a trusted brand for media channels, retailers, etc.

They have a huge variety of games and genres under their brand. It's really hard even for them to classify and patronize their products. Diversity is what makes them so unique. BadLand Games helps each game differently, it depends on each case every time.

Their main business model is premium games. They sell the game as a whole. A complete experience. The prices vary depending on the game type. From 20€ for mid-price games, or higher. BadLand Games want to preserve the physical product as a main pillar. They believe the physical copy it's more authentic and it's what the more hardcore oriented audiences really want. They know the industry is

transitioning to the digital distribution, but they want to keep working with the traditional distribution model while waiting for the change to happen.

The main audiences this company targets is hardcore. Players that are willing to spend more money in a complete experience rather than micro transactions.

The target of their marketing strategies are people from 20+ years old to 40+ years old, either male or female, with a considerable acquisition power.

BadLand Games doesn't spend too much money of their budgets on marketing. In addition to the fact that they are targeted to more hardcore gamers. Therefore, unconventional (or pull) strategies fits their needs better, even though their limited resources for this field, as confirmed by David Castaño.

They rely on the expert gamer to chase down their content and be interested in what they produce. There is a good relation with most specialized media and sometimes do conventional display campaign for some of their games.

David Castaño, the marketing director, is trying to make BadLand Games marketing gravitate towards more unconventional and organic marketing in media channels, as social media, Google Adwords and YouTube.

There is not a super active community currently, but they are heavily working to stablish a useful and important community. BadLand games is currently using social networks, phone and email as their main customer service resources.

4.3 8 Bit Studio:

Person interviewed: Pablo Rodríguez – Chief Executive Officer

8 Bit Studio's first game is the currently unreleased Skara. It is still in Alpha stages of the development process. The game is currently available in Steam as an Alpha.

After launch, they are planning to launch their game also in PS4 and Xbox one.

According to Pedro Rodríguez, CEO of the studio, Skara is an arena fighter or a team based melee combat game. He defines the game as a "Soul's like" game. Similar to a Dark Souls, Nioh, or any third person action game as the Witcher.

The business model behind Skara is free to play with micro transactions. Therefore, they get revenue from items that can be purchased. These items don't affect gameplay. Like the skins in *Overwatch*. By choosing free to play they are looking forward to gain as many players as they can.

Skara will only be available by digital distribution. Which means there are no costs involved with physical copies and the actual distribution.

Their target of gamer is from mid to hardcore. Skara is striving to appeal any gamer that is familiar with sword fighting game mechanics.

8 Bit Studio wants to take that kind of experience to an arena based game. With a touch of RPG and competitive gameplay. They want Skara to suit different kind of playing behaviors. From people that spends many hours to players that just do the daily quests.

There are currently 200.000 active accounts, and they have reached 500 simultaneous players. Great numbers keeping in mind that the game is not officially released yet.

At the time we had the interview, they didn't spend almost any money in marketing. Their approach to marketing is to strive innovative and cool ways to attract new players. For example influencer marketing: making an event where youtuber and a Twitch streamer fight to win. Each of them ask people to join their team, and every user that levels up fighting grants a point to their team.

This event created some publicity and engagement through the community.

Skara is not trying to promote via conventional media channels. They are targeting hardcore users that are way more inclined to search for the information they are interested in. They want to create an engaging "call to action" instead of investing money on marketing to gain players.

8 Bit Studio has a strong commitment with the community, they organize weekly matches with the players, listen to them, and have constant interaction to develop the relationship and also improve the video game experience. Their goal is to obtain valuable consumer insights and opinions to keep making Skara better.

Steam is used as a community meeting point, and also a discord channel started by the community itself.

5. Conclusions:

There are many facts that have to be taken into consideration. The companies involved in the video game industry are numerous. Also, the amount of video games launched every year is unimaginable. In addition, each and every player is completely different and unique and is just one small part of the huge amount of active gamers nowadays. At this point I can confirm that there is no right or wrong way to market a video game. It depends on facts that are completely different in every single case. Budget, kind of video game, targeted audience, objectives, genre, etc. and many others. Therefore there are numerous different facts that are part of the equation and there is no secret formula for success.

Every interviewed company is very different to one another, and have completely different visions on what the gaming industry is and will be. They are as different as game types, business models, distribution methods, marketing budgets, target audiences, marketing strategies, etc.

Going cross platform maximizes the marketing investments. The company advertises once and can get users from every platform. Most of the games are set to go cross platform. Like Skara and many other BadLand Games products mentioned before.

According to the key takeaways, there is a direct correlation between the size and importance of the content and the kind of marketing strategies implemented.

On the one hand, bigger companies like King have the economic power to invest in more conventional push strategies. The more economic potential, the easier it is to display the content in more conventional media channels. With a good team and the right market studies the efficiency and effectiveness of every dollar invested is maximized.

On the other hand, indie companies or smaller companies have to find the way around the smaller budgets for marketing. Therefore, there is a need for more innovative ways to market and engage the current and potential new players. The lack of resources encourages new creative and innovative ways to promote and the games for the target audiences.

In the cases studied we can clearly see the progression from conventional to unconventional. There is a correlation between push and pull strategies, and the size of the company. On the one side, hardcore games are more niche and require more

precise targeting of the marketing strategies. It requires the user to have a knowledge of the industry and it's usually only appealing to a certain group of consumers. On the other side, more casual oriented games require way less targeting. There are completely different kind of individuals playing the same game, therefore the marketing is required to be more general and suitable for the biggest number of people possible.

Digital distribution involves less financial risk and makes it easier to access for broader ranges of consumers. There are no stock related costs. In the cases studied, digital games are free to play. Which means, the source of income doesn't come from the game acquisition or install. They rely on the in game purchases, either cosmetic (Skara) or impactful in the game play (King games). The business models heavily depends on the constant stream of in game purchases.

Instead, BadLand Games depend on game sales to make profit. They have to plan in advance and produce as many game copies as the market can absorb. Their profit mostly comes from the amount of copies they can sell in the retailing shops.

The relation with the user and the community is capital for the evolution and longevity of a video game. A rich and involved player base keep games alive for a long time. Customers deeply value when they feel their feedback is taken into consideration and they are valued by the company. Companies do need to have in mind not only new players, but current players that keep the game alive. It's not only about getting new players. Taking care of the already existing community is key for the success of the future of any company.

A successful game not only depends on quality of the game itself, but also the marketing to sell it. There are great games that have failed due to the lack of a good marketing strategy to back it. But there are also games that have succeeded due only to the marketing part of the process. Innovation is a valuable asset. Developers, studios, publishers, etc. need to understand that marketing should be built in when developing a video game. Having a well-oiled machine since the very beginning makes the overall process a lot simpler and effective. Coordination and interrelation between departments would ideally strengthen the end result. Video games need good marketing to succeed and marketing needs a base video game to build content on top. Regarding of the game, platform or genre.

5.1 Predictions:

After all the research, analysis and interpretation of the information gathered. Taking into consideration other audiovisual entertainment industries trends and analysts' predictions, I am able to draw some personal predictions for the future regarding the video game industry.

Video games should brake the subcultural perception barrier to reach its full potential, and in consequence marketing. Marketing has to be the first tool to start this transformation, and eventually retro-feed on the benefits of it. Reaching a full potential on the video game industry would allow for new marketing executions and methods to attract new audiences that are not currently even conceived and explore unimaginable possibilities. Hardcore gamers, and also developers, have to open their mind to a broader audience to also benefit from it. It will happen with the next generation.

The current business models of the video game industry will evolve and transform to a similar model mimicking the movie and the music industry. Physical copies will disappear in favor of a full digital distribution model. The development of cloud storage, faster internet connections and better hardware will allow the perfect context for digital distribution to succeed.

Physical retailer shops will be forced to adapt and reinvent their business strategies. Video clubs went through the same transition and completely failed when the movie transformed from the classical VHS or DVD to the online streaming.

Nowadays a few people buy CD's or physical movies. Most of the consumers of both audiovisual entertainment sectors consumes subscription platforms like Netflix, Spotify or Apple Music. Therefore, the natural progression of the video game industry will tend to adapt this subscription model. The user will pay for a monthly fee to access the games.

According to the analyst Michael Pachter, video game consoles won't exist in 2020, and digital video games will completely substitute the physical copies.

Current hardware companies will stop creating hardware products or cycles, instead they will develop a virtual platform that will be installed in any hardware powerful

enough. Current generations of hardware limit the development during a set time period. Developers can only develop in a pre-set hardware for a long period of time, limiting their potential.

PS4 and Xbox have started to launch inter-generational products, as PS4 Pro and Xbox One X. Shortening the time between hardware cycles. Therefore, the next natural step is to make hardware disappear and become an online service like Netflix, HBO or any other streaming service online.

The fact that this future platforms will be online and accessible with different kind of hardware (like PC's) will allow bigger player pools for each of them. Every player will have the opportunity to access more than one platform at once.

This new business model will end with PC and console wars. Exclusive games will still be on each platform but more people will have access to them. It will be an evolution of PSNow, Xbox Pass and maybe Nintendo's eShop. Nintendo's success relies heavily in Intellectual Property and innovative and groundbreaking hardware mechanics, so it will probably follow a different path as other publishers.

A good example would be, having exclusive series like Game of Thrones in HBO and Narcos in Netflix. Both platforms coexist in the same environment.

Digital distribution will be more mature, and the users will gravitate towards it. The same users that are currently subscribed to streaming platforms will naturally end up consuming video games the same way. Even entertainment like reading is transforming from paper support to eBooks.

Physical copies will be sold as collectibles. Nowadays it's already happening in music and movies. For example with vinyl's. Continued renovation will lead to a better competition and an enriched video game environment. Therefore, soon video games as a whole will scale and explode as a media.

Smartphones will have enough raw power and technical specs to run higher quality games and will be able to support high quality games. At the beginning smartphones might serve as an emulator for re bumped and reconditioned video games of the past. According to nowadays trends, nostalgia is an important aspect to consider when talking about video games and would represent a good starting hook. Therefore using the most widespread device to expand the kind of games present in that kind of platforms might suppose a second revolution within the mobile industry.

From casual games device to portable gaming machine. If publishers end up licensing franchises to be able to be present in mobile platforms, more people will have access to them. In fact, this could be a considerable source of revenue for publishers.

Video games will end up being a fluid product. Not tied to a specific hardware or machine. Hardware companies will still produce accessories and products to enhance the experience, but at the end of the day, the machine that runs the video game will be any computer or machine with enough power to do so. Many devices will have the capability to access most of the video games.

All business models and kind of companies and games can coexist, without the need of one devouring the other. A healthy interaction between the different agents (developers, audience, developers, hardware companies...) implied can only enrich and develop even more this growing entertainment industry.

Video games itself have the potential to become the richest media by far, and it's limiting their potential by executing conventional marketing strategies. The transformation has already started.

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7. Keywords:

Game: activity engaged in for diversion or amusement.

Play: Term referred to the goalless activity that an individual does with a playful behavior.

Console: A device designed to execute and run video games.

Genre: A group of games categorized by sharing a group of similar characteristics.

Monetization: to utilize something as a source of income or value.

AAA: Large scale commercial video games with big budgets and development teams.

Gamers/Players: Any person that plays a videogame in any of the different platforms possible.

Game Revenues: Consumer revenues originated by video game companies in the international industry. It does not include hardware sales.

ARPU: Average Revenue Per User

Developer: Company that creates the video game itself.

Publisher: The industry actor that invests money and assume the financial risk to develop a video game. They are considered to be the link between the developer and the consumer.

ESA: Entertainment Software Association

Casual game: Video game with basic rules and simple playing system require a small play time to satisfy the player.

Indie game: Game created by independent developers without the support of a publisher.

Hardcore game : Video game with complex rules and game dynamics that require time and skill to master.

Whale: Player of a free to play game that spends a considerable amount of money in in-game transactions to acquire power ups or other enhancements.

Alpha: Part of the software release life cycle where the gameplay is functionality implemented and assets are partially finished.

Beta: Part of the video game cycle where all the assets are implemented and only bugs are fixed.

8. Attachments:

8.1 KING:

-What are the business models for King video games?

+The games are based on micro transactions. We create bite size pieces of joy for people to enjoy. The main revenue or hook comes from in game items. Try to think of it like old school arcade, when you run out of lifes, you put another quarter so you can play some more games.

You can play the games as much as you want for free, you can go the whole game without paying a penny. But it's just that little bits and pieces. Maybe you are just stuck in a level, or you can progress by buying a booster. Or maybe you run out of lifes and you are being impatient. Free to play with micro transactions.

-Do all games have the same business models within King?

+Yes, essentially. The only one that might be slightly different might be *Shuffle Cats*.

-What is the vision of the video game industry in King?

+ Being number 1 in mobile games, to be the leader. Being innovative when it comes to the best mobile experiences. Leveraging all the different parts of the Activision Blizzard family to create the best IP's.

-Are there any predicted trends within the mobile gaming industry?

+ Maybe augmented reality or merged reality. There are also other interesting things that are being worked on. There are interesting things that might change how people play games and the advertising throughout the industry. There are slightly different games with slightly different business models that sustain these games, that's going to create new different challenges.

-Where are King games going?

+ Most of what we have done are casual games, and we are probably keep on going in that space. We are trying to leverage some of the things that we know from casual and moving more to the midcore. So, I think King is trying to diversify as many games as possible, to try to see if we can create cool experiences in all sorts of genres.

- Is the casual market saturated already? Do you think King will survive?

+Yes, I think with the knowledge that this company has, all the data, and the high-quality standards. Even if it becomes saturated, if you have the amount of experience as we have. And pay attention to detail as we do, and the focus on customers as we have. King has a high bar quality, and that will always help differentiate from competitors.

Also the talent that works for the company. I think everything is tested, and double checked before it is out. It's not a company that just puts stuff out just to put stuff out. Everything is analyzed.

-What is the player base of King games?

+ The big number is 340 million of active users.

-What is your definition of a casual gamer?

+There are so many different of gamer profiles. I think there is a big overlap between casual gamer and non-casual gamer. The hardcore gamer doesn't just play WoW, Destiny or whatever every day. Sometimes when they are waiting for the train they'll play Candy Crush or all sorts of casual games. It's quite broad.

When we think about an audience we think about anyone and everyone.

I think the demographic typically would be mostly female. But then we find that we have a really big diverse audience.

-What is the demographics of the average player?

+Slightly more female than we have male. But it's huge amount of numbers of both male or female. And a huge age range. It's not just people in their 20's or people in their teen years. Also, not only people in their 60's. It's a huge range of people. Our games are quite universal. There's a lot of people that use our games in different stages of their lives. There is no average King gamer.

-What are the marketing strategies behind King games? What media channels does King games use?

+You always want to make sure that you see what the main mechanic of the game is. We want people to see how the game plays. We want to communicate to the users the game mechanic. Basically getting across the lexicons of the game. Try to sell the world in general.

Pushing the game to our network of players and outside of the networks also.

We use print advertising in magazines or billboards. We use the digital side of things, banner advertising, cross promotion with our networks. We advertise our own games, which we have a huge network for. We advertise on different apps as well, we advertise on Facebook.

All the different channels or all the user channels that people use.

King also does a lot of innovative stuff, but a lot of it is quite on the technical level. Like tagging, segmentation, cool things that they do to market the games to people that would be receptive to it. Trying to get the message to the people that want to hear it the most. They are doing a lot of innovative stuff in that area, as well as doing a lot of conventional stuff as well. In the traditional stage, we try to make sure that we are the smartest we can when using traditional media. We do a lot of research to make sure that we promote the game to the right people. Use the right creators, and not only make things look nice. Even though we do traditional stuff, we do it with innovation. Whatever is in our control or leveraging the knowledge to improve.

-How does King work with the user, what is the relation with them?

+ There is King Care, where they are incentivized to help other users with their issues. That helps quite a lot to have your player base help communicate to other players how they can solve simple issues. And those which can't be helped are

escalated to customer service. We also have a social media team that works directly with Facebook or any social media. We have the King Care blog, where we use to write announcements, or gameplay stuff. We use that to communicate with the players. We do meet and greet events. We do a lot of cool things with our community. We get feedback, we listen to what they say and try to keep our customers happy.

-Will Candy Crush fade out or start dying?

+I don't think it will die. We can always do a readjustment of the expectations. When you create a huge franchise. Other big franchises and brands have huge picks and downs. Especially when they are mature. But I don't think it's a brand that will fall off a cliff. One of the most important things that we have to do, when we have an important brand. Is to keep the game fresh, to keep thinking of different ways to keep new people getting in. There are a lot of people that have played, but also a lot of people that have not. We always have to find the way to keep incentivizing users to keep playing. To make sure that you get users to newer content. That you refresh content. I think that as long the company keeps doing the job of refreshing things and rethinking on how we package the levels.

And then also creating new IPs, new experiences in different types of games. The more the company innovates the more likely there are going to be different games.

-What is the goal behind the Candy Crush TV show?

+ It's a good show to make that helps the Candy Crush brand to grow bigger. It helps expose to people. The cool and fun part is exposed to people that maybe have not seen it. And they might give it a try to the game.

It's like of some of the best advertising you could get for a video game. It's half an hour slot every week of advertising for a brand and helps strengthen it. Not just mobile gaming.

-When did King start with the influencer marketing, and how useful it is?

+ King has used influencer marketing for quite a few years now. But my main experience with it was from last June, for Farm Heroes saga. King has always worked with different celebrities. We are trying to take it into different audiences. It's been more or less since the last couple or three years.

8.2 BadLand Games:

-¿Cómo decidís por qué juegos apostáis?

+Depende de varios factores. Para ponerte en contexto, nosotros tenemos dos principales áreas de negocio. Tenemos la distribución de producto físico de terceros. Que solo lo hacemos en España. Y luego tenemos el desarrollo propio. Lanzamos nuestros propios juegos en España y a nivel internacional, tanto en formato digital como en formato físico.

En la parte de producto físico, solo para España. Nos viene un poco dado con el catálogo del partner. Ahí no hacemos ninguna distinción, por decirlo de alguna manera, de los productos que nos llegan. Si vemos que un producto tiene un alto riesgo de no funcionar, procuramos traerlo en función a lo que el mercado va a ser capaz de absorber.

Para la parte digital es más complicado, entran mucho factores. Cuando se decide firmar con un estudio de desarrollo, entran muchísimos factores. Desde lo más básico, que sería la calidad del juego, hasta duración, plataformas en las que está previsto que salga. Cuales son los puntos principales del juego. Que lo hace diferente respecto a juegos similares que puedan suponer una competencia directa. Este tipo de detalles.

Generalmente esperamos que los juegos tengan un atractivo, un mínimo de calidad. Que nosotros identifiquemos, que tienen algo, esa característica única que pueda hacer que el juego funcione, venda y pueda resultar interesante para el consumidor. Es difícil. Al final vemos muchísimos proyectos al cabo del tiempo y ver los juegos muchas veces en el estado de desarrollo en el que los vemos, es complicado. Saber si este juego va o no a funcionar. Alomejor lo has visto una vez, o alomejor has visto un GDD, que no has visto el juego siquiera. Es un trabajo divertido pero complicado.

-¿Cuál es la ventaja para un desarrollador acabar decidiéndose por un publisher como vosotros?

+Por la experiencia que llevo yo trabajando en BadLand en estos 9 o 10 meses, te puedo decir que lo que yo pondría como un valor añadido por sobre de lo que es la auto publicación. Es decir, ir de la mano de un publisher en vez de ir por su cuenta. Es que muchos estudios, sobre todo los pequeños, funcionan mucho por esa idea romántica de hacer un videojuego porque es lo que me gusta, es lo que quiero. Y quiero sacarlo adelante. Muchas veces no se paran a pensar un momento a la hora de sacar este producto, en mirar la parte más básica del negocio. Hacer un estudio de mercado, ver si realmente hay hueco para este tipo de producto. Ver cómo le ha ido a la competencia en casos similares si hay casos de juegos del mismo género o mismo tipo.

La parte fundamental, los pilares básicos de iniciar un negocio. En esa parte es la que solemos aportar más. Diciendo que es lo que creemos que está bien, y lo que creemos que hay que adaptar o modificar porque creemos que no va a funcionar. Quizás deberías ir por aquí o por allá. Para intentar que ese producto se ajuste lo máximo posible al mercado. Nosotros ya tenemos una trayectoria importante como para de un vistazo rápido saber más o menos identificar por dónde van los tiros y por donde tendría que tirar este producto. Tenemos un equipo de marketing y de ventas que ya están acostumbrados a trabajar con ese tipo de producto. Y van a saber aconsejar muy bien a estos estudios pequeños. Que muchas veces no tienen ese punto de visto de visión básico.

Hay otros estudios independientes que ya tienen experiencia en estos aspectos y son otras ventajas las que se les pueden ofrecer. La facilidad de publicación. Al final nosotros tenemos mucho flujo de trabajo con plataformas como Sony, Microsoft o Nintendo. Y al final es mucho más fácil publicar para nosotros que alomejor un estudio que no lo ha hecho nunca. Nosotros ahí damos ese trabajo ya hecho. Tu nos das el juego y nosotros te lo publicamos, con todo lo que conlleva, que es un trabajo que también tiene tela.

Lo publicamos directamente en las plataformas digitales, o lo sacamos en formato físico y nos encargamos de todo lo que conlleva.

Realizar el packaging, una edición coleccionista, etc.

-¿En qué partes del proceso les apoyáis?

+ Se hace caso por caso. Hay veces que ayudamos hasta en el propio desarrollo del videojuego, aportando recursos o aportando personal, etc. O quizás solo con la edición coleccionista, como es por ejemplo del caso de Rime. Nosotros solo hemos puesto en la calle la edición física. Hemos creado la edición coleccionista que es exclusiva para España. Es lo único que hemos hecho para Rime.

Esto se firma caso por caso, depende de cada juego. Normalmente lo mínimo que busca un estudio de desarrollo de un gran Publisher es el tema de la publicación y sobretodo el marketing. Son los dos pilares en los que más se suelen apoyar, y en los que más ayuda suelen necesitar. Luego ya te digo, depende de cada caso.

-¿Qué modelos de negocio hay en cada uno de los videojuegos?

+ Nosotros trabajamos únicamente con productos de tipo Premium. Los juegos de pago de toda la vida. No trabajamos en modelo free to play, ni otros tipos de modalidades. Más que nada porque este tipo de negocio suele ser más para juegos para móviles. Y nosotros no trabajamos para móviles, app store, google etc. Nosotros sabemos que ese no es nuestro mercado, que nuestro mercado está en el juego tradicional. Depende del tipo de juego hay un rango de precio. Puede ser un mid-price, un full price. Ya sea un juego de 20€, 40€, 60€ o 70€. Esa es el principal, y único modelo de negocio. No trabajamos con algo que no sea la venta tradicional. El modelo Premium de toda la vida. Tú compras el juego y lo tienes completo.

-¿Cuáles creéis que serán las futuras tendencias de la industria de los video juegos?

+ Está claro que la tendencia para el tema audiovisual y los videojuegos sigue un poco por el mismo camino. Ya tenemos ejemplos de plataformas de suscripción, en las que tienes acceso a un catálogo determinado de juegos. No es exactamente lo mismo, porque un juego por streaming no tiene mucho sentido. El juego se ejecuta a distancia. Es decir, o tienes una buena conexión o lo tienes complicado. Tenemos muy claro que por un lado el sector está totalmente pivotando hacia lo digital y quizás en entornos de jugadores más casuales, hacia el free to play. Y aunque no estemos en ese sector, hay que tener al enemigo vigilado. Y estamos viendo que está creciendo una barbaridad. Creemos que lo que es el sector

más hardcore, más jugón de toda la vida. Si que va a seguir habiendo un nicho que van a seguir prefiriendo su edición coleccionista. Con su juego en su caja, su manual etc. Y también va a haber jugadores que van a preferir mantener el modelo tradicional de, yo pago el precio del juego, pero van a ser una minoría.

El jugador casual, ese jugador que se compre el fifa todos los años por ejemplo. Esta clarísimamente esta dirigiéndose a un modelo de negocio completamente digital. Quiere meterse en su plataforma digital preferida, descargar el juego. Pasa de la caja, pasa de las instrucciones. Y si es free to play, mejor todavía.

Luego ya entran en matices si es a través de micro pagos, etc. Pero resumiendo. Sí, tiene toda la pinta que el sector va hacia lo digital y el free to play.

-¿Cuál sería el jugador genérico vuestro?

+No tenemos esos datos, pero sí sabemos cómo orientamos las campañas en un Facebook o en un google adwords. Procuramos bueno pues dependiendo del juego porque sí que hemos tenido algún juego infantil. Pero lo más habitual es el jugador más tirando a hardcore. Perfiles medio altos de edad, 50/50, mitad y mitad mujeres/hombres. Poder adquisitivo entre medio y alto. Nos movemos más o menos entre esos valores. Eso es algo que vamos afinando título a título.

Te diría principalmente que rangos de edades a partir de los 20 veinte y pocos hasta los treinta y muchos o cuarenta, y 50/50 hombre/mujer.

-¿Me podrías dar la definición del target de jugador?

+Tenemos tanta variedad, en juegos tan distintos en género, que es difícil hacer una media de algo tan concreto. gente joven a partir de los 20 veinte y pocos hasta los 35 o 40, con poder adquisitivo medio.

Y en cuanto a géneros, no cerramos puertas tocamos todos los palos tener identificado un tipo de jugador concreto para todos nuestros juegos es difícil. Al final varía por producto.

-¿Cuáles serían vuestras estrategias de marketing? ¿Para que juegos usáis estrategias push o más convencionales, y para que otros juegos usáis estrategias más pull o innovadoras?

No somos una empresa que tengamos unos presupuestos de marketing. Tenemos que andar retorciéndonos los bigotes y afinando muchísimo el tiro. Porque como te decía, trabajamos con presupuestos muy limitados y no podemos ir a lo loco y probando cosas.

Dividimos la estrategia, en lo que te comentaba al principio, en dos pilares básicos. La distribución de producto físico en España, y la parte más indie de producción a nivel internacional.

La parte de producto físico. Aquí hay mucho trade marketing. Un poco la relación con el cliente, en este caso el retailer. Esta relación es la que procuramos siempre cuidar lo máximo posible, porque ellos son los que nos dan una mayor visibilidad. Luego ya independientemente de cada título, si nos vienen más o menos unidades. En función de género, etc. Procuramos buscar el perfil afín ya en medios más especializados. Es decir, ir a un 3Djuegos con una campaña display sencillita. Ir a redes sociales con una segmentación muy concreta y tener algo de visibilidad con los formatos más habituales. Twitter, Facebook, Adwords o YouTube. Esto es un poco para la parte de físico.

Luego está la parte digital, o más bien la parte de Indie mejor dicho. Aquí estamos haciendo marketing a nivel internacional. No solo para España, sino para todo el mundo. Cuando, distribuimos fuera de España, es el partner el que se encarga de hacer el marketing. Nosotros hacemos un plan de marketing base, maestro. Y ellos lo adaptan a las peculiaridades de cada región. Hacen la adaptación, nos lo devuelven, lo comentamos, debatimos y para adelante.

Pero la parte digital si es nuestra pura y dura. A nivel tradicional y a nivel global. Con los presupuestos que manejamos, hacer campañas notorias a nivel mundial es muy complicado. Aquí, la estrategia principal que seguimos, (que luego varia por titulo). Nos apoyamos muchísimo en la comunicación a través de prensa, todo lo que es PR. Tenemos relación con muchos medios a nivel internacional, que nos ofrecen un buen puñado de cobertura, que nos consiguen una visibilidad más que importante. Y luego también marketing de contenidos. La ventaja que tenemos es que muchos de los estudios de desarrollo están aquí con nosotros en la oficina de Madrid. Otros

están fuera, pero mantenemos un contacto muy directo con ellos. Y es relativamente sencillo ponernos de acuerdo en la programación y el calendario.

Por ejemplo, tenemos unos PR bits y unos hitos de comunicación, tanto de pantallas como video, etc. Para lanzarlos en estos momentos.

Es muy sencillo tener el material de primera mano para hacer el contenido, y si necesitamos más es tan simple como ir a la oficina de al lado y pedirlo. Hecho que funciona más rápido que otras empresas. Nos apoyamos mucho en este tipo de contenido para el marketing. Dado que no podemos hacer grandes inversiones, y de poder hacerlas, serían incluso contraproducentes porque al final terminarían incluso diluidas.

Abogamos por inundar lo máximo posible las redes sociales, foros de usuarios, comunidades, etc. A caballo entre lo orgánico y el street marketing, que es lo que nos permite llegar lo más lejos posible.

Mi trabajo es un poco alejarnos de este método más tradicional, y pivotar más a redes sociales, etc.

Atacar al consumidor directamente, no al medio. Estamos muy limitados por el tema del presupuesto.

-¿Cual es vuestro porcentaje para marketing en el presupuesto?

+Depende de los diferentes factores, si es distribución física o digital. Puede ir entre el 5% y el 10%.

-¿Apostáis por una transición por una transición a lo digital?

+Totalmente. Actualmente nuestro negocio se sustenta en lo físico. Pero eso va a cambiar. Clarísimamente el sector está yendo en esa dirección. Llegará el momento en que las consolas, si es que siguen existiendo, ni siquiera lleven lector para soporte físico. Claramente vamos a un entorno digital. ¿Cuándo sucederá? Nadie lo sabe. Estamos empezando a ver consolas sin soporte físico.

Las tiendas terminarán reinventándose. Pasarán de vender el juego físico a las tarjetas con el código para Steam. Te puedes ir al Game de turno para comprarla. Hay mucha gente que todavía es reacia a pagar por internet, y mucho menos que la plataforma en cuestión tenga los datos bancarios.

-¿Tenéis algún tipo de consumer service?

+Usamos el contacto a través de redes sociales o de nuestra página web. Hasta las comunidades propiamente dichas, que hemos empezado hace muy poquito. Que las estoy intentando poner en marcha, a ver si somos capaces. Porque ahora mismo no tenemos una comunidad como tal, más allá de las redes sociales. Estamos trabajando por un lado en Steam. Donde sí tenemos nuestro grupo de usuarios que poco a poco va creciendo. Les mimamos, les cuidamos y vamos hablando con ellos. También el formato foro, aunque ya está un poco desfasado, en tema videojuegos sigue funcionando. A ver cómo funciona.

8.3 -8 Bit Studio:

-¿Me puedes contar en cuatro pinceladas la historia de vuestra empresa?

+Yo (Pablo) y César, que es mi socio y lo tengo aquí al lado, nos conocimos hace ya 20 años en Alicante. Y bueno, hace cuatro o cinco años decidimos montar esta empresa que llevaba yo construyendo en papel. Y nada pues decidimos levantar un poco de capital, empezamos a meter nuestro propio capital. Familia y amigos, y luego empezamos a buscar inversión de gente un poquito más especializada. Pasamos por un Kickstarter y por el acelerador de empresas de Microsoft Londres. Y bueno, todas esas cositas nos han ayudado a crecer hasta este punto. Nos encontramos en el año de lanzamiento. En febrero sacamos la Alpha abierta, y de cara a final de año lanzamiento de Beta y lanzamiento global.

-¿Cuál es el modelo de negocio planteado para vuestro juego?

+Free to play con micro transacciones, que ya está funcionando. Al estar el juego ya en Alpha y disponible en Steam, ya hay gente jugando y comprando. Bueno pues todo a través de cosméticos nada que inflencie el gameplay. Dónde están juegos como, desde League of Legends o Overwatch.

- ¿Qué visión tenéis de la industria del videojuego? ¿Qué tendencias futuras prevéis en la industria?

+Es una industria gigante llena de oportunidades y al contrario que en otros sectores la inversión inicial no es tan grande, no tienes que construir nada. Especialmente ahora que casi todos vendemos el 100% en digital. Por ejemplo, sería también el caso de King, como me has comentado, que distribuyen el total de sus juegos a través de digital. Es más fácil sacar tu producto en plataformas como Steam, directamente al consumidor.

Esto viene también con contras, no somos los únicos que pensamos esto, hay más competencia. Pero también hay muchos nichos de mercado en los que puede entrar una desarrolladora pequeña innovadora. Y allí es donde estamos nosotros. Nuestro target sería, tanto el jugador de League of Legends que quiere probar otra cosa,

como el jugador de juegos más pequeños como puede ser Nosgoth, que ha cerrado ya. O los jugadores de PvP de Dark Souls.

Es para un target que no tiene una cantidad exagerada de juegos parecidos a su disposición. Si fuéramos un shooter alomejor tendríamos un mercado potencial más grande, pero también mucha más competencia. Con Overwatch, con Paladins, con Counter Strike.

Es un mercado muy chulo, muy accesible. Pero hay que hacer las cosas muy bien para poder entrar ahí.

- ¿Cuál es el target de jugador de vuestro juego?

+Nuestro juego tiene una jugabilidad que le va a sonar a alguien que juegue mucho al Witcher, al Zelda... Acción en tercera persona que se puede jugar tanto con teclado y ratón como con mando de consola. Ya lo estamos preparando para cuando salga en consola podamos convencer a ese tipo de jugador para que le eche unas cuantas horas.

-¿Cómo definirías tu juego?

+Lo llamamos Arena fighter, o team based meelee combat game. He puesto muchos ejemplos, es un poco lo que te comentaba antes, las ventanas que no están llenas.

En nuestro juego lo que intentamos explotar es la ventaja que este estilo de combate lo va a entender enseguida casi cualquier jugador que haya jugado a un juego en tercera persona. El sistema de target, el sistema de combos, eso le va a sonar a gente que haya jugado al Street Fighter o como ya hemos dicho al Witcher. A gente que haya jugado a Dark Souls, o a gente que haya jugado a Uncharted.

Más allá de tener espadas, está centrado en combate cuerpo a cuerpo. Nuestro juego es mucho más parecido a Dark Souls. Es un "Soul's like". Queremos llevar esa misma experiencia a un juego de arenas, lleva ese toque de RPG como por ejemplo el World of Warcraft o otros MMO. Llevarlo al entorno competitivo, al entorno de arenas. Con mapas bastante pequeños.

- ¿Cuál es vuestro target?

+From mid to hardcore.

- ¿Cómo definirías a este perfil de jugador?

+Depende, no todos los jugadores midcore van a actuar de la misma manera. Para eso tenemos varios funnels dentro del juego que determinan un poco el player behaviour. Y como va evolucionando.

Habrà jugadores que jueguen una vez al día para completar los quests para farmear un poco de oro. Habrà gente que le dedique muchísimas horas al día, pero luego se pasará muchos días sin jugar. No te puedo dar una definición que se ajuste al perfil.

-¿Con cuántos jugadores contáis?

+Tenemos 200.000 cuentas registradas. Nuestro pico de jugadores simultáneos andamos por 500 y pico. Teniendo en cuenta que aún estamos en el Alpha.

-¿Qué estrategias de marketing tenéis pensado utilizar? ¿Qué medios de comunicación? ¿Cómo pretendéis incidir al usuario?

+Hasta hace dos semanas no habíamos gastado ni un solo euro. Por dos razones. Lo primero es que somos casi una start-up todavía, y lo segundo es porque nuestro producto no está terminado todavía. No tiene mucho sentido gastarse el dinero en marketing aun, cuando las mecánicas del juego aún no están del todo definidas. Ahora mismo, por mucho que nos gustara, recibir un millón de jugadores no nos haría ningún favor.

Esperaríamos ejecutar las campañas de marketing de cara al lanzamiento de la Beta y el lanzamiento global.

Sí te puedo decir que hasta el momento hemos tirado mucho de social media. De twitter más que de YouTube. Y lo que hicimos hace dos semanas, fue contactar hace dos semanas.

Te digo esto porque no somos muy amigos de lo considerado marketing tradicional en videojuegos, ya sea tener un banner en una página especializada en

videojuegos. No consideramos que esto vaya con nosotros, no consideramos que de un alto porcentaje de descarga por click.

Perdemos bastantes usuarios desde que llegan a la página de Steam hasta que se descargan el juego, hasta que ejecutan el juego. Se crean una cuenta en el juego o hacen el tutorial.

Normalmente este tipo de páginas lo que acabas pagando es por click que lleve a un usuario a la página del juego. Si estás perdiendo a muchos usuarios en ese proceso estas pagando por poca cosa.

Lo que hemos intentado siempre es buscar maneras alternativas de lograr que la gente se descargue el juego.

Esa campaña que te he comentado, contactamos con un youtuber español: Revenant. Seguido por un poco más de un millón de suscriptores. Y con un streamer americano que tiene 350.000 seguidores en Twitch. Y les propusimos hacer una guerra.

Les dimos a estos dos influencers la posibilidad de hacer una guerra en el juego, para que convenciera a su audiencia para que se unieran a su bando. Entonces montábamos un evento, y cada jugador que traían ellos, pues escogía un bando. Los jugadores escogían un premio. Cada jugador de cada uno de los dos bandos, cuando subía de nivel le daba un punto a cada ejército.

Entonces, llevábamos un control a través de la página web que es muy interesante. Cada jugador que llegaba al juego se podía inscribir a cada uno de los dos bandos, y cada vez que subía de nivel sumaba un punto para el equipo.

-¿Tenéis previsto ir a eventos, ferias, etc tanto en España como internacionales?

+Sí, hemos ido, hemos estado en E3, en Gamescon, en Barcelona Games World. Estamos invitados al indie bus arena de Gamescon de este año. Todavía no hemos confirmado, pero siempre estamos abiertos a este tipo de eventos.

**-¿Cuál es vuestra estrategia de marketing? ¿Más convencional o innovadora?
¿Push o pull?**

+Nosotros podemos convencer al usuario para que vaya o no a la página de Steam y decida entonces si se baja el juego. Aquí había una **llamada a la acción** para que sus usuarios se bajaran el juego. Cuando hables con empresas más grandes verás que ellos juegan con las mismas métricas que nosotros, ellos saben cuanta gente pierden de los que llegan a la página de descarga. Ellos saben cuanta gente juega, cuánta gente llega a la página del tutorial, cuantos lo superan y cuantos han pasado el primer nivel etc.

Nosotros como no disponemos de este músculo no podemos hacer el mismo tipo de publicidad. A ellos igual conseguir una descarga les cuesta 1,5\$. Nosotros necesitamos una llamada a la acción mucho más bestia. A nosotros esta campaña nos ha funcionado muy bien, fíjate en los números. El marcador es 2.461 en el bando de Bajheera, y 2.322 en el bando de Revenant.

https://playskara.com/event/the_battle_of_kornit/results

Esto es al final mucha gente que se ha bajado el juego, y mucha gente que ha estado jugando para subir de nivel y que ha subido de nivel para darle a su equipo la victoria.

Apostamos más por atraer a la gente que estar en el número de sitios posibles, no tendría sentido. Nos gastaríamos dinero para que la gente fuera a la página de Steam, pero luego ahí perdemos porcentaje de usuarios en cada paso.

- ¿Que porcentaje de vuestro presupuesto tenéis pensado destinar al marketing?

+ En nuestro caso todavía no tenemos un número, pero anduviera por ese porcentaje de entre 10 y 30%. Pero todavía no lo sabemos.

-¿Cómo os relacionáis con el usuario? Tenéis algún sistema activo?

+Aparte de las propias herramientas que nos da Steam, el foro, el chat, los comentarios en las noticias. Nuestra propia comunidad ha creado un canal de discord de Skara que se ha hecho bastante popular, y nosotros nos unimos a ella y la usamos como principal canal de comunicación con el usuario.

Organizamos partidas todos los días, en las que el equipo de desarrollo juega con la comunidad. Hacemos directos en Twitch todos los viernes, jugamos con la gente y respondemos a preguntas en vivo.

-¿Cuándo tenéis pensado dar el salto de Steam a otras plataformas?

+Cuando hayamos pasado beta seguramente. Si no lo hemos hecho antes es porque ni queremos ni podemos. Cada vez que hagamos un cambio para PC tendríamos que hacer lo mismo para las otras plataformas. Con un equipo tan pequeño eso es muy complicado, queremos tener al menos la base en PC terminada, y luego esa base exportarla a otras plataformas. Somos 12.

- ¿Os mantendréis en digital una vez paséis a otras plataformas?

+Claro, nosotros somos un free to play, no tiene mucho sentido que nos movamos al formato físico. Estas plataformas, tanto Steam como Sony como microsoft se llevan un royalty del 30%. Igual que la tienda de Apple, de Google...