Haute Ecole

Groupe ICHEC - ISC St-Louis - ISFSC

ICHEC
BRUSSELS MANAGEMENT SCHOOL

Enseignement supérieur de type long de niveau universitaire

How do Belgian video game companies tap into crowdctulture?

Mémoire présenté par
"Lorenzo Psalti"

pour l'obtention du diplôme de

Master en Sciences Commerciales- MMS-60

Academic year 2018-2019

<u>Promoter</u> :
Monsieur Jacques Folon

Boulevard Brand Whitlock 2 - 1150 Brussels

Acknowledgements

I am wanting to thank my thesis tutor, Mr. Jacques Folon for his precious advice. He showed me the ropes of efficient ways to tackle my thesis topic. He clearly indicated the procedure to follow and people I should meet in order to gather enough information.

I also would like to thank Thibaut Sana for his time spent to point out the interesting aspects of my thesis topic I should tackle. Furthermore, the access to his lecture that provided precious information.

Finally, I am grateful to my friends and family who supported me as they could. During my thesis elaboration and, more generally, throughout my studies, they have continually encouraged me to achieve my goals. They provided me the motivation I have always had to give the best of myself and if, today, I approach the end of my studies, it was also thanks to their participation.

Table des matières

List of figures, tables and images

INTRODUCTION

We, humans, have always needed to play and it has always been a part of us. Playing develops mental and physical skills and play is an element which can't be ruled out when we think about elements having helped our development. We witness that games are also essential for animals and help them to have a better understanding of their environment and themselves. I used to watch animal coverages and animals were often said to need to play in order to learn .

Games bring people to another world where they decide the rules and where the nature of any component of the environment may change in order to suit to this new world.

The first video game was created by Joseph Kates in 1950 by Bertie the Brain (2018). 69 years later, video games have become a part of our lives, have entered our homes and, even, accompany us everywhere.

We will see that video games industry has become the most important entertainment in terms of revenues and users figures. Video games stakeholders make up new strategies to please a target that is seeking perfection.

Gaming studios have to find a balance between a pleasant gameplay and an effective monetization model. Furthermore, we will see that video game companies have to maintain constant interaction with their target and that companies may use them.

I will also look into the role (the?) technology played in the gaming industry evolution and how it provided new strategies possibilities. These possibilities will lead companies to take decisions about their strategies they want to implement.

However, each strategy has strengths and weaknesses. Thus, video game companies have to sort out how to implement tools they have at disposal, otherwise, it might compromise companies to achieve their goals.

I will depict how social media have created spots where users meet, interact and discuss. This had led to online communities apparition, called crowdculture. This crowdculture is composed of subcultures where members are gathered around one topic.

Video games are part of the crowdculture and we will see that this community is growing. I will explain why this it is considered as a goldmine that companies have to target.

Moreover, I will detail how gaming companies may adapt their strategies with a view to reaching efficiently members of this subculture. Another aspect that will be tackled is the different techniques to use gamers in order to develop a game that will live up to their expectations.

Afterwards I will focus on the Belgian video game market. I will present its specificities and I will come up with recommendations to Belgian companies active in the gaming sector.

Thus, the title of my thesis is:"How do Belgian video game companies tap into crowdculture?"

1. The context of my thesis topic

1.1. Humankind and games

Over time games played by humans have changed their aim. Roger Caillois, a French sociologist and philosopher classified in "*Les Jeux et les hommes : le masque et le vertige*" (1958) games into three different categories: Paidia, Ludus and a mix of both. Grégory Szriftgiser, from the website Gameblog presented a conclusion drawn by Caillois (2012). He argued there are three kinds of games and came up with a name for each of them. First, he named Paidia games without rules which are based on our imagination and may take place everywhere at any moment and without any particular reason. For instance, let's not touch the ground from the living room because it is lava. Secondly, games based on rules and players have to stick to them in order to win are called Ludus. We could think of chess. The third category is a combination of the two others and offers players the possibility to stick to the rules which, provides a greater freedom effect.

We have always had a reason to play, being a child or an adult. For instance, not such a long time ago in the history of mankind, games were used to divert people from real social issues through "Panem et circenses".

Nowadays, a game diverts, brings people together and develops creativity. Furthermore, through games we may know more about people or ourselves. Are we a cheater, a sore loser, a fair player or do we easily get angry? Moreover, they are for instance also used by companies in order to know applicants better and their skills or personality during interviews.

Throughout history, games have often been connected to children. I have often witnessed adults who have been attracted by entertainment supposedly created for kids, having been criticized. An adult who plays must be immature, have a lack of seriousness or simply, be retarded. Nevertheless, I am convinced mentalities have changed over time and I have personally seen more often adults playing board games or video games. What we play depends on our environment, personality and also on what people around us play.

1.2. People interaction

People we interact with is the topic I would like to connect to games. I have no doubt that they depend on each other. Games we play also depend on our social interactions. We get easier into games other people spend time on because we listen to what they play. Indeed, games are connected to happiness and free time and it may be considered as a topic people are willing to talk about. Besides, people's opinion matters to us.

We may easily conclude that interactions people have with each other have changed and this is partially due to our environment which becomes more and more connected and offers thus new ways of communication. From basic communication method to more elaborated ones, humankind used what they could in order to improve and make more efficient interactions with their peers. Information sharing is improved well as expression of feelings. From our ancestors who started to talk, we witness today humans who interact through machines which allows people to communicate about everything at any moment, everywhere, about every topic. Ideas sharing development has reached another level.

It goes without saying that internet development is behind this revolution. We, humans, tend to interact more and more through machines and some believe it becomes at their expense of face to face communication.

Nevertheless, this evolution was supported by the creation of softwares and apps which made this distance communication easier and at less costs. So much so that trends have been developed through internet and companies have understood the potential of this new technology. These subcultures, gathered around specific themes, were ideas, interests and values are shared through new technologies, are called "crowdculture". Douglas Holt, CEO of Cultural Strategy Group and former professor at Harvard Business School, came up with the word crowdculture. In his column for the Harvard Business Review he described crowdculture as "a term used to describe the way modern culture is created and driven by digital crowds" (Holt, 2016, para.7).

1.3. Motivation for this topic

When I first read about crowdculture I knew this topic needed to be deepen and this is the reason why I chose to check up on it. We see its daily influence, but we simply do not pay attention to it and most of the people are not aware of this concept. However, this might change due to the growing influence it brings in our world. Furthermore, most of the people may feel engaged in a subculture by first interacting with other members on the internet, social media or as a second step by meeting them at special places where you can share and enjoy your common interests together.

It seems to me that games, and more specifically video games, were the perfect illustration of this concept. I am an occasional player who is surrounded by other casual players or hardcore players who consider video games as an important part in their life. Another point I took into account when I had to decide how to tackle the crowdculture concept was what I had witnessed so far by myself.

I had already seen a change in people's opinion about video games and generally about gamers. When I was younger, I thought that people would be less comprehensive about this hobby. But my conclusion

today is that people admit easier than in the past that they play video games even if they have become older. Moreover, I tend to think that people play more games than before, on games console, computers or phones. Companies for instance also have started to look at video games with a view to training their employees and share knowledge thanks to serious games and make their training more attractive.

1.4. Objective of this study

My goal is to understand why this change of mentality is happening and what are the reasons. This evolution had an impact on the video games market and I will investigate it through the past, present and future.

Then, I would like to understand how companies tapped into it and adapted their strategy in order to satisfy this new target which, we will see, represents a gold mine.

I will first focus on the world trend concerning companies strategy and players' behaviour. That will be followed by an analysis of the Belgian market and its specificities. As a last point I plan to draw conclusions based on all my observations and bring recommendations to Belgian video game companies in order to increase their efficiency.

Consequently my thesis topic is :``*how do Belgian video game companies tap into crowdculture ?*''.

1.5. Am I the first?

I am aware that my thesis topic tackles a link between two entities which have been developed quite recently, especially the more and more commonly used crowdculture concept.

Nevertheless, it seems to me relevant to go through an overview of whether video games and crowdculture have been studied together and if yes, how? I will thus present how studies have tackled the link between these two entities.

I find relevant to introduce the link between crowdculture and video games by starting to present how these two entities have been developed distinctly so far.

2. <u>A theoretical overview</u>

2.1. Crowdculture

To start with I would like to present works focusing on crowdculture. As I pointed out the word "crowdculture", also sometimes written "crowd culture", appeared in 2016 with the intention of naming an observed phenomenon. Even though this word has been recently released, other works exist and describe it even if they were published before Douglas Holt's paper. I will expose some of them which are representative of the different aspects that have already been developed.

As a first work, I would like to present a practical project which linked theory to a study case. Hannah McFadden wrote a Master's Thesis (2016), in New York, entitled " *Redesigning Adirondack Adventures: Analyzing Crowd Culture to Develop Social Media Marketing Strategies*". The aim of her research was to develop the crowdculture theoretical aspect in relation with an entertainment company in order to improve their marketing efficiency. McFadden's is one if the first author to use the word "crowdculture" . Her work was released on December while Holt came up with this word in March of the same year.

Besides, some research have been carried out and they tend to show that traditional advertising has become inefficient. This is the reason why companies have adapted their strategy to the marketing environment changes which will lead later to the crowdculture development, by exposing the limits of the brand content strategy. With the aim to tackle this evolution, Sandra Fourny-Arrivé, a French searcher, worked on this in her PhD thesis :" *Contenu de marque : nature de la pratique et tensions associées à la formation d'une stratégie marketing hybride*" (2017).

As a result of technological development and a general exasperation among the targets, the crowdculture phenomenon started to become more obvious. Indeed, this common revulsion led the public to create a bad image towards traditional commercial advertisements. With a view to describing this feeling, Jean-Marc Lehu, professor at the University of Paris, detailed the reason of this hate in his column: " *Haine du marketing: analyse d'une relation consumériste ambivalente*" (2011). In order to illustrate his point in one sentence, he used an expression fraught with meaning. Nowadays, during a conversation, exclaiming "this is marketing!", is very often understood with a negative connotation. His conclusion did not depict a brilliant future to traditional marketing and it seems that he was right so far.

The crowdculture may be and has been studied through several aspects. Indeed, its appearance or consequences may be discussed. On the one hand consequences on social media are to be studied but also on the real life, by decisions taken by members of a community. With a view to demonstrating that members' actions are amplified thanks to social media, a study analyzed the contribution of new technologies.

A group of searchers from the Institute of Social Research in Oslo, Norway, wrote a paper with the title:" *Social media and mobilization to offline demonstrations – transcending participatory divides?* " (2013). In other words, the team wanted to understand the impact of social media on a crowd demonstration. According to Enjolras, Steen-Johnsen and Wollebæk, who conducted this study, people speak out louder when they undertake actions with other people with the aim to express their values (2013). The motivation

among implicated people and diffusion of information had been improved. Furthermore they noticed that participants of these demonstrations are on average younger than those involved in demonstrations organized by official organizations. Social media are a new channel of communication that younger people master and in which they express their opinion and thus are looking forward to meeting offline with other members they identify to.

As a last illustration concerning this topic researches, I have to mention the article which talk me into analyzing the crowdculture. This column in the Harvard Business Review (2016) was the start point of the "crowdculture" designation and was, as I have already mentioned, named by Douglas Holt. I will detail it later more specifically.

While I was reading about the topic it seemed to me clear that published works about traditional marketing and its efficiency tend to show that consumers have become reluctant to listen to these messages and they have deteriorated their perception towards ads. Thus, companies have had to change their strategy.

I could have presented many other studies depicting the role of new communication channels, social media, in the development of crowdculture and its importance. However, the main points have been discussed and presented and we have been filled in with necessary information to keep investigating the understanding of this theme. All of us have witnessed crowdculture impact on our society because its members tend to exhibit their membership to a subculture. We may for instance mention the hippie trend, football fans, metal songs listeners or conspiracy theories adepts. The members of these subcultures are aware of belonging to a group of people sharing their values and passion on online platforms where they feel free to express their opinion and where ads do not belong.

2.2. Videos Games

After this overview depicting the main works and representative conclusions drawn concerning crowdculture, it is unavoidable to do the same for the topic I would like to link to in my research, video games.

When I started to read and collect information about this entertainment, my first feeling was my astonishment concerning the amount of works published about it and their diverse kind. The topic is covered by articles, studies, surveys, books or reports through a wide period of time. More precisely video games works tackle many aspects such as economic, strategies used by companies, social and psychological impacts and risks or opportunities. In other words, people and experts from very different areas have scrutinized it deeply.

On the one hand, some studies tend to show that video games have a positive impact on players mind and improve their skills. Peter Gray, a research teacher at Boston College, is convinced about this idea and wrote many articles in order to develop his point of view. He has a Phd and is currently focusing his work on children's ways to learn and has been studying the impact of video games on them for years. In 2018, he wrote an article :" *Benefits of Play Revealed in Research on Video Gaming*" where he depicted the benefit brought by video games on children and argued that multiplayer video games are beneficial for their social life (2018). Many others share his point and studies supporting this view spread.

On the other hand, risks associated with video games are often pointed out by scientists or media. It is commonly thought that parents should restrict time spent by children on video games or it is abnormal for an adult to feel concerned about it. I often read that thanks to, or due to in that case, technological progress, video games are becoming more and more realistic and people, especially younger, have a hard time differentiating the real world from the virtual one. In recent years I have come across articles relating killing cases where video games were blamed. The one that surprised me the most is Anders Breivik, the Norwegian killer who admitted having spent weeks isolated play World Of Warcraft before his slaughter in 2011. When they tried to look into his motivation, police investigators pointed out the role that video games could have played .

Although video games market is expanding worldwide, its conclusions are a drag in a way that they foster the bad image of this entertainment and thus probably have an impact on sales. But what do studies concerning video games risks tend to show ? Let me present some representative studies depicting drawn conclusions.

Steven J. Kirsh, Professor at the Department of Psychology of New York College at Genso, had already written papers in 2001 aiming to tackle this issue. His conclusions detailed in his papers :" *The effects of violent video games on adolescents The overlooked influence of development*" (2002) did not suggest a clear link between violent video games and violent behaviour among players. Besides, he argued that video games had been too often criticized concerning these acts of violence and are not direct link.

However, other studies' conclusion differ from this view and blame video games heavily. For instance in October 2018 a study tried to link them to violence. The study title:" *Children's violent video game play associated with increased physical aggressive behavior*" (2018) is explicit enough to sum up the point of view of Dartmouth College, a private University in Hanover, in the United States. This is only one example among others that clearly support that view.

When an activity becomes more and more commonly used in a society, it undergoes more studies. After an overview concerning these serious analysis I clearly noticed that video games were not perceived as bad as I could think. While studies show more and more positive aspects on mental health and skills developed on people, other studies tend to show the opposite. The debate is far away from its end. Nevertheless I also could find content related to other issues such as addiction to video games but I will come back to this point later in this paper.

This sample of studies I have exposed tends to show that experts from different areas show interest concerning the impact on video games. However, even if playing has been studied for decades, conclusions diverge sometimes from an extreme to another one. The interesting point I would like to highlight is that the topic remains as interesting as literature content is enormous.

2.3. The relation

As a last aspect, studies undertaken with the aim to depict the relation between video games and their public or players interaction with their social environment should be overviewed. While I started to look into it. I quickly understood that it would have been impossible to expose all the studies conducted about it. They are simply too many, even though each brings new information. Given that my aim here is not to

present all the theoretical framework over studies and researches connected with this topic, I will present only the most relevant and their conclusion

The first study dates back to 2012, four years before the word "crowdculture" was used for the first time. Jo Bryce and Linda Kaye, respectively from University of Central Lancashire and Edge Hill University, Lancashire, in United Kingdom had studied this relation. In their paper, "*Putting The "Fun Factor" Into Gaming: The Influence of Social Contexts on Experiences of Playing Videogames*" (2012), they drew conclusions based on observation of young regular players through qualitative research by groups. According to their conclusion, gamers feel more attracted by content to be played with other than alone against the computer or machine.

How do they explain this observation? They argued that players' social life reinforces the enjoyment to play with peers. Social processes such as group flow, interactions with others or strategies used by a group in order to achieve a goal, are perceived in multiplayer video games. In other words, playing with others provide psychological satisfaction and this perception may be increased by video games developers if they create an adequate context (2012).

In addition to this, the psychological point of view has also drawn the attention of researchers. A study has been conducted in order to deepen the online video games' impact on players mind and their social life. Charlie Ecenbarger, a professor at Ball State University back then, in Indiana, depicted his conclusions in his 2014 paper:" *The Impact of Video Games on Identity Construction*". Ecenbarger noticed that online video game players may substitute real life interactions by online interactions with other players sharing the same passion for a specific game. Indeed, contacts between players having started through a game, where players play through an avatar, may go beyond the virtual relationship. According to his research this is due to a non-clear separation between online and offline personality feeling where the player extends his game character identity to his real life (2014).

Ecenbarger's conclusions could have made easier the development of the crowdculture phenomenon by developing and improving the players' interactions understanding. Indeed, still in this paper, he wrote a sentence which, in my study, is particularly relevant and without a doubt refers to the not yet named "crowdculture:"research suggests that gaming has positive social effects including strengthening family bonds and promoting inclusion into peer groups" (Ecenbarger, 2014, p.43).

By the same token, the positive feelings of playing with others had been checked out before the online video games. Technology brought this possibility thanks to LAN (Local Area Network) where players have the possibility to play in group in a limited area. It showed a workable way for players to interact, talk and discuss with others about a game while playing. In 2003 a study was conducted in order to deepen the advantages occurred by the online gaming technology. Jeroen Jansz and Lonneke Martens from the University of Amsterdam looked into the LAN introduction through their common work:" *Gaming at a LAN event: the social context of playing digital interactive games (DIGs)*".

I consider their psychological conclusion as very interesting because it completes the understanding of players' motivation to play. Gamers were looking for the same goal even though the tools they had at disposal were not as developed as today. The study depicted players who were meeting in places where they could play on LAN and thus compete with each other. The authors also described in this paper the sudden growth and the importance of websites needed for the organization of LAN events and for their

visibility. An interesting fact is that gamers who were participating in these events that last few days, had to bring tents to sleep, as a real community (2003).

The last work I would like to present is a thesis written by Yun Zhang in 2011, a student from the University of Southern California:" *Social media's role, utility, and future in video game public relations*". She tended to associate social media and the world of video games. According to her observations, they seemed contradictory but are actually not and are more linked that it may be thought (2011). Yun Zhang detailed several strategies used by social media concerning the video games and how these tools may be used to create a relationship with the community. As a last point, she tried to forecast the importance of social media on the world of video games. Her thesis' aim is close to what I am trying to do in this paper. However, the industry and social media landscape were different from today.

My research led me to discover many other works developing the video game and crowdculture. I am convinced that presenting each of them could be a massive information contribution but I have selected here the most relevant ones and by doing so, I put a limit to what, in the other case, would have been a never-ending presentation of researches.

2.4. Overview conclusion

With a view to summing up the most important points to bear in mind, I will draw my conclusion concerning this overview related to my two main topics separately and combined.

The word crowdculture was used for the first time three years ago in order to describe a phenomenon having already been noticed and studied. It can be considered as a conclusion of people's revulsion towards mainstream media advertisements and the possibility to discuss through new communication channels. Who has not seen these stickers "NO PUB" on the mail boxes or people complaining when advertisements appear on TV or on the radio.

These subcultures, which all together form the crowdculture, appeared long time before Holt wrote this word for the first time. Nevertheless, the diversification of these subcultures has been speeded up thanks to new technologies.

Concerning the video games literature, I was astonished by its quality and quantity built by experts from so many different areas. The industry is still perceived negatively by a part of the population but studies tend, partially, to demonstrate that video games do not have a bad impact as it is sometimes thought. To some extent, I have presented studies, having even concluded that video games have a positive impact on players. I am convinced that these works may bring people to stop demonising this industry.

As I have already mentioned, it was just impossible to present all the aspects tackled concerning the video games topic. Consequently, I will include later all the information I found depicting strategies and the industry because I will deepen it later in my paper.

Finally I have briefly exposed some studies having brought relevant information concerning the specific link between video games and the crowdculture. Once more, research workers from a wide range of different fields have focused on it. From social, psychological or even other thesis authors, each of them brought his contribution to the development of the literature framework.

While, on the one hand, we commonly hear that video games tend to isolate players and cut them from their social life, other studies, on the other hand, argued that video games allow interactions which would not have been possible. Furthermore, new ways of playing develop positive feelings towards the target thanks to, again, these subcultures. Finally the step between virtual and real meetings has been crossed because nowadays, players meet and assert themselves as a community, which is growing.

3. The structure

3.1. Hypothesis

The aim of my thesis is to bring answers to a specific question based on my future observations, conclusions and the information I gathered.

Nevertheless, I may already detail my hypothesis. I have personally witnessed the crowdculture phenomenon and I already have some basic knowledge concerning video games and their evolution through periods of times. I used to play and I still discuss with others about video games. Thus, I will give my opinion and it will be interesting to compare it with my conclusions later in this paper and wonder whether my opinion today corroborates with a deeper research.

To start with, I think that video games future will continue to develop to a certain point. Video game companies will continue to grow, but as I will detail it later, and they will continue to diversify by developing new kinds of games for new targets.

Concerning today's strategies used, I tend to think that companies of the sector try to improve a poor image diffused by the media. I see even games developed for a younger target with the aim to bring a tool for their education. The game learning associates a theoretical and practical content in a gaming design, depicted Gamelearn company (2017). For instance, the game Dragon Box, launched in 2018, aims kids to discover algebra.

Thanks to technology and social media, companies will have unlimited possibilities to produce adequate games. Moreover, I am convinced that games quality will be improved. I have seen many games being pointed out for their lacks and I would not be surprised that developers fear that, because of social media, their game would be criticised due to a bug.

The relation between gamers subculture and video game companies has changed and the balance of power has started to shift slowly from the companies to the clients. I remember when I was younger, we had to adapt ourselves to the games released. I consider players' interactions as the reason of this change. Before, we had no possibility to interact with others but when technology allowed us to do so, we seize the opportunity. Nowadays, I would say that companies have to adapt to players' needs.

Furthermore, as I have already presented, some works claimed that playing is part of the human being. Consequently, I tend to think someone saying that he is not interested in any video games at all is because he has not paid attention to it, yet.

Similarly, I also remember hearing that video games were aimed to boys and not to girls. I witness today that this is also not correct and I personally see girls playing games, especially on their phones or on platforms such as the WII proposing gamers to move in front of the TV. Furthermore, I have come across articles depicting female gamers activities and that this community is growing. We will tackle this aspect later in this paper.

Moreover, I would say that companies have succeeded in this technological transition and I can hardly imagine how video games will look like in the future but I feel convinced it will be still connected to players' interactions and the power will eventually remain in their hands. I would even go further by saying that the relation between video game companies and players will maybe not be seller-buyer anymore but will become more a kind of partnership and will cooperate in developing better games.

I am 27 year old and my friends and their friends still play video games. It fortifies my opinion that this is acceptable to still play at my age. I also remember that, during my childhood, games' content were especially connected to violence, fight or guns, thus what we used to play was more or less the same. Today we ask one another:``what kind of video games do you play?" because the companies content released diversification has increased. However, I know only a few parents of my friends who play, but it exists. My point here is that I think video games will not only try to reach the gamers' subculture but also the families with young kids thanks to learning games for instance. And according to what I have seen, it has already started.

To sum up my point, I see the relation between hardcore and casual gamers evolving towards video games. What do these two concepts stand for ? According to the website LeDictionnaire, hardcore gamers play intensively video games while casual gamers play occasionally to relax, pointed out the website GameArt (2019). More people will be attracted to gaming because their friends will also become users. Thanks to interactions on social media, people will motivate each other to start playing.

Gaming expansion is unavoidable because we have always and will always play, especially in an environment where pressure at work is growing. Video game companies, if they tap into the tools at their disposal that we will present through this paper, will witness a fruitful future. However, I see one threat: A revulsion among the community towards video games as it is the case for advertisements.

3.2. How my work will be developed

My thesis will consist of several parts organized in a way I consider the most logical one in order to bring as much information as I can and answer the main question "*How do Belgian video game companies tap into crowdculture?"* properly and efficiently.

It seemed important to me to develop my topic as a funnel. I have already broadly presented the situation before going through it, which will make my research development easier and the understanding of it. Then, I will investigate the topic and focus on specific aspects in order to bring precise answers.

My work will be developed as follows:

I will first introduce the crowdculture and depict how it appeared and how it has expanded in our society. That first point will be followed by a development explaining how crowdculture started to have an influence on the video games industry and how the current situation is.

After this depicting I will present this aspect through relevant figures about the world and the Belgian video games market which bring different kind of information than what would have been analysed so far. These figures will be put in a context and will be presented with a view to filling us in a better understanding of the past, current and future forecast figures.

Afterwards, my paper will go through a description of the video games market landscape and an explanation of how strategies have changed over time. Thus, on the one hand I will investigate how companies reach their target and how they earn money nowadays, in comparison with the past. This part will mainly be based on specific terms related to games market. These terms represent new tools used by companies to be profitable and adapt to the environment. Moreover, strategies and structural changes within the companies will be depicted.

That part will lead us to an important step, which is the understanding of how companies encourage their target to spend their money. The psychological aspect is important and companies have developed techniques in order to be able to use it. This analysis will raise questions about players' behavior and throughout this paper I will clarify actions that might seem senseless at first sight for people who do not play video games.

At that point, I will bring up a distinction between the different platforms used to benefit from video games outputs. In other words, I will develop the specificities of phones, tablets, computers and game consoles. If differences are clear, how do companies adapt their strategies to them? A few years ago players did not have such possibilities to connect to games, but what might the future look like? These are the kind of questions I will look into and thus improve my conclusions from the hypothesis.

The aim of my thesis is to detail how companies may enhance their strategies by tapping into crowdculture. We may consider this community as an asset, which has to be exploited properly. Conversely, I will see that in opposition to what I will have developed, crodwculture has the power to lead a company to go bankrupt. Thus, members of this community call the shots in the industry and are able to make companies shine but also fall.

From this point, my paper will focus on Belgium and its market.

I will start by comparing the Belgian market with points analyzed so far. Does our country's market show specificities that we do not see in another country? Furthermore, strategies used by Belgian video game companies will be examined. Due to the impossibility to check out all companies, I will focus on some specific representative companies in order to answer the question.

With a view to proceeding properly I will discuss with gamers and try to understand members of this subculture. On the other hand, I will analyse three Belgian video game companies With a view to depicting how they proceed to reach gamers' expectations.

With the aim to complete my research and bring satisfying solutions, surveys will be carried out among hard and casual players in Belgium. Answers sorted out will help me to draw conclusions about players in our country.

Finally, my paper will come down to the most important part of this thesis, which are my recommendations to Belgian gaming companies. My results will offer valuable information to highlight the most efficient strategies to be used by national companies in order to reach their goals in our country and maybe even abroad.

4. The current context

4.1 The crowdculture emergence

My paper has already tackled the crowdculture concept and several works. The aim was to fill the reader in with the necessary knowledge to be able to understand the topic analysis. Consequently, those who had no idea about what it could have been, now have a clue by reading about its meaning and context in which it appeared.

Nevertheless, with a view to proceeding as I detailed above, my explanations need further details and examination of what is actually at stake and what is precisely involved. That step will bring a clearer image of it and will highlight several aspects I intend to study. I have presented before the theoretical framework but now I will tackle it in a more practical way.

4.2. A theoretical approach

4.2.1Douglas Holt

I have already brought up Douglas Holt's work and what it represents. As long as a phenomenon is not yet named, it cannot reach large audience awareness. Thus, I will develop Holt's work because in my view the crowdculture was officially recognized through Holt's paper.

At the dawn of the development of technologies, social media were seen as groundbreaking communication channels that brands could use in order to spread their messages. Unfortunately, these channels took people away from brands, argued Holt.

On January 2019, the famous razors brand Gillette tried to tap into the "Metoo" social movement. The aim was to support this movement by highlighting men's stereotypes such as harassment, barbecues, fights, explained Fiona Schmidt for the Cheek Magazine (2019). By trying to please people who supported "Metoo"on social media with the support of a video spot, they attacked their target: men. The brand was pointed out by male gender in the US, where the video was diffused (2019). The message was perceived as presenting masculinity as toxic. The consequences for the company were a depreciation loss of 8 billion dollar, claimed the DailyWire website (Barrett, 2019, para.1)

Nowadays, actually, social media have become a barrier between brands and their target.

At the beginning of social media, brands saw these communication channels as an opportunity to seize. The reason is that provided brands the opportunity to reach their targets more efficiently by developing their advertisement contents and more elaborated designs (2016). Holt explained that brands spent billions in order to develop their messages and their creativity with the hope they become viral.

That strategy has a name: brand content. This concept has already been introduced when I presented Sandra Fourny-Arrivé's Phd Thesis (2017). In a few words, the aim is to reach clients' mind thanks to a spectacular advertisement presented as out of the box. However, Holt claimed that brand content strategy has become ineffective because targets have the possibility, through technologies such as AdBlock on computers, to avoid advertisements and are willing to do so (2016).

As I previously presented, some studies as Jean-Marc Lehu in: " *Haine du marketing: analyse d'une relation consumériste ambivalente*" (2011) have concluded hate towards advertisements is growing. Internet is the place where targets were and are, but sometimes, out of reach thanks to, for instance, tools that do not allow ads content to appear on the users' screen. Consequently, possibilities to reach targets have become more restricted due to people having finally the possibility to avoid their advertisements broadcast through mainstream media.

Still according to Holt (2016), the crowdculture is an entity composed of the already mentioned, subcultures, and the artistic world where people may express their creativity. The second component mentioned is the artistic universe where interactions between people ends in artistic creations and takes over brands' messages. Consequently, people are more cautious towards these works which do not expect anything in return from them, in opposition to brand creations.

In term of figures and results on social media, huge brands lag in comparison to smaller companies or even some people, such as influencers, who get a far better visibility than these corporate content which cost billions. Holt demonstrates his point by simply listing some Youtubers' and brands results.

In other words, on the one hand there are passionate people who spend money on tools such as a camera and get millions of followers who are receptive to their speeches and on the other side, brands which hire entire teams and work for weeks on projects which are, in the end, inefficient. Nowadays, the comparison is possible easily to everyone thanks to many kinds of figures such as the number of followers, views, shared content, likes, comments and more. Holt argued that this situation results in a kind of monopoly where attractions and trends are organized around new established celebrities. Members consider them as models they trust and admire. This relationship contrasts with how this target is bounded to brands because simply, companies do not represent an interesting topic to discuss or to interact with (2016).

After having read this article last year I started to wonder in which extent I was seeing eye to eye with the author or not, thanks to what I could have seen so far. Thus, I started to think about my own situation and I figured out that I was actually part of one of these subcultures. The relationship described in the article between someone and an entity corresponds to how I interact with the football club of Liverpool. What do I mean? I watch their games, check up on their news every day, spend time scrutinizing experts' analysis, follow them on social media. It boils down to my interactions with other members. Indeed, I used to read their comments and points of view and I did not hesitate to share mine which leads to real conversations. Furthermore, the step to real meeting is crossed when we meet at some pubs where clients are mainly other Liverpool fans. Of course, other football clubs gather their own fans in specific pubs in big cities across other countries.

People interested in art attend exhibitions while others organize demonstrations to speak out their opinion about lack of actions towards the climate. Illustrations confirming this logic process may be considered as unlimited and everyone may think of one. In other words, I am already convinced that Holt conclusions are in large extend right and time will confirm them.

On second thoughts, it seemed clear to me that Holt showed to companies the ropes concerning how to address a message to their target. He laid the foundation of a better understanding of crowdculture. Many works connecting crowdculture and video games followed his and even completed what he had started. He came up with another word to name a new strategy: cultural branding.

4.2.2. Cultural Branding

With a view to developing my knowledge about the topic, it is worth gathering information about what could have been developed and, consequently, check out what could be considered as Holt's work extent. In other words, I wanted to take a look at other authors' contribution.

I came across a very interesting blog called "Com&Unity Paris" which is specialized in marketing analysis. In addition, the group provides referencing website services to companies willing to increase their visibility on the internet. More precisely, one of its author's articles drew particularly my attention . Nathael wrote an article a few months ago:"*Le branding culturel, (web)marketing de la fierté des communautés: explications et cas*"(2018), which in some points went further than Holt's work .

Holt noticed that brand strategies had become inefficient and pointed out how they should communicate to their target thanks to cultural branding.

If I had to define, with my own words, what cultural branding is I would simply write it is suggested to brands to make people love them for what they are and not anymore for what they sell. In other words, brands should act in order to make people like them for their values expressed as a person, defend a position towards a topic which is important to their target. Nathael argued that brands had better show personality traits to which people may identify themselves (2018). It comes down to members of the subculture who consider the brand as a spokesperson that will defend them.

Why did I use the verb "defend"? Because crowdcultures, Nathael detailed , are trends which may be in opposition to what is already been considered as "normal" in a society. Another aspect developed by the author and which actually makes sense is the risk brands have to take in their advertisements. People got

used to seeing these one-size-fits-all solution messages, which have become invisible and consider thus brands as being one trick pony (2018).

By the same token, Nathael claimed, by taking the risk to please fewer people and claim their convictions, brands will please differently those who feel in harmony with the message. I see this as brands saying to their target "Look, we are not that different, I am also part of this society and what you believe is right and I will help you in your fight. For example Nike, has clearly supported women in sport, according to an article from Forbes. Consequently, I am at your service and I can make you happier because I know what you need and together we can make this world a better place".

So far, I have gained ground in the understanding of the crowdculture. I have presented the topic in a theoretical aspect through works and studies carried out about it. Moreover, the reasons of its apparition have also been depicted as well as the challenges and opportunities companies have and will face. Besides, some specific vocabulary has been introduced and will be helpful for the development of my paper. In other words, this information is necessary to get across to someone who did not have any knowledge about topics tackled here.

However, my investigation has remained descriptive concerning video games and crowdculture. Thus, both entities have been discussed separately and we will enter the heart of the matter by linking them. In other words, the next part will introduce the two main themes together and explain how video games and crowdculture have started to become linked

4.3. How it started

Throughout this paper I have tended to demonstrate that we are witnessing huge changes in the video game world. When I am writing these lines, everything indicates that the games landscape we knew a few years ago belongs to the past.

In a few years everything has changed, from mentalities to strategies processes. This is at least a conclusion we may already draw but, concerning what it will look like, it is much harder to predict. Ten years ago, it was probably hard for people to predict how the video game market would look like

I will develop this process through studies conducted by academics who brought relevant information concerning the gaming evolution logic and how everything started from scratch, and players mentalities evolution. Later, I will expose some specific cases which have been a boost for this evolution.

4.3.1. From a researcher's point of view

To start with, I will introduce a Belgian academic work from Stef Aupers professor at KU Leuven in Belgium. In 2007, which corresponds to the period when Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs) appeared, he looked into what this way of playing could bring to players through "*Better Than the Real World": On the Reality and Meaning of Online Computer Games*".

MMORPG usually offer the possibility to players to access a fantasy world where they play an avatar such as a creature. Aupers insisted that it is essential for the world to be developed enough and coherent for allowing the player to believe in it in order to "enter" this virtual world. He got across to readers that

Tolkien, the Lord of The Rings Trilogy author, is the precursor of fantasy world creation which make people feel attracted to discover this universe (2007).

4.3.2. World Of Warcraft

To begin with, World Of Warcraft, released in 2005 by Blizzard Entertainment, is considered as the game that laid the foundation of this kind of game. However, I would like to insert a quote of Auper's work which perfectly describes the specificity of these computer games " Like the 'real world', these online worlds are shared (they are 'inhabited' by millions of players at the same time), they are persistent (the three-dimensional environment continues to exist – twenty-four hours a day – even when there are no people interacting with it) and they generate a unique culture, social structure, economy and ecology that changes over time." (Aupers, S., 2007, p.256).

The settings had already been good enough to allow this transfer from a world to virtual one where players may feel so comfortable that they started to appreciate this other world.

As a result of the game quality development, we may start to catch on why players continually feel the need to enter this new world that they sometimes consider better than the real one

In his paper, Aupers analysed through several famous games the growing players' need to interact with each other but, here, I will depict only one game that gathers all the relevant aspects (2007).

World Of Warcraft is a game I have always considered as a high flyer when I was younger and I also had the opportunity to spend some time examining this game by myself. But what did the author depict about this legendary game, still played worldwide by tens of millions of players?

In a nutshell, what is this game about? To start, players are invited to decide whether they are part of the Horde or the Alliance which are the two rival entities that may be considered as good and evil. After this step, players must choose their character between several races, each of them providing their own specialities, strengths and weaknesses. It is interesting to point out that many of the popular Lord of the Rings writer J. R. R. Tolkien's developed creatures appeared in most of these kinds of games, including thus, World Of Warcraft. Although these decisions may seem set up just for fun and please the player, they actually lead the scenario and by the same token, players' decisions. Consequently, players will have to adapt their strategies and mind with a view to becoming stronger and fight alongside other players' clans or groups.

The game is composed of a story and players are invited to follow it and play by themselves. However, Auters developed , that is not the way which found success because developers set up the games in order to maximize interaction between players (2007).

Indeed, many missions, or also called quests, that players have to accomplish are simply impossible for one single player. This is the reason why players gather as a community and create teams, called guilds, where each of them is specialized in one aspect. In other words, each designed avatar brings inputs to the team and everyone becomes important in some way. By using the word 'input', I do not only mean helps during a fight against a creature or another clan, but also concerning the daily survival of the community

in the virtual world. Players are, for instance, to look for raw materials in order to build useful tools for the guild and their avatars.

Seeing that players have to "work" in the game, we might think of a kind of contradiction. Obviously, work being often placed as the opposite of having fun. The author argued that people's dissatisfaction and unease at work in our world is growing and, at the same time, technology provides them with a parallel universe where they can feel useful, understood, rewarded and free (2007). In other words, what their actual job does not provide.

World Of Warcraft, that actually shares the same features of other MMORPG games, offers players a high quality communication channel which makes interaction between players easier. For instance, it is common to run into other players and start a chat and if players hit it off, they may start a collaboration and which may later lead to a guild.

I had the opportunity to discuss World Of Warcraft with hard players who admitted having been addicted in the past. My aim was to understand how this game tapped into new technologies and opportunities, back then, and successfully gathered a community. This last point is what I tried to understand and to highlight developers' strategy who created a world in our world.

Firstly, people I talked to immediately pointed out the freedom offered. How did they perceive it? The story takes place in a huge open world where they actually have the possibility to do whatever they want to in a map they can explore and follow specific objectives or not. Thus, meetings with other players are common and from that moment they may ignore each other, discuss or fight. Nevertheless, the latter does not provide many rewards.

The game did not encourage players to fight with each other through their character. I detailed earlier that new players are to choose between two groups, The Horde or the Alliance and belong to it. The game strengthens this membership feeling with an invisible barrier between these two groups by creating interaction between players even though they run into each other.

Another effort made was to create a world where similar actions to our real world are needed. For instance, virtual cities have been designed on certain areas of the map, where players are invited to sell, buy or exchange items. Moreover, the financial aspect has not been ruled out. A bank, a market, gold coins and a special chat aimed to discuss exchanges of any type exist. What may players do with this virtual money? They have the possibility to buy items to improve their character or some skills.

Secondly, the other particularity of World of Warcraft lies in the community's development. As I mentioned earlier, setting up a guild, is very easy. But how are they structured? The number of members is unlimited but a kind of hierarchy is visible, as we also see in workplaces. Guilds are often structured in the same way. At the top, there is a player who may be compared to a boss and is generally the guild's founder.

Communication between members is possible through several channels. Indeed, once a player joins a team, a special chat appears where they can easily discuss strategies, how and when meetings will take place or topic related to real life. The more complex a game is, the more it encourages player interaction, it must provide efficient means of communication. Players get in contact with each other through forums, social media or special apps allowing them to discuss without an intermediary which could be the game chat itself.

In World Of Warcraft, mutual assistance among players reaches a peak during the dungeons and raids that, if successful, reward the guild with special equipment for one or many characters. As a result of this single reward for many players, they needed to decide in advance who would be going to take this special reward, or decide it at the moment the reward becomes available; some members would then get nothing. This is a reason why players are committed to proving they deserve to be there and receive the favours of their peers. Communication, mutual agreements, accepting to spend time for the others are essential for the survival of their guild.

The last point I would like to tackle in World Of Warcraft boils down to the rewards aspect. During my discussions with players, I have been told that this is an essential point video game companies focus on (2019). Indeed, the game tapped into this strategy after it was released. In other words, it tried to make players addict by offering rewards to players but not easily. A few years ago, players had to spend a lot of time and work their fingers to their bones in order to get new tools and improve their character. Nevertheless, former hard players I talked to, claimed that developers have made it easier to get rewards. For instance, at the beginning, players did not have the possibility to buy content with real money. However, nowadays they do and accessing rewards has also been changed in order to encourage new players to continue (2019), pointed out players I talked to. This technique is commonly used nowadays and the reward aspect will be tackled deeper later in this paper.

This video game subculture is consolidated through what I have exposed before. Their members encourage each other to play and companies tend to set up strategies aiming players to spend more time on games. They have tools at disposal which allow them to make players' interactions with each other easier. This point is important to bear in mind for what will be detailed later because it represents video game companies' logic.

Their strategies have become so efficient that people have witnessed a real addiction to this game where everything makes sense. I remember an image which illustrated what people feared when they saw players becoming addicted to this game. They saw players considering virtual world as their real one and World of Warcraft had, in their view, become everything they had in their life. This is a correlation with bad opinion arisen among people toward video games, as explained earlier and this paper.

So much so that, I remember a famous image which appeared a few years ago and aimed to illustrate what people were thinking of this game and players. We see a boy alone in a room in bad shape with a mask that reminds me of a virtual reality mask that we see nowadays. The boy is playing his game and does not seem aware of the environment in which he is actually living because his reality is what he sees through this equipment.

Image 1 : World of Warcraft in 2030

Yet, many studies have checked out new games possibilities offered and how players' perceptions have improved. I have mentioned earlier that World Of Warcraft offers the possibility to players to customize their avatar. At first sight it may seem a detail but it is actually not. For instance, a study was conducted by Selen Turkay, a researcher at Harvard University. She studied the Avatar customization principle through her 2016 paper:"*The Effects of Avatar-Based Customization on Player Identification*".

She put forward her conclusions about how video games help gamers to identify themselves to their characters and how it improves the experience. She published her work in a magazine called International Journal of Gaming and Computer-Mediated Simulations, published by the University of Minnesota, which gathers theoretical studies about video games (2016).

In this part of my work I have presented how video games have enabled a subculture to grow and how companies have tried to give goals to their members. Although strategies may be similar to games of this particular period which allows players to compete online, other kinds of games may be considered as groundbreaking. I have presented World Of Warcraft where players have to improve their character in an open world. However, another game, Counter Strike, released four years before, marked this period of dawn of online games.

During my childhood I also had the opportunity to watch players competing with each other on this game. It has travelled throughout ages and is considered as the game where players needed to create teams. It is a first player shooting (FPS) game where player takes place in his character's eyes and controls his hands. In contradiction to World Of Warcraft where players might identify themselves to their avatar, in this kind of games this is simply impossible due to the lack of visibility of the character. However, its strategy is different and pleasure felt of playing too.

With a view to developing the interesting information we might highlight concerning this game and what it has changed in the industry, I will bring up a study conducted by three researchers about Counter Strike.

This game was released in 2000 and even though it was the most played game of this period, it was not the first one providing these features. Nevertheless, what has ensued from it, coupled with World of Warcraft, designed the future of the video game companies strategies and thus explained why the current market looks the way it is.

4.3.3. Counter Strike

In 2007 three Norwegians, Jana Rambusch, Peter Jakobsson, Daniel Pargman respectively from University of Skövde, Södertörn and Royal Institute of Technology tackled changes brought by Counter Strike in the game industry through their work named:" *Exploring E-sports: A Case Study of Gameplay in Counter-strike*". They first described the context of the game market at that time and already mentioned e-sport or sponsors as growing actors of the industry. They also highlighted that players had to adapt to the changes and that video games tend to bring players closer together. So much so that personal performance had become less important than the team's victory (2007).

Furthermore, they witnessed that player-centred approaches were more and more investigated even though this concept remained slightly unclear but stated that communities interactions are probably a part of it.

In their paper they presented another work published four years before their own, thus in 2003, where three other authors depicted how video games and players' interactions had changed in an environment which had undergone a profound technological evolution. This other work was conducted by three Americans, Stephen Kline, Nick Dyer-Witherford and Greig De Peuter in the book:" *Digital Play: The Interaction of Technology, Culture, and Marketing*" (2003).

The 2007 study pointed out the rising culture gathered around Counter Strike and its implication among the players. Actually, it was the beginning of a phenomenon that we still witness today, called e-sport. I will develop it later but what is important to bear in mind is that unlike World Of Warcraft where players unite together to fight creatures from the game, in Counter Strike, teams aim to fight each other and thus have to cooperate with their teammates. The interactive gaming experience I would like to highlight through this kind of game is, according to Stephen Kline, the result of the interaction between these three elements.

With a view to being succinct in this paper, I will present relevant conclusions drawn by the three Norwegians that will bring input and an answer to the question of how video games and crowdculture have started to be linked to each other. The study's aim was to check up on players and their interaction with their environment. Researchers ,for instance, noticed that those who were becoming better at playing Counter Strike started to become more serious while spending time on other pleasant activities (2007). This is another point in favour of those arguing that the boundary between real and virtual world has become less obvious than before.

Moreover, researchers focused on motivation for players to play games on their computer, where Counter Strike is supported. The game itself is not the only point that encourages players to play a game online but the cultural environment also plays a role. They argued that Counter Strike gameplay should be analyzed through the socio-cultural aspect. As I pointed out before, people started to discover e-sport and all it involves. Specialized forums for players arose and as I explained earlier with the World Of Warcraft case, interactions between players are made easier (2007).

The study brought up Counter Strike game play and identified a real process where players have the possibility to improve their skills. The better they are, the easier they will join a team and thus the game will become more serious. Indeed, some players have become devoted to their team and aim to work on

their common strategies. These teams started to have the possibility to perform online or in special events where they could physically meet the other players. The game strategies set up depend on each member's strength and abilities developed before, while having played alone. On that point we may think of a similarity with World Of Warcraft where players had to make choices concerning their character's equipment and thus, fight through its skills (2007).

Moreover, the general level of players has increased owing to the possibility to play against the best players online for players and also novices who have the possibility to analyze them on the internet by watching videos of these matches. The role of players has changed as the process of playing has become different in comparison with before. Peter Jakobsson and his team's research emphasised that some interactions have been developed within a team and with other opposing teams. The reason is that high level teams have adapted their strategy to others and thus do not only pay attention to their own capabilities (2007).

We could compare these teams to a sport team, clans. It is interesting to notice that the word 'guild" is not appropriate to name these communities. The reason is that this word is used for groups taking place in a kind of medieval environment where guns do not belong, but rather swords. The website Merriam-Webster, providing information about language, defines a guild as:" an association of people with similar interests of pursuits. Especially: a medieval association of merchants or craftsmen". (Merriam-Webster, 2019, para.1). Nowadays, many games are composed of this play process but Counter Strike is the precursor. Specificities pointed out earlier are part of this groundbreaking way of playing games. As a sport team, they have to train, improve, set up group strategy and analyze the opponent team. Nevertheless, that may go even further with the use of player transfers to strengthen their group. Indeed, players have the possibility to join better teams, from their country or not, and consequently leave their friends achieve their goals.

In 2007, when this study was conducted, researchers argued that most of the interviewed players did not practice often or even never, because it was considered not necessary. The reason is that practicing belonged to teams with a chance of achieving a contest.

As I presented earlier in this paper, the internet allowed people to interact with each other without constraints and by the same token allows players to meet online in order to play. However, online meeting between members of a team takes place when physical meetings are impossible for instance if players live far away from each other. In other words, being part of a team might lead in meeting in real life.

On the one hand, members of this subculture have started to discuss online thanks to the technology development such as forums, specialized websites or social media. On the other hand, these interactions benefit to novice players who want to learn and also to semi-professional players who found a way to build their reputation (2007).

Another point which has become similar to sport is that external people, players or not, have got the possibility to bet on players or teams. I used to bet online sometimes for fun and I noticed that among the different sport proposed on the website, e-sport has its own category and we have the possibility to bet on the winner. This interesting research I am developing here, is the result of researchers and they examined some websites set up in their country, thus for Swedish players. In other words, games are presented in countries thanks to specific websites aimed to host players of this specific country. Nevertheless, some general websites exist and gather players from all around the world.

Moreover, "*Exploring E-sports: A Case Study of Gameplay in Counter-strike*" paper tackled the e-sport situation back then and possibilities offered by the countries. Players willing to become professionals needed sufficient infrastructures provided in their own country in order to play in an environment allowing them to reach their goals, such as an efficient internet connection or help of organizations to prepare the contests. The prizes offered to winners of such events are, still according to the study, the most enjoyable goal players may achieve because in their view, recognition of their skills is their priority (2007). This is sometimes considered as the new goal of best players and thus aim only to improve their skills. The best way to be among the best and expect rewards, is to participate in contests and thus spend less time on public servers and consequently, stop fighting against random players which has become as a waste of time. Fun was the priority, but this was before.

Researchers noticed that the best players seek to meet players who may bring them experience and help them to increase their visibility.

As with any sport, you do not have to be able to do a sport if you want to watch it. Football stirs up public passion even though not everyone is capable to play it properly. In this case of Counter Strike, or nowadays other games, people who look at professionals are not necessarily players who understand everything they witness but just enjoy it.

The study finally ended by pointing out how the three circuits of interactivity schema, developed a few years before this study, made this new process of playing understandable. They developed a model which represents the different interactions between the three different entities composing the video game industry. Their model takes into account culture, technology and marketing and will be improved by the Norwegian researchers, as you can see below.

However, in this paper, e-sport will be deeper investigated in a section where the current situation will be depicted and thus how these elements presented here will have changed.

Figure 1 : Three circuits of interactivity
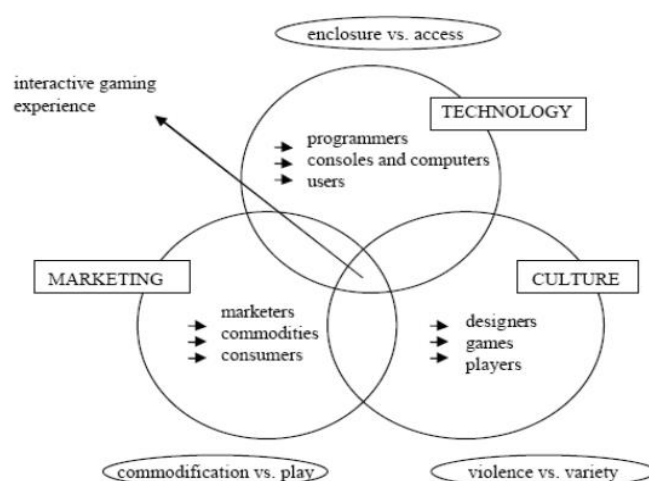
It comes down to the main changes brought by Counter Strike development. Video games, which basically are aimed to bring joy to players, have become much more serious than before through all these changes which appeared through games I have presented and technology development. Players understood there is more at stake than fun and it may contribute to improve their situation in the real world thanks, for instance, to money rewards or increased visibility. Nevertheless, those who consider themselves as casual players have to face players like them and thus, generally, do not meet more experienced players.

Furthermore, discussions within a group have become more important thanks to the contribution of World Of Warcraft, but in the case of Counter Strike, strategies are different and players practice and examine their opponents during new kind of meetings and contests. These events have created a kind of professionalization and thus a new kind of work from what was supposed to help people to run away from the real world (2007).

Then, companies understood they could tap into this new way of playing and sponsors began to spend money on these events because an audience started to be interested in this new sport.

How I see this transformation of the video game landscape is that the number of stakeholders has increased and everyone has a purpose with its development. Companies may increase their visibility through sponsorship, video game companies got a scene where they may expose their games, players have new goals and the public is entertained.

I have exposed two games which made the link between crowdculture and video games world possible, both in different ways. World Of Warcraft has created a feeling allowing players to take place within the game through they customized their avatar and reach goals with their guilds which become as a community. The game set up strategies with a view to encouraging players to spend time on the game and mutually helping between players is necessary. They also designed an open world where the player always finds something interesting to do and where some tasks are identical to their real world. On the other hand, Counter Strike has reduced the limit between fun and seriousness. Indeed, playing this game actually provides real skills which allow players to become better and join a motivated team with other goals.

These elements combined created an environment where more is at stake and everyone has adapted their behaviour to these changes. We may use the word community to describe these subcultures of players who interact more with others and where actions arise. This community is a target that companies cannot ignore and they even have to serve their community members them.

We have gathered information about how my two themes have started to be dependent on each other. However, I would like to expose two other aspects which are other examples of how games may give players some useful skills for real life and how countries have started adapting laws according to video games. Many other studies have been conducted, which provides theoretical frameworks about how the video game industry has become more related to this subculture.

4.3.4. Poker star

Have you heard of Chris Moneymaker? Probably not, unless you are a fan of poker. I have never played poker, I do not know anything about it even if some friends tried to encourage me to try. However, I found Moneymaker's story very interesting and his family name, which is actually not a nickname, suits him marvellously. This is the story of an American citizen who started from scratch in the Poker world and ended on its summit thanks to online training. I have decided to tell his story because he represents these new opportunities provided by technology.

Moneymaker's life was turned upside down in 2003 when he was 28. He used to play Poker online and got some skills which provided him a good level but he remained a novice. One day, he took part in an online contest, which was the first step leading to a big contest which took place in Las Vegas, Chad Holloway told, journalist for PokerNews website (2013). Moneymaker won the different matches which offered him the possibility to play in real life, the final of this contest. The city Entertainment Capital of the World hosted the finals where the winners had to challenge each other. From online playing he ended up in the most important tournament across the world, the World Series Of Poker, where $2.500.000 were at stake, according to Chris Holloway from the website Pokernews.

In the end, Moneymaker won and this was probably the most unbelievable victory in the Poker history. But what were the consequences? We may tackle several aspects but for this paper, I would like to highlight the consequences on games and culture. His victory was widely exposed and people recognized themselves in Moneymaker because they were like him, novices, who only sometimes used to play online. Nevertheless, from that moment, they understood they could also win a reward and Moneymaker had become a celebrity and this subculture was gathered around him. Moreover, the number of players of online Poker started to skyrocket because, as with Counter Strike, people knew they could become better by playing online. We even talk about " The Moneymaker effect", meaning that profiles players spending time on Poker has diversified (2013). Poker has been generalized and passion has spread everywhere in the world. It would have been impossible for online Poker companies to become as successful as we know them today through traditional marketing.

As a last point for this part of my paper, I will present how the law has been adapted to these changes. Nowadays, players have the possibility to spend real money on a game in order to get an advantage, such as for instance a boost, unlock content or get special items. I will detail this possibility which is called "pay to win" later.

Nevertheless, the aspect I consider interesting in this part is that a new flow exists between real and virtual world through money spent. For instance, governments are thinking about cracking down on bad behaviors among players.

In the Netherlands, two teenagers were sentenced after physical abuse on another kid because they wanted to rob him a virtual item. In 2007 two players from the game RuneScape forced a 13 year-old player to give them items, according to Edwin Feldmann writer for PCWorld website. He pointed out:" but it's the first time a judge in the Netherlands has ruled that the theft of virtual property is illegal and should be treated like stealing real-world objects." (Feldmann, 2008, para.4). Both thieves were sentenced to penal servitude. We could think that this story did not have many consequences but it actually did.

Seven years after this unfortunate event, Mike Weatherley, a UK politician dealing with intellectual property, asked the Parliament to examine virtual theft and its consequences for its perpetrators. According to Erica Buist from the Guardian, since players spend real money on virtual items, they become the owner as they would be in real life and thus law from our world should be applied in a world depending on money.

4.4. The video game market

4.4.1 Through figures

The video game industry has gone through an important evolution in different aspects. We have depicted how crowdculture, which represents a target companies should tap into, has started to find a resonance amongst video game players. With a view to having a better picture of this industry and understand it better, figures have to be presented.

As I have already mentioned, this industry is expanding and figures prove it. In this part of my paper I will fill us in with relevant figures demonstrating how figures have improved and how the future for video game companies is offering new possibilities.

First, figures related to the world market will be exposed in order to bring a wide picture of the market over time. This will be followed by a more precise analysis of the Belgian territory and its figures.

My aim here is to develop awareness concerning the pace at which different aspects of the industry have improved.

As a first matter, how is the industry current situation? Let's have a look at 2018 figures.

Last year, across the world, sales amounted to 134 billions dollars, which represents an increase of 11 percent in comparison with the year 2017 (Batchelor, Article, 2019, para.2). This information comes from the website GamesIndustry, aimed to gather data concerning the video games market and it describes itself as the leading website about this topic. With a view to developing the context of these gamers' expenditures, that concerns a total of 2.3 billion players across the globe, detailed Tom Wijman from the website Newzoo (Wijman, Report, 2018, para.4). This specialized website aims to investigate in the video game market, provides data and develops forecasts in conjunction with their consumers' profile analysis. Their clients are companies willing to develop a strategy elaborated with the market specificities.
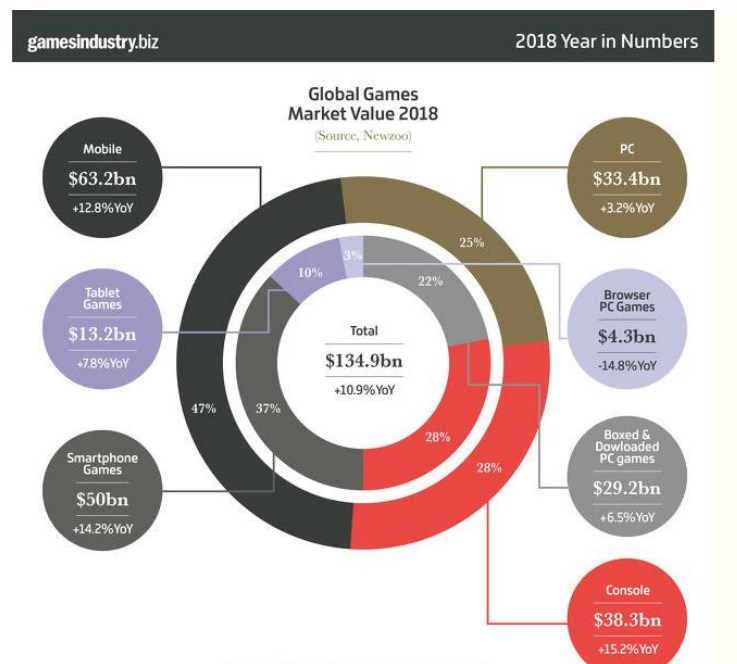
A question we could put forward is, for instance, how this industry is spread over the globe ? Are these figures equally generated around the world, across the different continents ? The answer to this question is clear and does not leave room for doubt and is absolutely not, revenues are not generated equally worldwide.

According to a research conducted by Newzoo and completed by another website Wepc, a team dedicated to helping clients to build their own computer and also gathering data about the game industry, some parts of the world provide more turnover than others. Figures outline Asia, Europe, Latin and North America and their market revenue from 2015 to 2017. The Asian market has increasingly dominated the total market revenue and its growth has also outweighed other continents and thus seems unreachable. Europe combined with the Middle East and Africa will almost reach North America while Latin America remains stable.

Worldwide Game Market Revenue from 2015 to 2017 in Millions (by region)

Source: Newzoo — Created by WePC.com
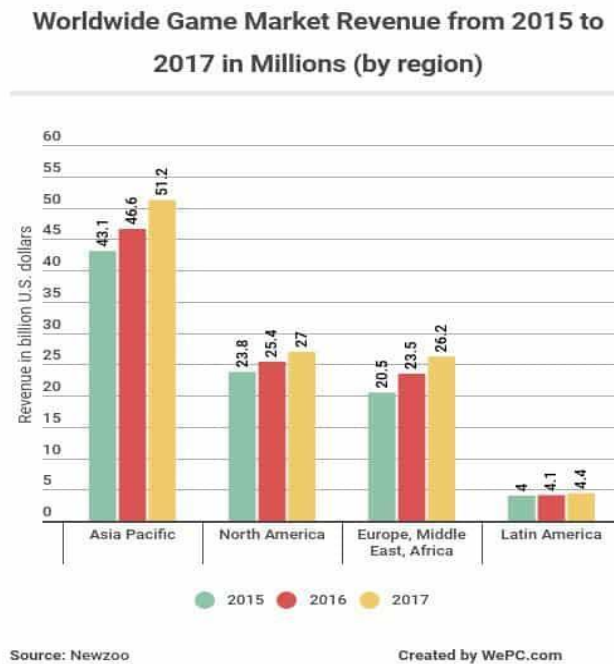
Source: WePC. (2019). *2019 Video Game Industry Statistics, Trends & Data.* Retrieved from https://www.wepc.com/news/video-game-statistics/#esport

If we deepen the analysis, the market was mostly represented by mobile games with almost half sales, 47%, while PC and consoles shared the rest of the market with respectively 25 and 28%, still according to the GamesIndustry website (Batchelor, 2018, Report, para.9).

According to the specialized website Techcrunch, in 2018 traditional games, pay-to-play content, brought 16 billions dollars (TechCrunch, 2019, Report, para.6), based on PC's and game consoles. In other words, free games for acquisition represent the biggest part of the market.

Furthermore, according to GamesIndustry report, the most important year-to-year progression about the global games market value concerned consoles with 15%, followed by mobiles, 13% while PC games sales marginally rose by 3% (Batchelor, 2018, Report, para.9). The article also tackled boxed sales, meaning games needing a physical support such as a CR-ROM and thus not through a download. However, even though figures depict the UK market, they respect the world market proportion. Without surprise, PlayStation 4 represented 44% of the world sales and the second place of the podium was taken by XBOX ONE while Nintendo completed the ranking. I have to admit I was astonished that PC did not represent even 1% of CR-ROM sales (Batchelor, 2018, Report, para.11).

Last year, 2018, I witnessed that spotlights were focused on two games, Dead Red Redemption II and Fortnite, which respectively shares similarities with World Of Warcraft and Counter Strike detailed earlier. The first one generated 725 million dollars three days after it was released while the second gathered 200 millions players at the end of November 2018.

What do I mean when I wrote there were similarities? Dead Red Redemption II is a MMORPG taking place during the conquest of the West, where the player embodies a cowboy in a huge open world. The player is offered the possibility to follow the story and accomplish missions requested to finish the game or he may spend time on secondary quests, which contribute as bonuses. The second one, Fortnite, is a third-person shooter which means that, in contradiction with Counter Strike, the player sees his character fully and the camera stands behind it. The aim is to shoot other players. The main difference between Dead Red Redemption II and Fortnite is that the first is a pay-to-play and costs today, in June 2019, 43 euros for the acquisition while the second one is free (Jeuxvideo.com, Article, 2019). Free games and what is a stake will be examined deeper later in this paper.

Concerning games visibility, figures have also been pointed out. I have, previously, presented some scientific papers having tackled relevant aspects of games. I see these works as capable of changing people's opinion and thus having an impact on sales. By the same token, the more a game is examined, the more it will benefit from free visibility. By the same token, the more a game is checked out, the more important its place on the market is. Without any surprise, in 2018, the game which was covered the most through articles across the world was Fortnite with almost 70.000 papers dedicated while Dead Red Redemption II ranked fourth, according to the GamesIndustry study.

Nowadays, as for movies, video games companies release a short video, as a trailer, before launching a new content on the market. These short clips are used for the launch of a new game or simply for a new update which, is seen by players as a new season release of a serial for its fans. Features, innovation and specificities are highlighted. These short clips are visible on social media, Youtube or specific websites for instance. A ranking has been established and takes into account views per clip. Here again, Fortnite ruled over the top and even the podium thanks to three of its trailers which, together, have accumulated 117 millions views (Batchelor, 2018, Report, para.14). The official trailer of Dead Red Redemption ranked sixth. I noticed that the game I used to play on my phone, Clash of Clans, proposing to have to improve our village by attacking other players in order to gain gold, took place at the seventh and tenth most viewed trailer, for updates. On Twitter, here again Fortnite is not reachable and is the only game whose name was tweeted more than one million times in 2018.

The subcultures composing the crowdculture are generally built around one or several people who may be seen as spokespersons, or influencers who talk for the community and represent them. Members identify themselves to them and see them as a model who shares their values and, most importantly, interests. It boils down to how the community perceive influencers' speeches. In contradiction with brand messages, an influencer finds a receptive public among the community. Even though the influencers' role in the video games industry will be tackled later in this paper, it is already interesting to have a look at figures concerning this new kind of internet celebrity. What do the figures tell us about their role importance ?

To start with, I would like to expose a piece of information I consider representative of how the video game community has become powerful. According to SimilarWeb, a website gathering data about digital efficiency for companies, the most visited website behind Google is Youtube (2019). In other words, Youtube is a major role player on the internet and influencers got the opportunity to spread their messages to another scale. Which youtuber is currently the most followed across the world? Surprisingly, it is a gamer who publishes his games on the media, even though he has nowadays diversified his video content.

His nickname is PewDiePie, Felix Arvid Ulf Kjellberg's real name, a 29 year-old Swede whose channel records 96 millions followers, according to Paige Leskin from Business Insider website (2019).

When I discovered his existence, I started to ask people around me if they knew who PewDiePie was and what his activity aimed to. All the people I asked were clueless about him and this point deserves our attention. Those who were asked this question all used Youtube but none knew who the most important actor in it was. I guess the reason is simply because these people were not part of the video game community. Actually, one person knew about him and could tell me about his activities. This person is my cousin, a thirty year-old aeronautical engineer, who is a member of this community. Thus, it reinforces my opinion that members of this subculture have diverse profiles and it may be harder than expected to classify their features precisely.

While I am writing these lines, behind PewDiePie and his 96 million followers, , other Youtubers seem to lag behind and obviously cannot represent troublemakers. According to the website Influencer MarketingHub, the second most followed is VanossGaming, or Evan Fong, from Toronto, whose community amounts to 25 millions subscribers (Youtube, 2019, Official page). Even though his figures are relatively small compared to PewDiePie, he still enjoys a huge community which is eight times bigger than a brand such as Coca Cola for instance.

The mobile phone market has to be studied too, as mobiles nowadays represent a new support for gamers. The smartphones technology development was an opportunity companies could not ignore. Last year, the game Helix Jump was the most downloaded game on the support, with 328 millions downloads, according to the GamesIndustry website, and is free to acquisition. Its developer is the company Voodoo, ranked number one concerning publishers downloads. The company recorded 1.2 billions of total downloads for their games (GamesIndustry, Report, 2018, para.10) .

In this paper, I will bring up a new monetisation possibility for companies which helped them to see their revenues expanding. This technique is called in-app-purchase. In other words, players have the possibility to buy content within a game with real money in order to have kinds of bonuses. The interesting aspect is to examine how companies talk their targets into encouraging them to pay. I will discuss in-app-purchase stakes later. Nevertheless, the mobile game in which the most important amount of money has been spent is called Monster Strike, based on a Japanese manga, with 691 millions dollars. In this ranking two games appeared I heard a lot about Pokemon Go and Candy Crush which have gathered 642 and 541 millions dollars during the year 2018, still according to Gamesindustry figures (GamesIndustry, Report, 2018, para.11).

4.4.2. Is our country doing well ?

We have been filled in for worldwide video game market figures and I have to admit that before doing this research, I was not expecting such amounts concerning these aspects I have presented. However, worldwide figures help us to understand how this market is expanding but this paper will bring answers related to the Belgian market and a better understanding of the context in which I decided to write this thesis and answer the main question. Thus, what do gaming figures in our country tell us?

According to the same website, Newzoo, our country occupies the 31st place in the world's most important market (Newzoo, Report, 2017). Our market gathers four and a half million players for a total income

amounting to 332 millions dollars. These figures represent a progression of 8% in comparison with the previous year (Newzoo, Report, 2017).

Furthermore, surprisingly, 39% of PC gamers who play more than once a month, are women and concerning that point I have to admit I expected a lower percentage. However, my surprise was even bigger when the report indicated that this proportion is distributed equally between the different age ranges, concerning females women between 21 and 65 year-olds.

Figure 2: Belgian PC players
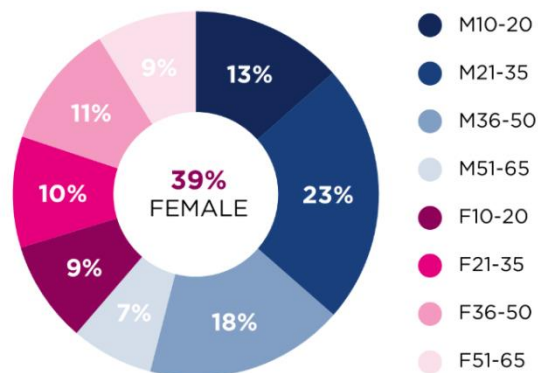
Source: Newzoo. (2017). *The Belgian Gamer.* Retrieved from https://newzoo.com/insights/infographics/the-belgian-gamer-2017/

Concerning men, it is interesting to notice that the distribution across age ranges is not equally represented as with women. Indeed, 23% of the total players, thus almost a quarter, are men who are between 21 and 35 year-old, which is significantly more than the second group the 36 to 50 year-olds representing 18% of the total players in our country. The ranking ends with the 10 to 20 aged group gathering 13% of gamers which is slightly more than the highest percentage for the women. I was expecting to see the smallest representative group occupied by a women age range but again, I was wrong. Men between 51 and 65 years old achieved 7%, which is two percent less than women of the same age.

In addition to this information depicting players according to their gender and age, the website Statista fill us in with the players income level (2019). The pie chart visible in the appendix, figure 1, displays the players by income. Turnover amounted in Belgium has emerged with 41% from high income players, while medium and low ones respectively represent 32 and 27 % (Statista, Annual report, 2019).

I mentioned earlier that an activity started to arise, involving players from games released more than a decade ago, such as Counter Strike, watching other gamers playing. Still according to the report, almost half of the players who watch videos about gaming on the internet, used to watch other gamers playing, meaning that this activity has not weakened. This information might be useful for the future of this paper.

Moreover, we have exposed that platforms on which people have the possibility to spend time on this entertainment, have diversified. We may think of PCs, game consoles, tablets, mobiles, which are the most common used by players. A question we could put forward is whether players spend equal time on these diverse platforms or not. As far as I am concerned, I used to play on consoles with friends because I have not invested on new consoles and I still own an XBOX 360 which was released in 2005. Nevertheless, as I have already mentioned, I also play on a game on my phone, Clash Of Clans, a free game produced by

Supercell company. As a last point, I also sometimes play a game on my computer, which belongs to a series called "Total War". The specific game I used to play from that series, Rome Total War, is quite old and released in 2003. However, I still enjoy it. Even though I do not spend a lot of time on games and thus do not consider myself as a real member of this community, I spend equal time on these different platforms and would not reject a game because it is playable on one of them specifically.

As far as Belgian gamers are concerned, 21% of them play on PCs, consoles and mobiles (Newzoo, Annual report, 2017). If we check up on figures, we clearly notice an evolution regarding the different platforms. Indeed, this below bar chart compares different kinds of games revenues in Belgium by excluding physical video games sales and free to be acquired. This evolution has been confirmed over the years, as looked into Statista. These revenues will amount to 248 millions dollars by the end of this year and will have reached 265 by the next. The grey area from the bar represents online games which can be played on browsers on the internet while the dark one is the revenues on games needed to be installed through downloads for PCs or consoles. The blue area is allocated to mobile games or tablets where revenues are generated from purchase for acquisition or money spent by players within the game.

Table 3: Revenue growth in Belgium
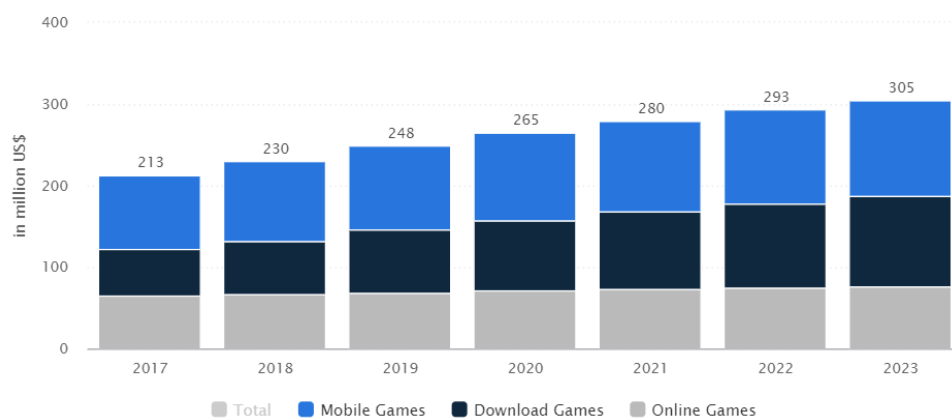
Source: Statista. (2019). *Video games in Belgium.* Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/outlook/203/129/video-games/belgium

Furthermore, sales will continue to grow and reach 305 millions dollars within four years, in 2023. In other words, the market for these games in our country should continually improve. However, if we analyse this evolution we may notice that the evolution is slowing down.

We may convince ourselves thanks to the bar in appendix, figure 2, Revenue growth in Belgium. In order to quantify this progression, it is necessary to look into mobile, download and online games separately.

More precisely, download games have reached a peak between 2018 and 2019 by 18%. However, this movement has been slowing down since the beginning of this year and even though revenues raised, their pace will falter.

The most important segment concerning mobile games, will also go through a decelerating evolution from this year, 2019. Before 2018, players expenditures increased with almost 8% but after that year, this number will have been reduced by half. As a last point, online games figures will also been developed but its slowing growth will stabilize at 3% (Statista, Annual report, 2019).

As a comparison, we may measure Belgium with other countries concerning these presented figures. Our country and its 248 millions revenues may seem surprisingly high, but put in a context, not really. If we take a look at the podium we discern how small we are. China is ranked number one and its market generated 23 billions dollars (Statista, Annual report, 2019). Behind, the US and its 17,5 billions are followed by Japan and 11,5 billions dollars.

Even though figures tend to demonstrate a stabilization concerning our market evolution, others show the opposite. Put in a context, they contradict another aspect analysed, which is the number of gamers. While our video game market concerning these three kinds of games tends to keep in steady state, gamers figures are slightly expanding.

Figure 3 Number of players in Belgium
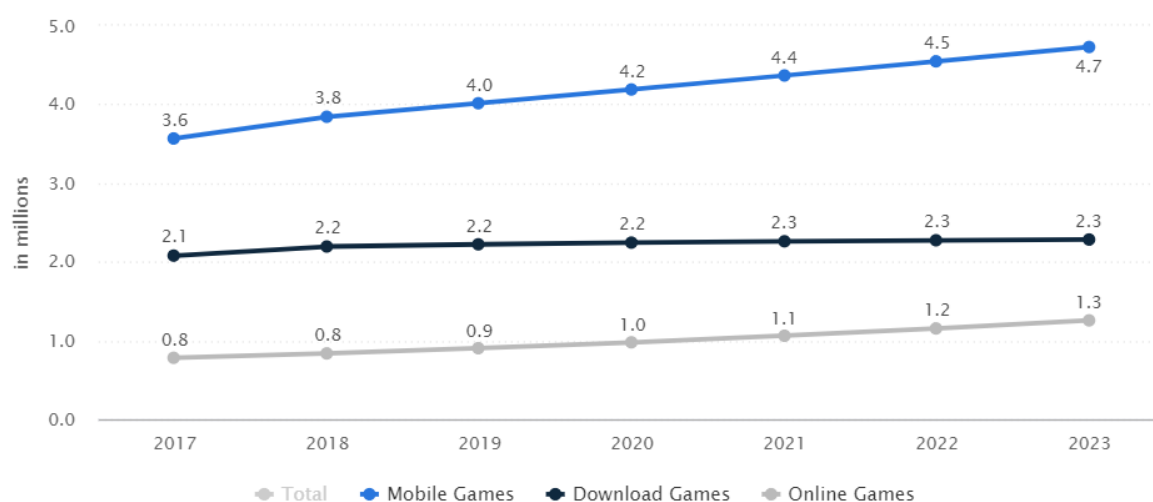
Source: Statista. (2019). *Video games in Belgium*. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/outlook/203/129/video-games/belgium

The Belgian video game industry has also to be talked over concerning how companies present themselves to other countries. With a view to making meeting between gamers and companies physically possible, fairs have been created. These events take place each year and all stakeholders from the industry have the possibility to discover new games or companies or exhibit their products.

I will later point out why these game conventions are important and game companies consider these events as an opportunity they seize. Some of them gather people from all around the world as for instance one of the most important, the Gamescon. According to Sarah Gordard from L'Echo, last year Belgian video game companies that attended Gamescon represented a common turnover of 86 millions euros whereas in 2014, all Belgian companies represented a turnover of 43 millions euros (L'Echo, Article, 2018, para.4).

For my research I also had to investigate the field. with a view to gathering information I asked for a meeting with Mr Sana, professor at the Albert Jacquard Institute, in Belgium. My tutor, Mister Jacques Folon had advised me to contact him because his knowledge would be valuable for my work. Later in this paper, I will mention his name when information I received during our meeting will have to be put forward.

During our conversation he explained to me that the different regions of Belgium, the North and South, were not similarly efficient. According to him, Flanders is between eight and ten times more productive, in the video game market, than Wallonia which thus lags behind. Furthermore, the north best representative studio is Larian Studio and Wallonia hosts Fishing Cactus studio, considered as the best in this region and presented a turnover of 2 millions euros and takes on 30 employees.

The online newspaper L'Echo detailed that Larian, which attended Gamescon last year, owned an important part of the turnover of Belgian companies which attended this event. According to L'Echo, Larian Studio, from Ghent, earns 80% of Belgian revenues (L'Echo, Article, 2019). In total, in Belgium, companies had earned 100 millions euros in 2018 while it had reached 90 millions one year earlier. If we look into this figure, a huge part of it, 82 millions euros had been gained by Flanders, mostly by studio Larian alone. This part of the country's result was possible thanks to the 790 employees spread in 72 studios. Regarding Brussels and Wallonia combined, they clearly lag behind. Together, they hosted 34 studios in 2017 for a total of 210 employees which brought about revenues amounted to only 8 millions euros (L'Echo, Article, 2019, para.7).

4.4.3. What do forecasts tell us ?

After having been filled in about how the world and Belgian video game market has developed so far, it is as relevant as looking at forecasts in order to get a complete understanding of the video game industry. To start, figures presented in studies and reports unanimously show an increase in the world market figures. Indeed, revenues concerning mobiles, PCs and consoles will keep growing. According to an annual study conducted by Newzoo, while revenues concerning PCs and consoles will progress, those depicting the mobile games market will skyrocket. The figures presented showed that mobile games have already gained half the industry and this trend will be reinforced. The report detailed that 80% of the mobile games revenues will be originated from smartphones while the remaining segment will represent tablets.

Moreover, pointed out Newzoo, it is interesting that mobile games expansion has not and will not correlate with a drop off the two other main segments market shares, PC and console games. Newzoo put forward reasons such as e-sport or in-app-purchase for consoles.
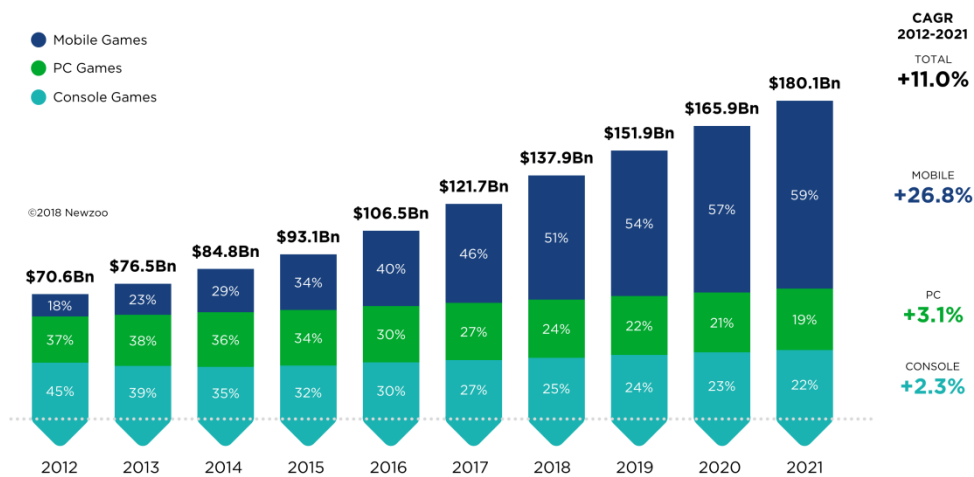
Source: Newzoo. (2018). Mobile *Revenues Account for More Than 50% of the Global Games Market as It Reaches $137.9 Billion in 2018.* Retrieved from https://newzoo.com/insights/articles/global-games-market-reaches-137-9-billion-in-2018-mobile-games-take-half/

Concerning forecasts depicting our market, indicators tend to indicate a bright future. General revenue growth and the number of players will boost as we have seen thanks to the Belgian video game market graph provided by Statista. Moreover, the environment will tend to be more adapted in order to make Belgian companies development easier and compete with other countries. Thanks to a law endorsed by the House of Representatives this year, in March 2019, it was decided to extend the Tax Shelter system to the video games industry. Concretely, tackled Jean-François Sacré from L'Echo, they will benefit from a fiscal help and their taxes will be lowered. Stakeholders have a good hope that this is the beginning of empowerment of video games in Belgium (2019). Even though the environment is not conducive to a spectacular expansion due to other weaknesses of our country's environment, this is at least a step in the good direction.

4.5. The video game landscape

From several aspects, the video game industry is not similar in comparison to a few years ago. The evolution of technology and changes among players' behaviour have considerably changed this entertainment industry. Therefore, companies have had to adapt their strategies and, seeing figures, they have done it remarkably.

According to a column written by two authors, Marion Garnier and Guillaume Prostak in a collective work "*Management & Avenir*", there are five different kinds of revenues in the video games sector (2015). In their paper "*Pourquoi payer dans un jeu par navigateur gratuit? Motivations à jouer et achat d'objets virtuels"* they briefly presented them.

A company may make its products available for purchase through direct pay-to-play, which was the traditional process to acquire a game. Nevertheless, some studios decided to use another technique, called

the "pre-alpha release" which consists in selling a game in its early stage of development, before it is completely finished (2015).

I have already presented the worldwide played World Of Warcraft and its interesting features. However, its commercialisation process is to be presented. It is neither free access or a one time purchase but it is similar to subscription where small amounts are required at determined frequency to access a service. In addition to that, the client has the possibility to end it whenever he wants to. These are also called pay-to-play.

Another motivation of buying a game is based on a human feeling, frustration. This feeling is a strategic 'tool' on which game developers may turn their product fruitful, but its stakes will be deepened later. Companies may offer a part of the game for free, as a sample, and encourage the target to purchase the entire game as a second step. If the player liked the free content, frustration will hopefully arise due to the nonexistent possibility to continue. This selling technique is called freemium.

Last but not least, the last two are free-to-play games which are particularly important in my work and they will be checked out in depth. and revenues from ads within games.

In this part of my paper, I will present the most relevant changes among these strategies and highlight their efficiency among crowdculture. I would define these new processes as tools at the disposal of companies in order to create, for instance, new monetization mechanism. They have the possibility to tap into them but an inefficient or wrong use might lead to unpleasant results for the company. I will provide several examples later in this paper.

4.5.1 Free-to-play

As a first point, free-to-play seems the most important thing to start with. You have probably heard about it and, thus, know what it consists in but it was difficult not to deepen it because I consider it as one of the most important aspects of my topic research. Actually, what it involves and what it has brought to companies was a complete mystery to me at the beginning due to its contradiction.

Free-to-play games mean that their acquisition is free, in contradiction with traditional games that gamers have to pay to obtain. This aspect makes them more attractive than traditional games. Nevertheless, it includes content, within the game, that players have the possibility to buy with real money.

However, you may wonder whether revenues arisen from free-to-play activities are equally spread within the different continents. The table 3 in the appendix, the free to play market, clearly depicts an unequal distribution and Asia is clearly ahead in comparison with the rest of the world, followed by North America and Europe.

According to Stéphanie Marius, head of columns for Ecommercemag website, this free-to-play process is efficient thanks to, or due to, the gamers' addiction to this entertainment (2017). They have the possibility to download the game unreservedly. However, there are two types of free-to-play games, Sana, the video game professor, explained to me during our meeting.

On the one hand we have those, once people have acquired the game, they already have the possibility to enjoy the game's full experience which are called unobstructed play. On the other hand, other games

require a single, or several payments with a view to having full access to the game. The restriction may occur such as a limited period of trial or we could also think about game mode unlock, special avatars or part of a restricted open world. These purchases within a game, which are thus how these games enrich their developer company, are called "in-app-purchase" and will be tackled later. According to Marius, trades are generally made in two steps. First, players have to exchange their real money into a virtual currency developed by the game and then have the possibility to spend it as they wish.

A study has been conducted in order to expose and understand why free-to-play use has become greatly prized by video game companies. Robert Flunger, Christine Strauss and Andreas Mladenow, three researchers from the University of Vienna looked over this topic and exposed their conclusion in their 2017 paper:" *The Free-to-play Business Model".*

They explained that free-to-play is based on a simple contradiction: the offer of a free game in order to receive undetermined money from a player. It may, of course, be a situation where the player does not spend money at all or he may spend huge amounts exceeding by far the price of a normal game. In other words, games have to include possibilities to buy items through processes developed by studios in order to encourage players to spend.

The study also indicated that the model was basically used with a view to selling software and thus was later duplicated for the video games industry. Softwares were made available for free with basic features and, as a second step, people willing to get a more advanced and completed service. Thus, the aim is to prove that the service offered is reaching the consumer's expectations by offering him a sample of what he has the possibility to get by purchasing the complete service.

Nevertheless, for most people, it does not make sense to spend real money on something virtual. Sana, in his lecture content, detailed that free-to-play represents 80% of apps and cash generated is provided by 0,15% of players who spend 50% of total expenditures within a game (Sana, Lecture, 2019, p.70). These players are called "whales". Stéphane Vallet, communication chief at Wargamming, editor of the game World Of Thanks, did not differ from this conclusion and confirmed it. Vallet argued that the huge majority of players who spend money, pay out few euro and those who spend hundreds are marginal.

By the same token, it becomes clear that in order to be profitable, free-to-play games need to gather a huge amount of players, if possible create a real community, since they cannot rely on acquisition price. Christine Strauss and her colleagues brought up Metcalfe's law (Strauss and al., 2017). What does it stand for? Let me quote them because their sentence depicts it clearly and efficiently. "More users make the network "better" and more effective by exchanging information and experiences which subsequently leads to increased visibility and attracts even more users." (Strauss and al., 2017, p.374). Free-to-play games probably allow an expansion of new players more easily, which provides much convenience.

Furthermore, Christine Strauss's team argued in their paper that free-to-play market has become less profitable for companies due to the expansion of its use and thus it has become harder to differentiate from competitors. But how come?

You have probably figured out that free-to-play needs to maintain a kind of relation with the player because as long he does not lose interest in the game, he represents an asset. As a result of this outcome, and with a view to differentiating from competitors, these games are endless. Thus, I would say that players can never say 'well, I have finished the game, it is over, I have been through it'. From that moment,

if you wonder why, then, players keep playing a game they know they will never end, the answer is the addiction. But this aspect will also be tackled later.

The study pointed out that gamers' behaviour is different depending on the platform. Games on mobile phones encourage people to connect several times to the game and spend each time only a few minutes on it. The ease of the accessibility helped that process. Players connect, play one or two games and shut down the application and do the same later on. This process is called 'easy-in, easy-out'. These periods of the day when players are not connected to the game, called dead time, are essential and must have a logic (2017). They should not be considered by players as useless and they should motivate players to connect again. In practice, mutual aid is thus needed as play is created. The game has to be designed in such a way that players have the possibility to ask for help easily and quickly to other players and, furthermore, this help may come when the player is not even connected anymore.

For instance, in my game, Clash of Clans, when we join a team, discussions between members take place in a private chat. Once we need soldiers from a teammate to protect us, we launch a request and others send troops even though the player asking for help is not connected anymore. This process appears in other games such as Candy Crush. Clash of Clans encourages to join a clan by highlighting the advantages to join one, while a picture representing a friend's request for a 'life' is represented by a heart allowing him to continue the game and avoid having to wait.

Image 2: Clash of Clans advices players to join a group

Source: Clash of Clans. (2019). My account

Image 3: **Mutual assistance between friends in Candy Crush**

Source: Candy Crush. (2019). Leslie Leplae's account

Concerning mobile phones games, which represent the biggest part of the games market, their accessibility is simplified by a platform that most people own in their pocket. This is the most important advantage because time between the access to an app, its use and its shutting down is short. According to Vienna's team work, this may last only a few minutes and this process may be reiterated several times per day. In addition, the period between discovering a game, its downloading and its first use may also be a matter of a few seconds and this is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, people get interested quickly and make the step because access is simple. On the other hand, they may lose interest as fast as it drew their attention in the first place.

PC games require more concentration from gamers. Indeed, daily sessions are less frequent but longer thus strategies used in mobile phones games cannot be implemented.

During my meeting with Mister Sana, he called my attention to the specificities of players to lose interest in a game depending on the platform. He argued that a player loses on average interest after only a few seconds on a mobile game. In other words, steps between the download and the start of a game must be short.

If we analyze free-to-play in parallel to one of the two main topics of my paper, crowdculture, we can see that they are actually linked. As mentioned earlier, free-to-play games need a solid audience in order to stay profitable and this is possible thanks to crowdculture and interaction between players. In other words, the gamers community is essential to these games.

Social virtual interactions between players have already been mentioned in this work and the study entitled "The Free-to-play Business Model" I have exposed, has brought additional information. They have also come to the conclusion that games developers encourage players to interact with each other through gameplay and different techniques used we have been through earlier such as cooperation to reach goals or trade of items for instance.

4.5.2. In-app-purchase

This concept was briefly introduced earlier in order to explain with what it involves. Nevertheless, what follows will deepen the topic which is actually created from a simple contradiction: Why did players who were basically attracted by the free access of a game start to spend money while nothing forced them to ? Even though in-app-purchase is more and more debated, its use still provides profitable revenues to companies. However, what are its advantages, according to Strauss's work?

The range of content available within the game and their different prices have allowed companies to reach different kinds of players. These in-app-purchases are mainly made through what we call "virtual goods", which stands for items available in a game and which, as in real life, provides an advantage to its owner and furthermore, it is sometimes tradable, too. That point was already been exposed when World Of Warcraft was analysed. Consequently, developers may earn from those who spend a lot by making expensive items available with higher in game value or basic ones which also provides a kind of asset to its owner by being useful or just making the player distinguishable.

Strauss and her team divided available items into two categories (2017). On the one hand, those that make the player's avatar stronger and on the other hand those which do not bring any complementary efficiency

but just have a special design. Why would someone buy a useless item just because of its look? Because as we have been filled in earlier, the player identifies himself with his character and thus it makes sense *its appearance matters to him*.

This is the exact opposite of casual games' logic. With them, companies have to set up a strategy in order to reach the target segmentation and once they have done it, the question of how they can provide additional revenues does not exist anymore. From the moment someone has purchased the game, the company may consider that the job has been done. In contradiction, free-to-play first step may be considered only as the beginning of the process of making revenue. Indeed, the aim is to create a relation with the game based on the short, or even better, long term and meanwhile gain something from him. For instance, gaining financial revenue obviously, or other players through word of mouth.

Moreover, Vienna's researchers pointed out that the Metcalfe effect, if tapped into, contributes to higher benefit to a company because it makes easier the transition among players from non spender to spender (2017).

For that point, which is probably the most important one to tackle, I would like to expose a personal example. I have mentioned earlier that I used to play a game on my phone, Clash of Clans, which taps into this strategy. Exposing this game is relevant because I know its strategy, I have witnessed it, which helped me to understand its aim and how developers may set it up. For those who had not heard of this game launched in 2012, this is one of the most profitable mobile games. The Californian company SensorTower which provides data information to companies about the mobile market, looked into Supercell figures. Supercell is the developer of Clash of Clans.

First, SensorTower report pointed out that the game's performance is remarkable given that is was released six year ago. Last year, according to their research, the game brought a daily yield of 1,5 million dollars, which obviously represented satisfying efficiency (SensorTower, Report, 2018).

I started playing this game in 2013 and I am convinced I am in a good position to give my point of view and at the same time present practical examples of what I am discussing here, how a free-to-play may encourage players to spend. These examples are aimed to raise readers' awareness about how companies proceed and how competitors' strategies may seem similar to each other. For those reasons I will expose what I have witnessed so far.

In order to improve our virtual village, we have to collect two types of resources: gold and elixir. How do we get them? The first possibility is by doing nothing and just connecting to the game for a few seconds and taking what our resources extractors will have collected while we were offline. The problem is that by doing so, improving is taking too long. And this is how we get to the second possibility which the game encourages us to use which is attacking other players' village and stealing their resources.

For those willing to develop their village even faster another possibility exists which is of course, paying with real money. Actually, not exactly paying immediately content with real money but rather with a tradable within the game, called gems. As a first step leading to buy content in the game, the player has to exchange real money for gems. I took this image from my account : this is what the players are offered and the shop of the game.

I have never spent money within this game because it is possible to get small amounts of gems in different ways such are for instance cutting trees around our village. I explained earlier that game developers,

thanks to free-to-play, have the possibility to reach different types of players, from those inclined to spend a few euros to those who are willing to spend hundreds. This is why offers are adapted to this wide range of targets and amounts injected may quickly escalate. This purchase process is also used in other games such as Candy Crush for instance where money is transformed into gold and not into gems.

Image 4: Shop offers in Clash of Clans and Candy Crush
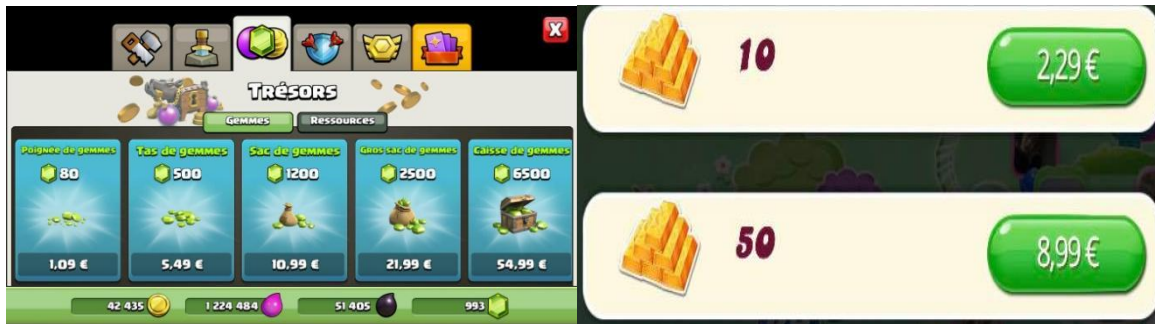
Source: Clash of Clans. (2019). Retrieved from the application   Source: Candy Crush. (2019). Retrieved from the application

Once a player owns gems, possibilities to spend them are huge, which of course encourages them to buy again. For instance, exchanging gems against resources, or buying a shield protecting the village against other players' attack; those are two possibilities among a lot.

Image 5: Investment in protection   **Image 6: Exchange of resources**

Source: Clash of Clans. (2019). Retrieved from the application

These games offer possibilities that can boost the players' efficiency for a while, but this against a magic component owned by the player. He may usually get them thanks to several possibilities such as completing challenges and thus spending more time on the game or simply by paying and thus overtaking other players. Consequently, the community encourages the members to become stronger faster and thus to spend.

A friend of mine, Leslie, plays Candy Crush, this famous game which was basically a Facebook Game but was then adapted to mobiles. She showed me, as Clash of Clans presents, that players have the possibility to access a ranking with their Facebook friends. As you can see, she is ranked fourth and she admitted that it motivated her to spend more time on the game in order to outdrive her friends.

Image 7: Facebook friends ranking in Candy Crush

Players may be tempted to spend money because the game allows me to see my Facebook's friends villages and their progression and at a certain moment, being better than them was important and I knew they used to check my village, too. In other words, help between players exists as much as a certain degree of competition with friends. Nevertheless, I have resisted and I have never made the step to pay. The reason is that it seemed obvious to me that the game set up an elaborate strategy to retrieve money from players. However, I have met many players who had spent a lot of money. The range of players' age is clearly wide and probably that younger people are more vulnerable. This is my opinion but I have also met people of my age having admitted that they had spent a lot on a game. However, it seemed that my opinion was shared by others too.

Moreover, a distinction has to be made between games such as World Of Warcraft requiring a subscription purchase and free-to-play, according to Marion Garnier and Guillaume Prostak in " POURQUOI PAYER DANS UN JEU PAR NAVIGATEUR GRATUIT ? MOTIVATIONS À JOUER ET ACHAT D'OBJETS VIRTUELS" (2015). The latter relies on the quickness of small purchases, called micro-transactions.

Even though in-app-purchase represents an efficient way of monetization and is thus appreciated by companies, it is also relevant to bring up how this is perceived among the main actors of it, namely players. In order to get an answer to this question, a survey was conducted by the company Unity, focusing on helping game developers and professionals from the industry, by offering different services and by providing tools aiming to help their clients to reach their goals. For instance, they advise companies on the best monetization method they should use in order to maximize their profit through tools such as ads.

According to the Unity's report entitled:" In-game advertising the right way", video game companies willing to be profitable through mobile games, have different possibilities they can use (2015). Ads may be included within the game. Another possibility is to include premium content or in-app-purchases. The aim was to understand which method is accepted the best by gamers' communities and in the same way, would be the most efficient or, on the contrary, the least.

Unity report tackled that in-app-purchase is considered the worst monetization technique a company could use, according to the thousands of players surveyed. Only 11% of them pointed in-app-purchase as the most efficient way a company should use, while 71% of players stated that video ads are the best way to reach them (Unity, Report, 2015, p.3). Thus, premium content takes place in-between.

More precisely, videos ads presenting rewards within the game are the content more than half the players privilege to see. They detailed that 62% of the players admitted they would take actions in the game, related to the video ad they would have seen before (Unity, Report, 2015). They actions undertaken are motivated by what these ads pledge the game has for them, a reward.

Some have mastered how to encourage players to spend money on their game by being a part of the video game culture and understood how to combine these different techniques without affecting their game play.

4.5.3. Fortnite study case

Nowadays, a good example to illustrate the crowdculture features and the gamers community, through a game is Fortnite. On the one hand, because its success is obvious and on the other, their strategy is interesting to present because it gathers most of the aspects I previously detailed. Due to its visibility, the game has undergone much research, by specialized websites or people active on Youtube.

To start, the game, played by 125 millions people worldwide, is available on PC, game consoles, Nintendo Switch and recently smartphones. Nonetheless, according to Numerama, a French specialized website dedicated to games environmental stakes, Fortnite experience on mobiles does not equal consoles or computers (2018). The game proposes a Battle Royal mode where gamers have to kill each other on a map. Even though many games had already presented a similar concept before, none of them had reached such a success and in this section we are going to bring some clarification for this success in parallel to the gaming community.

According to Devin Coldewey from the specialized website Techcrunch, the game revenue amounted to 2.4 billion dollars which, of course, makes it the game the current world leader (Coldewey, Article, 2019). So, it seems interesting to look into developers' work and figure out how they used the tools at their disposal.

The battle Royal mode, where everyone else but yourself is an enemy, has known a growing success among gamers over the past years. Nevertheless, the game, developed in 2017 by the American studio Epic Games, has overtaken competitors such as PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds which was till then the most liked premium game by players, thus not free-to-play. Basically Fortnite offers two kinds of game mode. The first one is called Save The World and four players have to survive zombies waves and thus cooperate. This mode was overshadowed by the Battle Royal mode.

In a nutshell, there are two kinds of mode to play. The most famous one proposes 100 players to battle on a map and the last standing wins. The other mode focuses on a team battle, where players are invited to deal with the opposing team.

A game starts with the character flying thanks to an item and the first player has to land on a spot he thinks is convenient. From that moment, he has the possibility to look for equipment which will make him stronger. In parallel, he must also collect wood and rock, which will help him to fight against others. The specificity of this gameplay is that resources gathered enable the character to instantly build walls to protect from the enemy or stairs to climb and thus have a better visibility on the map.

Once you have been filled in with the gameplay, specificities have to be discussed.

First, this game is a free-to-play which had to create an environment where players are willing to spend. Today, when I am writing these lines in June 2019, it seems clear that they have reached their goals. According to The Telegraph, SuperData website concluded that Fortnite, in 2018, had earned the most in the game history with 2,4 billions dollars (SuperData, Report, 2019).

The game has performed in tapping into the crowdculture and I would not be surprised to see in the future companies trying to follow its example.

Thomas Versaveau, a French Youtuber who deeply analysed the game said the developers tried to create a social environment, like social media, where players have a place to meet (2018). He named a service game Fortnite and there, people would have a spot to interact with each other. Furthermore, as pointed out earlier, developers aim to keep their clients in the long term with a view to making them profitable and on the other side, embolden them to purchase.

Fortnite has mainly based its retention on rewards brought to players who have deserved them. We have explained how a player may identify himself to its character and thus undertake specific actions in order to improve it.

Moreover, argued Versaveau, there is a new competition between media entertainment where the aim is not only to propose a better content than competitors, but also to keep the target's attention and become a part of his life. In other words, he considered that a platform such as Netflix is also a competitor because it also aims to earn time form this target. This is the reason why Netflix claimed that Fortnite is its biggest competitor (2019).

Concerning the monetization of its content, developers have tried to think out of the box in order to improve motivation among their target. Companies used to tap into "whales" gamers, representing less than 1% of their target but whose expenditures reach 80% of the total revenues. However, Fortnite adjusted to the evolution of gaming and has not gone with the flow and has also involved other players who are not considered as "whales" but still committed to spending.

According to Numerama, the game yielded 300 million dollars for April 2018 only even though it does not propose pay-to-win content (Numerama, Article, 2018). This aspect will be examined later but it is the name for content that a player may buy in order to become stronger in a game.

In contradiction, the virtual shop within the game where purchases are made, offers content to personalize the character through costumes or specific dances it can do if the player asks for it during a game. The article recounts a study conducted among Fortnite players with the hope to figure out where their motivation comes from to spend real money on a virtual item which does not provide any advantage. They argued that spending real money is a way to differentiate from novice players and that it proves their seniority in the game and by the same token impress other players (2018).

At first sight, it probably does not make sense but surveyed highlighted that if they know they face a skilled player, they must adapt their strategy on the battlefield. The avatar visibility is simplified thanks to a transformation of its clothes as players level up and thus represents a proof of the player's ability. The visual appearance of an avatar is called "skin" and developers have already created hundreds of them. With this wide range of choice, every player may find the one which fits his own personality. Interviewed players admitted having paid sometimes hundreds of euros for skins and are now the owners of hundreds of them and are proud of them.

There is another reason why players are committed to spending money even though nothing forces them to. They are aware of spending hours on a game which is free and thus they feel that they owe money to the company, to at least thank them for taking care of them and asking nothing in return. Furthermore, these micro purchases are made in two steps, through a virtual currency created by developers, V-Bucks. I have already pointed out the advantages of such a process, which erases the feeling of spending real money directly, and from a psychological point of view, especially for free-to-play games where a player feels that he is doing a good deal since it does not exceed the price of a traditional game.

Fortnite developers have been guided by psychologists and marketing experts in order to find the perfect balance between gameplay, rewards, frustration, enjoyment and addiction. The balance was found thanks to a specific person Epic Games had hired. The team welcomed a French woman called Célia Hodent who is a psychologist. According to the newspaper Le Monde, Hodent and her team's goal was to improve the implementation of the game in the players' life and thus enhance the game experience through her knowledge about brain processing (2018). Furthermore, they had to make sure that all the details included in the game and also their aims would be clearly understood by players.

A Fortnite game, even though it gathered 100 players at the same time, lasts only a few minutes and thus encourages strings of games. This is a clear feature of free-to-play games and is similar to a game such as Clash of Clans. The difference is that Fortnite allows players to take part in another game right after, without dead time and thus made the decision not to provoke frustration among players.

Moreover, Numerama argued that developers decided to put players on equal footing by not boosting players who had started to play before others. This makes the integration of new players easier and on the other hand justifies the lack of pay-to-win content (2019). However, it is still possible to recognize a new player on the map. Beginners are first given a basic avatar. The community has also set up a word to indicate players who have never paid in-app content: Bambi. This name was first given by an influencer and was adopted by the rest of the community.

Nevertheless, another kind of content is available and does not concern skins. It gives the possibility to bring rewards. The game includes a kind of pack offering its owner the possibility to achieve other complementary goals developed. Once they complete a challenge, they get V-Bucks or skins or other visual content.

If you had the possibility to see images of the game, you have probably noticed the particularity of its graphics. While most studios aim to reach the best visual aspect for their game, Fortnite made the decision to bet on a cartoon effect. Today, we can draw the conclusion that the community has adopted it.

Regarding the community, developers understood that coddling its members was essential by surprising them and thus avoid tiredness. Thanks to innovations and updates, the game has succeeded in keeping their community, even expanding it and by the same token increasing addiction among players. Despite content, their turnover has probably allowed Fortnite to reach crowdculture and their players, the company also tried to encourage players to boost the communication thanks to spectacular announcements concerning new content incorporation.

Still according to Numerama, Fortnite developers have mastered the use of social media to announce updates and new seasons with the hope to provoke excitation among their community (2019). As we saw, the top ranked trailers concerning new updates in video games were Fortnite content. Interaction about

the game within social media permitted a better understanding of the target and efficient advertising. In other words, the game has become part of the players' life. According to a study conducted by TVREV, a group of analyst journalists, Fortnite gamers spend 25% of their free time on it (Bloom, 2019). The main reason is the feeling of belonging to a group where everyone understands each other and where they have the possibility to feel disconnected from the real world, argued the study. Fortnite has become so important in players' life, that other media are losing interest among them.

In our real world, failing is a problem, and can even bring consequences. In Fortnite, playing Battle Royal theoretically gives you one chance out of a hundred to win, so most of the time, players lose but the company succeeded in making it accepted and even normal. In other words, winning is something special and this is the reason why when it happens, winners feel the need to share it with others and on social media.

I decided to tackle this topic because it was a period when I was every day witnessing some friends posting on Facebook their victory on the game and I wanted to understand where this craze could come from and how companies could take advantage of it. Even though I was not playing Fortnite, I could hear and see about it every day about its news, seasons innovation or opinions. Several dedicated websites appeared in order to create spots where players could meet and interact. In addition to traditional social media they also collaborate with Youtubers who influence the community. The most famous one is called "Ninja", Tyler Blevins, on June 2019 he had more than 22 million followers on Youtube (Youtube, 2019, Official page). He is active on the platform Twitch and shares his games with his community. If you were not convinced that these influencers may be compared to brands that are followed and to whom people identify themselves, here is an interesting picture I took this year in Brussels June. We see products, such as cups, with the name and logo of the streamer Ninja, aimed obviously, to his followers

Image 8: Ninja products

Source: H&M. (2019).

The visibility is also enhanced thanks to celebrities who help a game to be discovered by more people and many examples could be put forward. To present one, if you watched last year, France football games during the World Cup, you could have seen Antoine Griezmann celebrating his goals in a special way, with a dance. If you were wondering where it could come from, it is a dance from Fortnite that avatars can execute. No need to detail how often these images were seen across the world, especially during the final when he scored.

Another strategy used by the company to become even more popular among the target, young males, is called co-branding. According to the website E-Marketing, it involved two companies willing to reach the same target and thus cooperate in order to reach the same community, crowdculture (2019). Once members have commonly adopted the brands, they set up mutual help. Fortnite is active in the entertainment industry and aims to create a virtual world for members of the community, argued Numeama (2019). The Marvel movie: Infinity War was released last year. For that event, Fortnite had included the main enemy, Thanos, for a few days in the game and players could use him as an avatar. This year, the last movie of the serial was released: Avengers: End game. In one scene, we could see Thor, one of the main characters, playing Fortnite. By including each other's content, they have simultaneously helped to offer a visibility to this crowdculture and reach a wider public.

The community does not only provide financial advantages but the visibility is also enhanced because once a brand is adopted by a community, its members naturally feel the need to purchase products it offers. However, Fortnite understood that, in order to get more from their community and exploit their close relationship, they should surprise their target. Developers are trying to continually innovate and come up with new content and this is possible thanks to their creativity and ideas. Thus, the question had to be answered: who knows best what players want and how to reach or exceed their expectations through innovation? The answer is players themselves. According to Gabriel Dabi-Schwebel from the marketing agency 1min30, Epic Games studio analyses gamers' opinion and adapts the strategy (2018). For instance they scrutinize gamers' opinion on websites and forums and pay attention whether players have detected a bug. They also launch ideas contests where players have the possibility to express what they would like to see added or modified in the game. Upstream, the company has hired players who test new content and made partnerships with startups.

For instance, a few days ago, in May 2019, a member of the community had an idea to improve the communication between players on the map when two teams have to battle, since not everyone owns an audio headset. Communication is important because it increases the experience with others, allows to set up strategies and attract potential new players. His idea suggested adding an image on the screen with the name of the player and its needs during a game such as assistance or ammunition. The idea may seem irrelevant but it shows that everyone has the power to contribute to the game and that players feel involved and are heard out, which brings a company and its target closer through cooperation in a common goal: improving the game.

Image 9: Juraeloffs's proposition on Reddit
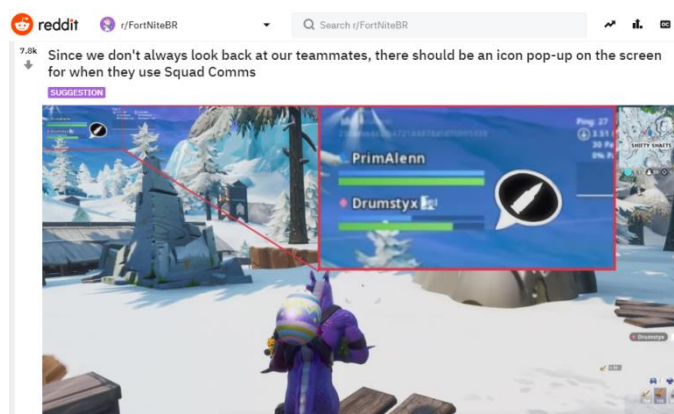
In order to reach and maintain a good contact with the crowdculture, the brand has to set up an efficient communication with its members and also create an environment where these members may interact through high quality channels within and outside of the game. Consequently, the company bought an app this year, HouseParty, used in the US by teens to communicate with each other through a camera. According to the app's CEO, this acquisition made sense because both companies were willing to bring together people and thus their vision are similar (2019). However, the amount to acquire HouseParty remains unknown.

Fortnite has perfectly tapped into the crowdculture in order to improve its understanding of its target and the maintenance of a cohesive community.

Fortnite can be considered as more than a game but as a social network which is a part of the players' life and this, thanks to its use of tools at disposal and the crowdculture.

In my view, developers tend to make players perceive their character further than just an entity they can identify to but also a character they admire, especially aimed to younger players as kids. A few days ago, thus in June 2019, I saw that Panini cards were available to be collected. The same as for football players. from one perspective, it represents a diversification of products sold and from another hand it encourages interactions between players outside the game. Thus, at a first sight I was surprised but after a second thought I concluded it made sense. I even took a picture of these cards I saw for the first time. You have the possibility to see it in the appendix, number 4, Fortnite cards.

4.6. Tools at disposal

4.6.1. Downloadable content

Video game companies have, in recent years, developed out-of-the box strategies allowing them to diversify their cash inflow. We have brought up additional content within the game but nowadays, it has become possible to get additional content of the game itself. And, once again, this way of giving at disposal the product has become a debated topic due to misuse.

Once a company has created a game, it sells it and as already explained, it may keep working and develop content within the game to enhance the experience and monetize it through several possibilities. Another possibility is the traditional way of selling a game at a certain price, which represents the maximum amount the company could earn from it. Nevertheless, a process was created. It involves that parts of the game content are launched at different moment. As you may see in the appendix, the number 5, DLC market, revenues generated through this technique, DLC, are booming.

For instance, a company having witnessed that a game has been successful among the target, may develop an extension of it and sell it, which, in that case, represents two different products at disposal. However, offered at disposal mainly through downloading called "downloadable content", or DLC by the community.

The DLC of a game may take several forms such as an extra level to be unlocked, an expansion of the scenario or an additional game mode connected to a special event such as Christmas or Halloween. In other words, content permitting further hours of play, according to Blacknut. But what does this company offer? They propose games to be played across platforms, through an internet connection thanks to a joystick. They propose 320 games in streaming to be played instantaneously on TV, phone, tablet or PC (2019).

In order to get this service, clients have to pay a monthly subscription and are offered an unlimited cross-platform access to all games. The advantage of this offer is that clients do not have to spend money on a new platform and the range of available games is continually expanded. In other words, they provide a similar service as Netflix but for video games. Even though this service was launched two years ago in France, it may become the future way of play, according to Bastien Benrath and Jonas Jansen from the newspaper Courrier International (2019). Even though today, it seems impossible to predict how dematerialized games, cloud gaming, will look like in the industry in the future, I decided to mention it because it may also represent a tool to tap into by our Belgian companies.

Companies may take the decision to provide new content for a successful game, which is thus a strategy based on previous games. Conversely, additional video game content might also be used when a company forecasts that its profit will not be reach expectations. Developers only sell a part of the game created and "cut" on purpose partially their game and sell it later. Therefore, players have to pay twice for a full game and Blacknut argued that this process is a kind of abuse (2019).

But, what is the problem with DLC then? Later in this paper, we will see that frustration among gamers is a feeling providing boosted revenues for those who exploit it efficiently. Otherwise, the community demonises the game and the company. This may lead to a failure for next games marketed and thus lead the company to go bankrupt. This frustration may arise for instance with the impossibility to end a game completely or when someone who had bought the DLC, lend the game to a friend who would not have access to the DLC due to an algorithm which bounds the content to only one machine detailed Gaylord writer for JournalduGeek (2015). You have probably understood, by selling one game the company can expect to receive several purchases behind through DLC.

According to the specialized website a.liste, aimed to provide insight and complete marketing analysis, there is another risk for a company behind DLC than just having the community turned against itself (2019). If a DLC is released, then the players community is divided between those who bought the new content and those who did not, and this is a problem from several aspects. Players would discuss this new experience with less players and within the game itself players would have less possibility to meet new players.

4.6.2.E-sport

We have already been through the professionalization among gamers when games such as Counter Strike have opened a path to new opportunities for players and game companies. Thanks to new technologies

and social media, visibility has reached another level and a new stage has appeared. Players and companies had to use it for their interests and other actors benefit from it such as spectators, sponsors or organizers.

During my conversation with Mr. Sana, we had the possibility to go through E-sport and I could explore further explanation in his course content. At which extent is E-sport involved within the crowdculture? He argued that there are six levels in gaming socialisation. From the first one who gathers people who are only looking at other people playing to the sixth one which is actually E-sport which depicts the professionalization and how players aim other goal than those within a game thanks to new relations with other players (Course content, 2019). The pyramid is visible in the number 6 in the appendix, Gaming socialisation levels.

First, let me introduce a few figures in order to develop your awareness about this new entertainment, or sport, and how it has taken prominence.

According to the specialized video games website Newzoo, in 2018, E-sport generated 900 million dollars, which represents a 37% upswing in comparison with the previous year, and was followed by 165 million people across the globe (Newzoo, 2018, Report, para.8). Moreover, this figure is expected to reach 307 million in 2021 and total revenues are forecasted to reach 1.1 billion this year and 1.7 billion in 2021. The number 7 in the appendix, the E-sport evolution, is included the image number 6 is a bar chart comparing E-sport viewers through years. On the bottom are represented people watching at least E-sport content once a month while the top is depicting those watching less than once a month.

More precisely, the number 8 in the appendix, E-sport revenues per segment, represents a pie chart displaying the size of each beneficiary from E-sport in 2018. As you may see, sponsorship benefits the most from revenues, by far and increased by 50% in comparison with 2017, while advertising and media rights complete the podium. Right after, game publishers gathered last year 114 million dollars which represented 13% of total revenues (Newzoo, 2018). The last, merchandise and tickets brought 10% of revenues.

Newzoo also argued in their report that brands will keep investing massively in E-sport with a view to reaching a young target through this channel, as it seems clear that gamers will spend more time on E-sport platforms, such as Twitch for instance that we will check out later. This new entertainment will boost the global video game industry to such an extent that it will overtake traditional professional sports and that it will, alone, generate more than rugby. By the same token it has already exceeded an entertainment appreciated by young males, the famous WWE Wrestling (2018).

In 2018, the event which generated the most through tickets sold concerned a specific game, the League Of Legends World Championship with almost 2 million dollars. On a personal aspect, the game I have already mentioned several times, Clash of Clans, and which can be considered as a League Of Legends competitor, will launch its first World Championship in October of this year, according to the website VentureBeat. They analyze video game trends or events and also propose specific help to clients. However, every player of my game has become aware of this event because, currently on July 2019, the game has already launched tournament qualifications and communicate about it as you may see below on the picture taken from my account.

The reward to the winner team is amounted to one million dollar, pointed out VentureBeat (2019). Supercell, editor of Clash of Clans, will cooperate with ESL, the most important E-sport events organizer,

in order to set up this unprecedented event. Community manager, Marika Appel declared that they owed it to their reliable and faithful community.

Image 10: Clash of Clans: World championship qualification

<u>Source</u>: Clash of Clans. (2019). My account

Even though E-sport entertainment has offered new possibilities to reach new goals for companies, it is unavoidable to examine how to use it properly. As other sports, fans have the possibility to support their team on the spot during LAN competition, or online through streaming. Stakeholders such as media's diffusing these events in live, sponsors who take part in organization and aim to increase their visibility, merchandise and of course, celebrities which are the gamers. The issue of how including these different components within a common strategy has been discussed last year by several experts from different game companies during a webinar driven by the website VentureBeat.

VentureBeat pointed out that E-sport allows a game to enhance visibility efficiency coupled with an increase of players or viewers engagement (2019). For instance betting websites have understood they may also get a piece of the pie and thus launched a category allowing people to bet on E-sport winners. Revenues generated origins are diversified and the ecosystem is expanded. Nevertheless, in their view, industry figures have to be improved with a view to being profitable. Kent Wakeford, operating head at Gen.G, who took part in the discussion highlighted that figures may be impressive but have to be put in a context. He highlighted that a report conducted by Goldman Sachs, a leading investment banking in New York, showed that E-sport industry earns 4 dollar per user which, in comparison with traditional sports and their 54 dollar per viewer, is weak. On the other hand, it suggests that there are opportunities to be exploited (2019).

For instance, the connection between E-sport players and viewers may be improved. VentureBeat made a parallel with traditional sportsman who have a life story and whom people may identify themselves. Moreover, ads content, which brings a big part of revenues, has to become more relevant. As we discussed earlier in this paper, people are running away from ads if they consider invasive. E-sport channels thus have to pay attention not to lose viewers due to irrelevant content. Indeed, their target have often uploaded AdBlock which, as the name suggests, blocks ads content on computers.

However, E-sport growth has become faster than forecasts and today, stadiums dedicated to this entertainment are built to host live events, pointed out VentureBeat. Nevertheless, Jonathan Singer who works at Akamai company as industry strategist, put forward an idea to other people who participated in

the discussion. He raised the question whether interaction between fans and users was possible how to monetize it (2019). For instance, he asked whether it was possible for people to spend money in order to provide an advantage within the game for their team. To this question, Wakeford answered that this kind of strategy is to be discussed with the game publisher and thus, that it could be possible and it could represent another opportunity (2019).

People who participated in the discussion pointed out that members of E-sport teams have their own streaming channels. Thus, they have to find a balance between their channel occupation where they earn money and their time spent with their team.

Furthermore, another relevant question which should be looked over is how Belgium performs? Unfortunately, the answer is clear, Belgium lags behind in comparison to other countries. Several reasons explain this assessment. According to a report,""*E-sport" : La nouvelle tendance !",* from the Belgian network RTBF, the first and main issue comes from the top, the State. Titouan Marichal, who conducted the investigation, brought us further answers (2019).

First, the Belgian State does not take E-sport seriously and thus does not grant money, resources or time to this new entertainment. The first event was organised in Charleroi two years ago. It is the first club who understood that it represents an opportunity to seize. Since then, international contests with professional players have been organized thanks to budgets, which remain weak in comparison to other countries in Europe. Indeed, 100.000 euros are allocated to the organisers of events. According to Philippe Bouillon, an E-sport organizer in Charleroi, Government of other countries are committed to developing this new industry and providing the necessary resources. Whereas, those who are willing to expand it in our country are left on their own (2019).

Marichal pointed out that our government does not trust this entertainment stakes and its potential return on investment. For instance, in contradiction to other countries, Belgium is not represented by any official organization which may coordinate the different stakeholders. By the same token, this new sport needs investment through sponsorship and talented players. However, without a clear understanding of the Belgian E-sport landscape, investment is impossible and nowadays, we are witnessing an exodus of our best Belgian players.

Nevertheless, the future may bring hope argued the investigation. Indeed, recently, a communication university created a master in E-sport that aims to train students in order to help the different actors of the industry to set up a more efficient coordination. Indeed, the aim is to increase revenues generated from this sport because it benefits stakeholders and also creates jobs. Unfortunately, expectations are not reached and E-sport players still dedicate time on earning money on their own such as streams on Twitch, where they started before having joined a team (2019).

4.6.3.Twitch

We entered the age of social media several years ago . People express their opinions and communicate about their activities. Communication channels such as Twitch have allowed gamers to share in live their games and allow others to learn from them.

But what does Twitch stand for? According to the website Blacknut, which offers as we said, a service similar to Netflix's with a subscription allowing free access to client, Twitch was basically used by people to share their daily activities, not necessarily about video games (2018). However, its creator understood the opportunities that games streaming offered and thus decided to dedicate it to this new activity.

Concerning the monetization process, the access to this platform is free so developers had to set up other revenue possibilities. A comparison with Fortnite is possible. The use of this service is free but complementary content is available for users. For instance, thanks to a subscription, additional emoticons may be acquired by users in order to include them in their messages while commenting on the game. Moreover, ads also generate revenues for the platform. Twitch celebrities , streamers, may receive gifts and donations from their community with a view to supporting them. But does Twitch mean fortune for gamers? According to Blacknut, only few players are able to live thanks to this activity, which rewards the top streamers. The most followed Fortnite player, Ninja, earns the most in the world with 1 million a month (BlacknutLemag, 2018, Article, para.5).

With a view to being able to reach the crowdculture, companies have to check up on the content users are looking at on the internet. The website Jeuxvideo.com, released an article depicting The E-sport Observer report and its conclusion. Between the 1st January 2019 till the end of June of the same year, users had spent in total, across the world, 512 million hours watching streaming about League Of Legends and the game is ranked first. This is followed by Fortnite and the third is called Just Chatting content with 373 million hours (The Esport Observer, 2019, para.3). What does the latter mean? As the word suggests, it implies a chat, discussion between a streamer and the community, not only about games but about any specific topics. Hours spent on this activity have considerably increased compared to 2018 with a boost of 155% (The Esport Observer, First half 2019 Report, 2019).

Twitch website proposes several categories of videos and makes it easier for users to watch content they find interesting. One particular helps game developers to enhance their games thanks to the community. This category is called glitch hunter where players aim to find issues within a game and help developers to improve their game thanks to what players have pointed out. We have already discussed how psychological immersion within a game for gamers how important is to appreciate it and to spend money on virtual content. If glitches appear, it reminds the gamer that it is actually a game and may make the player feel disconnected from the game and thus it becomes impossible for developers to receive any profit if it occurs.

A Polish researcher, Justyna Janik from the Jagiellonian University in Krakow (2017), conducted a research to understand how glitches may impact players' experience. In her paper:" *Glitched perception: beyond the transparency and visibility of the video game object*" written in 2017 she went through several cases which have shown that one mistake within the game has the power to destroy everything developers had built because the player will not believe anymore what the game has to propose. In a free-to-play mainly relying on gamers' identification through a character for instance, a lack of identification might have a direct impact on monetization. This is the reason why this tool, provided by Twitch, allows developers to decrease risks related to these glitches, especially with the growing complexity of games with for instance bigger open worlds.

4.6.4. Community manager

Video game companies have to be able to clearly depict their target's features for several reasons we have already exposed. The community is not only an entity companies should analyze from a distance and adapt without having any impact on it. Thanks to a community manager, they have the possibility to interact with the members of their community in order to communicate about their product or to have a closer look at their needs. As explained a 2017 report from the association Knowledge Works National Centre for Cultural Industries, in Norway, community motivators have different aims (2017). First, they enhance communication efficiency between players by offering them a spot to discuss and thus avoiding fragmented smaller communities, which would reduce the community experience (Knowledge Works, 2017). In addition to this interaction boost, they also have an administration role of their community and gather information about them.

Community managers are committed to developing a pleasant environment for users inside and outside the game and, by the same token, encourage players to become spokespersons. Game developers rely on community managers to indicate them appropriate decisions to make in order to satisfy their clients.

Jason Way, column writer for the website Game Industry career guide, aimed to help people to find a suitable job in the video game sector, depicted what the daily activities of a community manager of a game company are .

Besides being active on social media and following what people write, he has to draw a concrete strategy of the posts he will release. These posts have to follow the global strategy of the company and follow the same path. This should take place in the virtual spot he would have dedicated to this, such as social media pages (2018).

The website VentureBeat has also tackled the community management in the video game sector. Rafael Vivas wrote the article "*Game devs: Build your community as you build your game*" where he gives pieces of advice to game developers in order to exploit the community (2017). The virtual spot where players meet in order to interact about a game, should be created before the game is launched. He explained that people would be more enthusiastic about staying in this community if they have already met people who share the same interests as them (2017).

Afterwards, the following of interactions between users may start and reports are done by the community manager, pointed out Way. Game developers and people in charge of the strategy are filled in with conclusion drawn and adapt the content of the game. In other words, their role takes place from scratch at the launch of the game and afterwards through the follow-up of interactions between gamers and between the company and the community.

Furthermore, a community manager in a video game company should also increase the commitment of players towards the game, argued Kelsey Gamble from Bethesda studio for in an interview conducted by Chris Button for the website Junkee (2019). They aim to turn players from clients into a part of their team by helping them to improve a game or by, as said, becoming spokespersons. However, she added that a community manager has to be able to do different tasks such as dealing with social media, event organization, following public's game appreciation or developing the marketing strategy of the company.

4.6.5.Communication elaboration

Over time, as the video game industry landscape changed, marketing and communication strategies had to be adapted by companies. We have already mentioned the different possibilities studios may tap into in order to increase the awareness of their game among their target. However, in this part, we will deepen the marketing aspect and have a look at other channels at disposal to reach the gaming community and talk them into to buying or downloading the product.

The website Gamemarketinggenie.com exposed different techniques used by companies to increase their visibility (2019).

The first channel is Youtube. We have already brought up Youtube and its impact on the crowdculture and specifically on the gamers' community. On the one hand, it constitutes a channel for gamers to increase their visibility and gives them a new purpose to play. On the other hand, for companies, it represents an essential tool to increase players' awareness concerning their products through, for instance, trailers or ads, and also feedback among their target. Furthermore, they pointed out that Youtube allows to add complementary information such as other links people may visit. Nevertheless, as we have exposed earlier, people tend to avoid ads thanks to AdBlocker for instance.

The second tool companies could use is the creation of a website. It may attract gamers or media informing the community about new innovation. Moreover, if the website is attractive and provides the necessary information, people could conclude that the game is reliable and thus their curiosity is increased (2019).

We have entered a period where people are connected and internet has found a crucial role in our daily lives for communicating or seeking information. Nowadays, people gather information on the internet before a purchase because they trust other consumers' opinions. Google referencing is a strategic aspect that helps brands to get an advantage to their competitors. Game Marketing Gennie website pointed out that video games have the same possibility to use search engines and the App Store optimisation, which like the Google referencing is a first step to attract prospects and present specific features of a product sold.

The next tool at disposal is probably the most obvious one. We have already discussed how brands failed to use mass media and how Douglas Holt detailed the impact of social media on the apparition of crowdculture (2017). The article pointed out that efficiency of Facebook and Instagram may be enhanced thanks to the possibility to target specific prospects filtered by age, interests or geographical position for instance. On my Facebook personal account, when I open the app, first appears live gaming of streamers appears first. The number 9 in the appendix, Live gaming on Facebook, is a screenshot of what Facebook proposes me to watch and follow. Last time it was a streamer playing live Clash of Clans. Moreover, this game has its Facebook page where the studio fill in players with new updates, news or even to ask their opinion about some aspects of the game. Their page was followed in July 2019 by 24 million people (Facebook, 2019, Community).

Furthermore, Game Marketing Gennie explained that game companies may also use channels such as Reddit or podcasts to enhance the visibility through media's use by gamers. Review websites are also a possibility to increase people's awareness about a new game. The article advised to include relevant content while submitting the game to reviewers.

Influencers are also a kind of tool at disposal. We have already tackled this aspect earlier and how important they have become in the crowdculture and not only in the gaming community. With a view to having an influencer presenting a game, the company must pay this person and the amount may be proportionally amounted to the size of the audience .

A last possibility which is not tackled in the article is the participation in video game fairs. It is a place where people from the industry, professionals and gamers physically meet, discuss and it allows companies to have a better understanding of their target's needs and also how clients perceive products they sell. These meetings take place through different events considered as opportunities to seize, also to get contracts with editors for studios. We could think of the Electronic Entertainment Expo, known as E3 which takes place in the US. This year, the event gathered 66.000 people taking place in the US (Presse Citron, Article, 2019, para.2). Another yearly event is the Gamescon which is taking place this year in August in Cologne, gathered 370.000 visitors in 2018 (JeuxActu, Article, 2018, para.1).

However, we could wonder whether these video game conventions aims are the same or some are specific to stakeholders. Pierrick Labbe, journalist for the Evenement, a specialised website informing about events regarding communication and new technologies, looked over the different kinds of conventions.

Labbe argued that there are five different kinds of conventions (2019). The first one, the fan test, aims to host fans of one specific game or platform and everything is focused on it. Then, those dedicated to new announcements are places where actors from the industry meet and present their new production. The E3 and Gamescon enter this category. Another type of convention targets even people out of the video game community, and is called Generalist. (2019). They also provide a meeting spot for companies and gamers, but propose other kinds of activities such as concerts or debates. Generalist conventions are efficient to talk people into playing video games by improving the game sector image. The last two groups are addressed to specific actors of the game world. One is dedicated to professionals of the game industry and the other to developers, called Hackhaton, where they have to achieve goals in a determined time, through kind of games (2019).

4.7.How to encourage gamers to pay ?

Since trade exists, people have always exchanged something they possess for something else. Trades may be in the form of tools exchange or a service offered against money. Humans have kept tapping into their imagination to make these trades profitable and business is obviously affected by this evolution.

Indeed, the kinds of elements traded have been diversified but also the way these transactions are made. Once again, due to technology evolution, people had to use their environment to attract new customers, diversify their services and differentiate from competitors.

Video games business has not steered clear of this evolution and I have already filled you in that thanks to the emergence of the crowdculture and gamers subculture, companies had to change their strategy. These strategies are based on an understanding of their target behaviour and motivation to play. In this part, we are going to check up on gamers' motivation to play, which make legitimate investments into a game. Many works have tackled this interesting aspect but here I will present two different works conducted which are complete and bring the necessary information.

The first one is the work presented by Robert Flunger, Christine Strauss and Andreas Mladenow from the University of Vienna (2017). I have already mentioned the dead time in free-to-play, which represents the period when a player cannot use his game fully and it can take several forms. Developers have understood that this aspect is crucial because they can exploit it, if used well . Indeed, developers may also develop a negative frustration among players, if they do not use these dead time efficiently. These elements included in a game, aimed to make players wait, are the basis of what we call obstructed game and might take as many different forms as developers have decided. According to the study, the conclusions of which are also supported by studies, these games tap into one of the human weaknesses, impatience (2017). How annoying is it to be stopped when we are doing pretty well? Or even worse, this feeling after you did pretty bad and you do not have the possibility to redeem yourself immediately. These elements aim of course to encourage players to pay.

Obstruction within a game is not always obvious and is specific to free-to-play. Traditional games should not include it because the frustration coupled with the price of acquisition would be too high. The feeling among players to be seen as fools by developers could appear. Crowdculture and the interactions between players would simply point this out and the game would not be successful.

The game I play and I have already presented in order to illustrate some points of this paper, Clash Of Clans, does not differ from the rule. A typical example is the period during which a player improves a virtual item which will make him stronger. For instance, this image below I have taken from my personal account depicts several interesting elements we could highlight in order to understand how these barriers within a game may be included subtly.

On the bottom right, players have the possibility to access the virtual shop and thus access in-app-purchase. Furthermore, inside the blue circle, the game calls our attention that there is always a possibility to do an action quicker by spending the virtual money, gems. As you may see inside the white circle, I do not have any builder available. Consequently I cannot improve any item because this is the builders' job. In other words, I am stuck and I have to wait 5 hours 45 minutes till one of them is available. We are always offered the possibility to use the basic method. If I wanted to, I could spend 69 gems and free him and this is what most players would probably do.

Concerning Candy Crush, the player has the possibility to earn a life immediately by spending 69 gold coins and thus be able to play otherwise he has to wait 25 minutes. Another possibility offered by the game is to propose to watch short ads and earn a life. In other words, two possibilities are at disposal to get around this wait.

Image 11: Obstructed play

The frustration among players is a tool that game companies have to use carefully. As a first step, they have to develop it and as a second, maintain it, which is harder. Indeed, as already mentioned, its use is one important guarantee of the failure or success of the game. An illustration has been developed by professor Sana I had the opportunity to talk with. During our meeting, he exposed several theoretical concepts connected to companies' strategies.

This line chart depicts that the boundary between a too weak or too strong frustration provoked by the game is tight and thus implementing the adequate frustration rate is not evident. On the X axis, the experience of the game is represented while the frustration takes place on the Y axis. In between the two extremes, we have the level companies should reach in order to encourage their target to undertake specific actions. In the drawing, this efficient level of frustration is represented by the buy canal where players would be tempted the most to purchase within the game. Moreover, this graph also points out that the buying gap becomes wider as play experience progresses.

Figure 5: Frustration curve by Mr. Sana
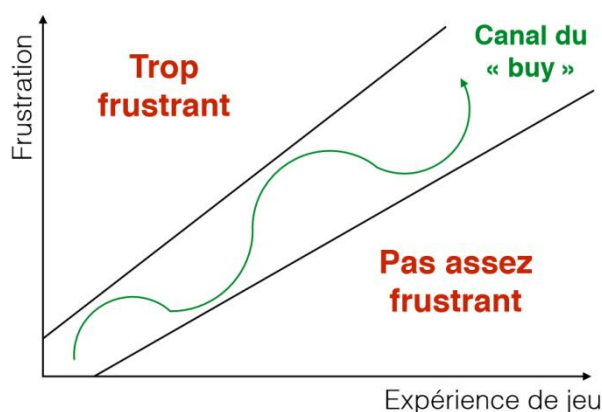
Source: Sana, T. (2019). *Le jeu vidéo dans la stratégie de marketing digital*. Retrieved from his course. p.72.

My thesis topic tackles how people creating video games tap into their target's community and interactions between gamers. These relations are interesting from many aspects for those who know how to make them valuable. Strauss's study pointed out that social interaction within a game may encourage players to spend money. I have already brought up that players identify themselves to their avatar, which make some actions legitimate.

To illustrate my point, I took this screenshot from the same game, Clash of Clans. The Supercell game offers me the possibility to customize my character but without upgrading its skills. But how to get it? As you may see on the image, I need to achieve several challenges and gain points, but this is not enough. The second condition is to own a Gold Pass which is of course not free. I personally will not buy that pass but I have the possibility to take a look at my friends' village, from Facebook or in the game, and some of them have spent money in it, which for other players may clearly talk them into buying this optional content.

You need 1800 more points and the Gold Pass to unlock this reward.

Source: Clash of Clans. (2019). My account

To this point, another aspect is to be added. As in the real world, people, in some ways, seek to impress others, especially those whose opinion is important. In other words, a player is giving more prominence to another player's opinion about games, fantasy world, than someone who does not belong to this culture. As a result of this humankind logic, gamers, if they have the possibility, might try to impress other members of their community. Thus, they may proceed for instance by showing them their skills or through buying items which will upgrade their character. Impressing their peers, coming from the game or not, is a reason to purchase virtual items (2017).

The features of these items are also to be taken into consideration. For instance, some of them may be rather dedicated to a special kind of players, hardcore or non engaged through the difficulty to obtain them. Furthermore, recurrence at which players come across these items is also important. According to Jack Cleghorn and Mark Griffiths, the more the content is difficult to obtain, the easier would the player purchase it with real money (2015). Due to this emergency feeling, if for instance the special item is available for a short period of time and combined with the need to impress peers, the willingness to invest in it is enhanced.

Impressing peers is a need which may result in different kinds of actions but the most rewarding is others' admiration. This feeling may be encouraged thanks to one's skills or achievements. With this goal, some do not hesitate to spend money to become better at a game, which is called 'pay-to-win".

It seems obvious that a community enhances game experience through several aspects. According to Marion Garnier and Guillaume Prostak, writers of " POURQUOI PAYER DANS UN JEU PAR NAVIGATEUR GRATUIT ? MOTIVATIONS À JOUER ET ACHAT D'OBJETS VIRTUELS" the motivation to purchase a virtual item thanks to real money is boosted (2015). They argued that some players have social interaction with other gamers they will never see, thus online, than with people from the real world. Moreover, one out of two surveyed players consider social interaction within a game as the most important aspect, which justifies why he is willing to spend real money on his virtual world because it makes sense to him.

So far, processes of delivering a game to the target have been briefly exposed in addition to how companies set up strategies within a game to encourage players to pay. This topic has been investigated since free games exist and theoretical and practical aspects have been tackled. A paper has been dedicated

to understand how games designers have the possibility to use their skills in other ways than just satisfy the target through a pleasant game. In their 2010 paper, Juho Hamari and Vili Lehdonvirta, from the Helsinki Institute, conducted a research to understand how virtual items sales are and may be boosted (2010).

Nevertheless, Mladenow, Flunger and Strauss work that I have already presented, improved this theoretical contribution and exposed it. Their observations conclusion have been summed up in a table that I have included in my appendix, number 10, Strategies to sell virtual items thanks to game design. As you may see, most of these strategies have already been exposed previously through theoretical or practical illustrations. These exposed elements have also been pointed out by the most relevant people who could do it, gamers themselves. I had the opportunity to have a conversation with some of them, and some were aware of these strategies and some were simply not but could say it was actually working on them after I explained them their aims.

A relationship between a game and a player may be maintained thanks to several factors such as content in a game. Indeed, content may be adapted through updates related to the environment such as the period of the year. Special events, lasting only a few days, are, a way to avoid weariness among players. Once again, my personal account is filling me in with what the game will offer me the following day and I have the possibility to participate in it or not.

Image 13: Upcoming events in Clash of Clans

Source: Clash of Clans. (2019). My account

Moreover, the question of which amount of money and at which frequency a company might expect to get from new customer is relevant. The main question could be: What is the average behavior? Many companies adapt their strategy through time as long as a player is bounded by a game? Strauss and her team found out that a small part of the game target spend money, and within this group a small one spend a lot, "whales", whose expenditures represent a huge part of total turnover of the company (2017). In the research, they rather called them "VIP's". As any service provider, game studios should make sure to please them in order to keep them for the long term and thus ensure a constant and high revenue. Nevertheless, as Fortnite exposed it, targeting a wider range of player is possible and can be more profitable. Even though companies' dream would be that a new player spends a lot soon after having started to play the game, reality differs from this utopian view. Users, in general, if they spend money, do it gradually, through small amounts spread in time, argued the study.

4.8. Pay-to-win

Video game companies revenues are thus based, partially, on how much users spend money. They cannot force them to pay but they can encourage. Developers work in parallel on the game play and how to incorporate a monetization system which is aimed to boost revenues.

As explained, motivation to unlock specific content on a game is an aspect and is generally accepted but this is not the case of pay-to-win. Simply, it concerns strategies pushing players to pay to become better. Between players rebellion and countries law, stakes are important for the video game market.

In the industry, professionalization of video games among the target implies a decrease of "play just for fun" motivation and this makes logic that some are willing to spend money in order to achieve their new goals.

On the one hand, players have to make decision between use the common procedure to earn advantages, play or take a shortcut, spend. Nevertheless, it may happen that the game strategy is to obviously turned to push players to the second possibility. Concretely, when this is pointed out by some members of the community, it is generally highlighted. An example among others, Black Ops, one of the most famous first shooter game worldwide, took the rap for that.

They deliberately added a new weapon within the game which was available through a purchase. The real problem of this gun, as explained Joe Craven from the website Dexerto.com, specialised in video game news, is that it was much more powerful than others. It created a clear contrast between those who had paid and other players who could not compete anymore (2019). The weapon was added at the beginning of June 2019 and was remote few days later after the community's anger. However, that move was not enough to appease the community members which pointed out the publisher had taken this decision after they had earned enough money from those who paid.

The interesting aspect of this story is that it brings me to a new strategy developed by games which was widely discussed and decried. The Call of Duty case relates a strategy used encouraging players to spend money in an item they knew they would receive and the question they were facing was whether they were going to pay or not. However, some companies have gone even further and had developed a vicious method based on player weakness, addiction.

The new strategy was basically the same, players had the possibility to earn special items through time spent on the game or through purchase. However, the difference is that players were invited to pay but without knowing what they were going to earn. This year, this method was pointed and countries had to look into the "loot boxes" case. The website parentzone.org, aimed to offer digital services to families and pieces of advice, depicted what it clearly involved (2019).

Players have to spend an amount in a virtual box with no indication whether it's worth to spend in it or not. You have probably figured out, possibilities to earn an item which reach player's expectations are only based on luck and the parallelism with gambling is obvious and this is the main issue. We witness a younger target accessing games and this coupled with a visibility upswing of this method has encouraged law to crackdown on it. Indeed, games such as FIFA, Overwatch and Star Wars have been pointed out by the community for this new strategy which actually creates an imbalance between a lucky and unlucky player

who has spent the same amount (2019)t. For instance, according to an estimation, Star Wars Battlefront II, released in 2017, needed six months without a break to be finished and get all characters unlocked.

The same year, due to a growing dissatisfaction, organization aimed to protect gamers in UK and US, discussed whether loot boxes were simply a kind of gambling or not.

Surprisingly, their conclusion differed from community's point of view and argued that loot boxes were not sharing the same features as gambling due to a lack of proof and at the end, the player does not earn money. Nevertheless, they warned video game companies to be careful to strategies used because even though what they were doing was legal, they were heading down the wrong path.

In June of this year, the representative of the company Electronic Arts (EA), editing the famous game FIFA, came up with his point of view about the game, which is not a free-to-play, was criticized for including more and more loot box content, according to jeuxvideo.com (2019). He argued that this should be considered as a Kinder Surprise that amuses clients. Furthermore, he obviously suggested he was seeing eye to eye with countries permitting this method and claimed not understanding countries who had forbidden games including loot boxes.

Moreover, the president of the Entertainment Software Association (ESA), Michael Gallagher, claimed that video game companies should simply ignore these constraints and thus continue because these countries took decisions which limit companies' freedom to innovate.

However, which countries did he specifically target? The answer is our country, Belgium, and our neighbouring, Holland. Last year, the Belgian gambling commission, after months of investigation, took the decision that loot boxes included in video games are gambling, detailed the Belgian newspaper RTFB (2018). They explained that our Government based its decision on the lack of protection for players such as kids or addicted players. Concretely, actors of the industry who would not abide by the law would be sentenced to a fine depending on the age range of players the company is trying to reach or even jail. If for instance minors are clearly targeted, the fine would be higher.

4.9. Addiction by Burrhus Frederic Skinner and Nir Eyal

We have introduced several relevant concepts which enlighten how the community of video games may be considered as a target and a tool to make a game profitable. We also have been through the psychological aspect of games such as free-to-play which base their strategy on becoming a part of gamers' life on the long term and by the same token lead to addiction. We can draw a contradiction with pay-to-play video games, except those who are acquired under a subscription such as World of Warcraft. They bring the possibility to players to end the game and also secondary tasks which are not part of the main story of the game but provide a feeling to the player. This feeling brings to someone the satisfaction to end a game completely, even all secondary tasks. I had the possibility to have discussion with some players and who pointed out that they enjoy ending a game fully. However, free-to-play aim different feelings among their target.

Thus, if developers are able to achieve these goals, they increase the possibilities for the game to become a success. Nevertheless, as we mentioned earlier, addiction brought by video games tend to increase negative thoughts about them.

In this part of my work I would like to introduce a theoretical approach concerning addiction and how to look at it through video games. Burrhus Skinner, born in 1904, was an American psychologist who investigated addiction through experiment. Darrin Perez, journalist for Levelskip website, created by gamers in order to bring informative information about their passion, tackled Skinner works and compared his conclusions to video games strategies (2018).

In a nutshell, what did "Skinner's box" experiment taught us? He locked a mouse in a box and each time it was pushing a button, it was given a little bit of food. In the mouse's mind pushing the button meant receiving a reward, food and it became evident to keep pushing the button in order to receive satisfaction. Nevertheless, it was not given food each time it had pushed the button but after some time it was given. In other words, it knew it would receive a reward even though it had to reiterate the same action several times and the period between two rewards did not affect the mouse actions (2018).

With a view to making a comparison with games, the mouse pushing the button would be someone playing the game and the reward could take several forms and depends on developers' imagination. Furthermore developers have to pay attention to the frustration intensity which impacts the willingness of players to spend money. Too many rewards may decrease the attractiveness of a game, such as, as tackled, World of Warcraft that became too easy according to one of my friends due to the high frequency of rewards received.

William Hanmer-Lloyd wrote for the website Mediatel, specialised in the media industry in the UK, that being unsure of the outcome of actions may lead to feel stress and excitement. This is the basis to feel addicted and losing is necessary to enjoy a victory. We could think of Fortnite and the Battle Royal mode where hundreds of players fight against each other and only one of them wins.

Even though Skinner filled us in a theoretical aspect, how companies may concretely set up content in the game in order to stimulate the addiction among players? Nir Eyal, a 39 year old Israeli investigated how a brand may achieve this goal in his book "*How to build habit-forming products*" (2013). Onur Karapinar wrote for Medium.com an article where he depicted main conclusion drawn by Eyal and his model named Hook (2017).

He divided in four different steps the process of implementing a product in customers' life so deeply that it becomes an addiction. I will present the model and how it could be transferred to video games.

First, argued Eyal, an addiction towards a product should start with a stimulus, or a trigger, which encourages someone to purchase a product or undertake a specific action. We could think about video game ads or other people, such as friends or members of the gaming community talking someone into discovering a game. Eyal claimed that the most powerful stimulus are negative emotions such as boredom or loneliness (2017).

The second step is the action needed to use the product or service. I consider this step are strategic because as we have seen earlier, gamers need only few seconds to get interested in a product. However, they need even less to become disengaged, pointed out Sana during our conversation (2019). Thus, creation of an avatar and an account, downloading time, understanding of the game or ads must take as little time as possible and the use of the game should take place as soon as possible after downloading.

The following step is the reward obtained. If the player was seeking a specific goal, such as fun, it should reach his expectations. Moreover, we could also think about interactions with other players and the feeling

to belong to the crowdculture and be admired by its members. This reward could take several forms and could also be included after having completed challenges, for instance. The kinds of reward, their frequency and when they occur should be efficiently set up.

Sana pointed out that a game could reward, or thank, a player who had downloaded a game after having uninstalled it. People who play the game, Clash of Clans, receive a lot of resources back after their village was attacked several times. After our village has undergone an attack, we receive back 20% of resources stolen. Thus, after having stopped the game for several weeks, players receive enough resources to continue. On this picture taken from my account, we see that I had received back a lot of resources, which encourages me to continue.

Image 14: Rewards for uploading Clash of Clans again

Source: Clash Of Clans. (2019). My personal account.

The last point, according to Eyal, is the investment (2017). This investment could mean anything needed in order to use the product such as money or time. Money is indeed needed if we focus on pay-to-play and time is an element for which video games and other entertainment such as Netflix are actually competing for.

Skinner and Eyal works brought further comprehension about rewards and addiction among people and also those playing video games. This may be useful to understand better the addiction and its danger but also useful for companies willing to tap into these humankind feelings and adapt their monetization model.

4.10. Gamers' voice

Throughout this paper, we have understood that crowdculture has gained power in comparison to the period before social media and communication channels allowing people to discuss across the world. Nowadays, video game companies have to please their target because their members are aware of their

opinion power. If this one is positive, it leads to a boost of sales. Otherwise, negative opinions leave marks and affect the community's opinion.

But there is a question I would like to put forward: Are gamers the most appropriate to decide how a game should look like and which features it should gather? Developers have, thus, to find a balance between what they are willing to propose and what people are expecting.

Lucy O'Brien wrote an interesting article released by the website IGN Benelux, specialised in video game platforms news. In this article "*The (Sometimes Dangerous) Power of The Video Game Community*" she highlighted the threats concerning companies paying too much attention to the audience opinion (2018). The target gives opinion about some details of the games but also about important elements and companies cannot always adapt the game to their willingness. She had the opportunity to discuss this issue with a developers for AAA games, the most successful that are created by hundreds of people and costs millions. He pointed out that modifying a game has a direct impact on revenues and it may lead directly to losses.

Furthermore, the article called attention to the difficulty to change a game which may take weeks and gamers, who are not all aware of how video games are created, may show a lack of patience.

We have brought up the interesting aspect of listening to gamers opinion and people within companies, such as community manager, are reporting feedback to developers. However, the article present another AAA developer opinion who claimed that having too much feedback among players may lead developers, who have the final decision, to have hard to create out-of-the box and coherent ideas.

For these reasons, interviewed developers declared to O'Brien that game companies should increase the transparency of their game development process and also the content of new product to be released in order to avoid people to trust fake information on the internet (2018). In other words, the communication should contain information about how the company works to make people understand that they cannot please everyone, and also about new games to make people look forward to buying the new content. Players, with these information, would be able to provide more relevant feedback.

However, transparency may bring other kinds of problems, argued Jeff Kaplan, Blizzards's Vice-President in a text he posted on the Overwatch game forum (2017). Providing a better transparency means also showing studio's workers' identity. Thus, unsatisfied consumers may attack directly the person if they are disappointed with the game. Why do some people think they have the right to threaten video games developers or people behind the creation? Because they know they have the power that others from the community will listen to them and, thus, feel they have a more influence than the company itself.

O'Brien provided an interesting example showing that developers sometimes feel forced to adapt their production. Seven years ago, some unsatisfied players asked Mass Effect 3 developers to change the end of the game and launched a protest 'Retake Mass Effect 3' which led other players to agree with their claim (2018). Due to a growing dissatisfaction among the community, developers had no choice but change entire parts of the game.

Allison Demailly and Barbara Jacob wrote a thesis where they looked into the influence of the gaming community in developers work. In "*Jeux vidéo: aspects et enjeux des échanges communautaires virtuels*"(2012), they argued that the bigger the community of a game is, the smaller are the possibilities

for the company to use creativity to develop the video game content due to a growing power among gamers.

Gamers' voice is important because it helps companies to understand what people are looking for and it is also an efficient way to highlight when companies abuse, such as how the use of loot boxes, for instance. However, companies should also protect their employees, since some of them have become public, for transparency, and pay attention if threats occur among members of the community.

Understanding the target's needs is possible by including gamers in the conception of a video game. I have already presented the 2017 report conducted by the Knowledge Works National centre for cultural industries, a Norwegian association which brought information about the video game industry. They pointed out that video game companies have the possibility to tap into the crowdculture and its members' creativity by offering them access to the game development. They put forward Blizzard company and the game World of Warcraft.

Professor Sana, who I had the opportunity to talk with, had explained that video game companies had different possibilities to develop a product and launch a game on the market, through the soft and hard launch (2019). What is the difference between these two techniques? The website Channel Creator, active in the B2B industry in order to help clients to boost their sales, provided an article tackling these two aspects. John Stoddart, who wrote the article in April 2018, enlightened us by exposing the specificities of a soft launch while the hard one represent to sale to all clients on the market without any restriction (2018). Thus, soft launch means that a product acquisition is limited by any kind of aspects such as parts of its content, geographical launch or to specific target. For instance, Sana gave me an example of a video game company that may decide first to launch a game to a specific country and get feedback before launching it to the rest of the market. Another possibility providing the same advantage is to sell a part of the game, the beginning for example, and as a second step, launch the full game. This technique is called MVP, argued Sana (2019).

Blizzard offered parts of the game to its community and engaged its members. Those who were committed to improving the game had the possibility to do so and the efficiency of the development was enhanced. Here is a sentence taken directly from the article which I perceive as interesting and relevant :" Outsourcing innovation to players is also a mean to hyper differentiate the game at lower costs while maximizing the potential sources of innovation" (Knowledge Works National centre for cultural industries, 2017, p.28, para. 2). Enabling gamers to modify the game to meet their expectations, allows the company to have a clear and better understanding of the target and, by the same token, adapt to future games (2017).

There is another question we could put forward: Are gamers' opinion reliable? As we have discussed, opinions on the internet have an influence on the community and directly on sales. The website Blacknut, that I have already introduced in this paper, released an article which look into the question. Pierre Barbet, who wrote the article, claimed that the answer is no, gamers' opinion cannot be considered as the Divine Word (2019). People have the possibility to expose their opinion on the internet, but it happens they base it on irrelevant elements and then give a low mark on websites.

This is how, personally, I proceed. Before buying a game I always read the reviews on the website Jeuxvideo.com and, I have to admit being influenced by other players' opinion. Some people proceed by analysing comments on the platform Steam. Thanks to this platform it is possible to play games online

without the CD and it also provides a place where the game community meet and discuss and give an opinion about games. Barbet argued that gamers take position and, from that moment, are lacking of objectivity and undertake what they can against the game (2019). I have often seen people putting a 0/20 and admitting to do so with a view to lowering the global mark of a game.

Moreover, he argued that having a clear unbiased opinion about a game is not that simple. Influencers are probably not completely reliable since they are paid by companies in order to promote their games. Even reviews on specialised websites are sometimes also written by journalists who take position and defend their own views, pointed out Barbet (2019).

Spending money in a game has become easier because once someone has gathered enough information about a product and made up his mind, he may feel more confident in his choice. However, the features scrutiny of a game may lead to a confusion since everyone exposes different opinions and contradiction appear. This may be a drawback of having so many different sources of information which does not help gamers. Nevertheless, this may change thanks to the new implication of fans in the games conception that we have exposed. Video companies may tap into a technique of product development called scrum.

4.11. Scrum

I discovered the concept of crowdculture in the Harvard Business Review magazine (2015). In addition to this concept, I came across another one which I consider as relevant to be included in my work. In another Harvard Business Review, the design thinking is exposed(2016). In a few words, Tim Brown PDG at Ideo, who wrote the article, design thinking is a new way of product conception. The aim is to diminish the risk of creating an unsuitable product for the final client by engaging him in the process. The article argued that the conception of a complex product may fail to meet the client expectations. Thus, the user experience and the product design have to be thought at the same time.

During my conversation with Sana, we went through design thinking. He indicated that the concept is suitable and is used in the video game industry. However, the appropriate term to be used in not design thinking but scrum (2019). He revealed that scrum is defined as an agile method because it allows the company to adapt quickly to unforeseen changes.

Whereas product developers cannot guess how a product will be adopted by the target, designers had to think about a solution. The idea exposed by the article is to present the product during its conception to the users and analyze feedback in order to meet their needs (2016). Thus, interactions between the company developers and final users are multiplied and final clients know in advance that the product will live up to what they expected. This is the reason why the introduction of this concept is relevant because it is connected to crowdculture, members of the gaming community.

The process is then composed of more different steps, but smaller, and by the same token, useless steps are avoided, highlighted Brown (2016). The website Dummies.com, proposing affordable explanation about specific concepts, deepened scrum and how it can be adopted by video game companies (2015).

Marc Layton, author of the article, claimed there are four advantages for a video game company to use the scrum method. First, developers should start from basic features and as long as they are working on the project, the more complex content should be added. Then, during this growing complexity

implementation, the fun should also be added gradually. Moreover, from a financial point of view, Layton argued that, even though the game conception is impossible due to problems, content that has already been developed may be used for another project. This is thanks to the scrum method which implies that every step ends in a coherent content. The last and most important point highlighted in the article is the feedback leverage (2015).

This feedback should be maintained among stakeholders of the project and final users. Thus, the company makes sure that goals through the production steps are aligned. Feedback should be collected as early as possible in the process of conception, pointed out Raluca from Marionette studio (2016).

The Californian studio Marionette explored the scrum and also developed the theoretical aspect. They explained that scrum is actually several different projects undertaken as one project. Each of them is composed of a discovering step, followed by the design and then the development. This is ended by tests..

In other words, the video game company does not have one specific goal to target at the end, but has divided it into several different goals that take less them to be achieved. The term used to name these short periods to achieve these goals are called 'sprints' (2016).

What is important to bear in mind for my paper, is the feedback contribution during the game conception. Each step of the game creation is tested and different stakeholders approve the sprint in order to continue to the next one. The crowdculture has a role to play because, as we saw, thanks to soft launch they may have a first contact with the game and expose their opinion through different steps. Thus, companies are confident to move to the right direction. After each of these different small phases, people within the company meet, analyze and discuss what should be the next goal to achieve.

This schema retrieved from the Dummies website depict the different sprint which are becoming shorter during the post production and production process.

Figure 6: Scrum process
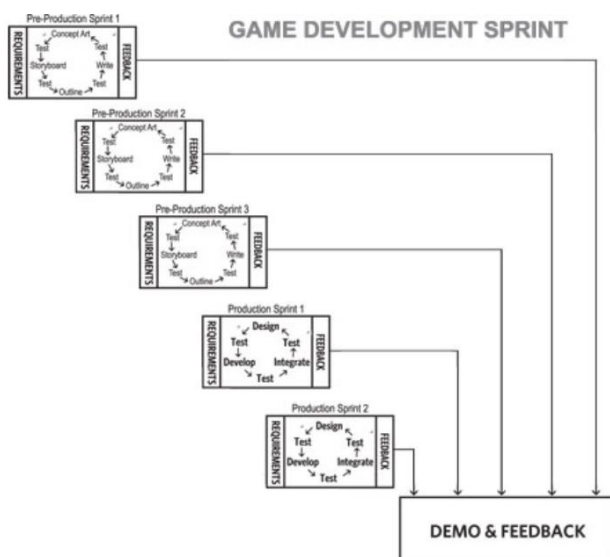
Source: Layton, M. (2015). *Video Game Development with Scrum.* Retrieved on July 1st from https://www.dummies.com/careers/project-management/video-game-development-with-scrum/

5. <u>Belgium</u>

Main tools enabling video game companies to tap into crowdculture have been presented. From that point we enter the last part of my work which is the analysing of Belgian video companies and how they use techniques previously presented. These companies have to reach their goals in an environment that does not provide sufficient resources due to the lack of governmental help, as we saw for instance for the E-sport. Etienne Froment pointed out in his article "*Le jeu vidéo, un business peu lucratif en Belgique*" that our country's represented 0,01% of the global video game industry (Froment, 2018, para.5). However, as we highlighted earlier, the Tax Shelter may boost this entertainment in our country where there is no AAA studio. This initials depict companies able to create top quality video games that may cost several millions for production.

After that investigation I will come up with recommendations in order to propose ways to improve the efficiency of the gaming community use.

5.1. Fishing Cactus

The first studio I would like to look into is called Fishing Cactus. According to the website L'Echo, the company is the leader in Wallonia (2019) and was set up in 2008. In an interview for the TV show "Face à Vous" in 2019 Laurent Grumiaux, commercial director at the company, explained the choice of the company name and it enlightened why our country, especially the South, lags behind. In 2008, argued Laurent Grumiaux, the video game market landscape could have been compared to a desert, thus, empty. Nevertheless, as a cactus ables to survive in a desert, they succeeded in growing and developing Fishing Cactus (2019). Based in Mons, Fishing Cactus' turnover amounted to 8 million euro last year (L'Echo, 2019, para.2).

Fishing Cactus has opted to focus on developing content for PC's and consoles whereas they first where active on the mobile games industry, argued Nicolas Zinque journalist at LaProvince. After an analysis of their website, I noticed that the studio focuses on both pay-to-play content and on free-to-play monetisation model.

Furthermore Grumiaux admitted during the interview that producing a good game is not sufficient. Indeed, a misuse of elements such as marketing may lead to a failure of the game launch.

5.1.1. Interactions with the public

According to an interview from Grumiaux in April 2019, they based the development of the game Nanotale on gamers feedback from another game, Epistory (2019). This latter was presented during the Gamescon in 2016. The studio has participated to this event every year since 2015., according to Grumiaux.

In this paper, we have been through different kinds of games and Fishing Cactus tapped into a growing trend which is the serious games. They tend to improve the players abilities or knowledge and, thus, do not only aim the fun. Their 2016 game, Epistory, aims to improve players' ability to write and, by the same token, improve their vocabulary knowledge thanks to a gameplay focused on the words typing. The goal was to reach a specific subculture of the video game community, serious games adepts. They offered the game to an association, Teacher Gaming, active in the world in the students development through video games , claimed Adeline Louvigny, journalist for RTBF (2019).

Games produced by Fishing Cactus are available on the platform Steam. The studio has its own page where previous or upcoming games are gathered in one page. Relevant content are available such as games trailers, professional and gamers reviews and also links to articles uploaded by specialised websites.

Another platform where video game community members meet is Twitch. We have already been through aspects at stake and how it may boost the visibility of a game thanks to streaming, for instance. I have to admit I was surprised when I saw that the company does not rely on Twitch when I discovered that their page proposed only one video about one of their games. Moreover, the video is not even available anymore. I looked for content uploaded about this game and I was surprised about the results. Only one streamer had shared her play, lasting almost seven hours for only eleven views which I consider as a weak result for a game on the most used platform by gamers.

Image 15: Shift Quantum on Twitch

Shift Quantum - 3
Aubri
Shift Quantum
2 vues · l'année dernière

Shift Quantum - 2
Aubri
Shift Quantum
1 vue · l'année dernière

Shift Quantum - 1
Aubri
Shift Quantum
8 vues · l'année dernière

Source: Twitch. (2019). Shift Quantum. Retrieved on July 2nd from https://www.twitch.tv/search?term=shift%20quantum

If we have a look at the main platform concerning videos, Youtube, we understand that the studio is more active on it even though figures could be improved. Today on July 2019, Fishing Cactus page is followed by

469 people. It seems obvious that the company has accelerated video sharing, in comparison with previous years, due to the launch of Nanotale in September. As for movies, games studios used to share a teaser with their community in order to present features of the new product and encourage players to acquire it. Teasers uploaded on Youtube gather the biggest amount of views and the peak was reached three years ago for the teaser of a mobile game called 'Learn 2 fly' and its 43.000 views (Youtube, 2019).

According to AFJV, the official organisation for the French video game industry (2017), the most visited video game website among French speakers is Jeuxvideo.com. I looked for the Fishing Cactus page and I noticed that all games have not been presented. Even though such a website is an efficient spot to attract spotlights, it seemed that Fishing Cactus has not dedicated much effort to propose their games to jeuxvideo.com reviewers, which could be a mistake. Mobile games produced by the studio do not even appear on the website, while among those that are registered, only two of them have undergone a test and received an overview.

However, the company seems aware that gamers' opinion is an opportunity that brings additional value. On its website, a category is gathering games produced by the studio and each of them proposes a link to the official website of the game. Moreover, a 'wish list' has been set up for people committed to expressing their opinion about in-game content they would like to be added (2019). This element is a typical technique to collect information about members of the video game community and adapt the game efficiently.

In addition to their activity on Steam, Fishing Cactus is also active on a software called Discord. But what does Discord stand for? According to daFrans, journalist at Jeuxvideo.com, Discord allows users to create and join servers in order to discuss (2019). He claimed that the number of users amounted to 200 million at the beginning of 2019 (daFrans, 2019, para.2). Fishing Cactus took the decision to get feedback from the target thanks to soft launch and offers BETA version. A BETA is a non-marketed version of a software, the website Futura Tech defined (2018). On the official page of the company on Discord, I could see an announcement saying that gamers committed to helping the studio for a game had to subscribe with a view to participating in the test. A picture of this announcement is available in the appendix, number 11, Access to BETA by Fishing Cactus.

5.1.2. Work process

Today, in 2019, the studio takes on 25 people working in groups between 4 and 8 people, claimed LaProvince (2019). Furthermore, the studio is creating its own video games and do not outsource tasks.

The studio is planning to launch a game Nanotale in September. The particularity of this game and Epistory is that they are both to be played with only a keyboard. This is the reason why analysis of users reaction who played the first game was relevant in order to understand their needs and, thus, improve Nanotale.

According to their website, they use the scrum method for their games development. As we saw, the difference with the traditional process of work is the multiplication of smaller steps (2019). They claimed undertaking several tests during a game production and filling in their clients with the necessary information concerning the evolution.

5.1.3. Learn 2 Fly case

Learn 2 Fly teaser is the most viewed video on Fishing Cactus Youtube page and this is the reason why I wanted to understand and discover its specificities. The game is a free-to-play and its monetisation strategy analysis would provide relevant information such as whether techniques used differ from what has been previously presented in this paper. In a nutshell, the goal is to throw a penguin as far as possible and use some tricks to increase the distance and boost the score.

We have been through free-to-play possibilities to use the gaming community in order to set up a monetisation model, including a presentation of Clash of Clans. In this part, similarities and differences with Learn 2 Fly will be exposed.

To start from scratch, the period between the downloading of the game on my phone and the first play lasted only a few seconds. As we saw, this period is a critical aspect because it may lead to a complete loss of interest among players.

After the downloading of the game, players are proposed to like the game on facebook and are rewarded with three diamonds. Remember, free-to-play games tend to develop their own currency with a view to making in-app-purchase more acceptable. The currency works as an additional step to gain in-game currency. On this image taken from my phone, we see possibilities to use this currency. I noticed that the choice offered is not as wide as Clash of Clans propositions.

Image 20: Virtual shop in Learn 2 Fly

Source: Learn 2 Fly. (2019). My account.

Furthermore, we have brought up the reward aspect within video games and theoretical inputs brought by Burrhus Frederic Skinner. After a while spent on Learn 2 Fly, I received a gift for no specific reason. It appeared randomly after a few minutes I had uploaded it and of course encouraged me to keep playing.

Source: Learn 2 Fly. (2019). My account

Another psychological aspect taped into in the patience. A game may be obstructed by several techniques that may lead to monetisation possibilities due to the frustration occurred. I presented Candy Crush and Clash of Clans and it seems that Learn 2 Fly game shares similarities with these games. In this image taken after a play, I am not allowed to play again but I was proposed two options: pay or wait. The difference here with the two other games is that real money needed to unlock the game was visible which spoils the two steps process to spend in the game and thus does not make sense.

Image 22 : Waiting period in Learn 2 Fly

Source: Learn 2 Fly. (2019). My account.

As a last point of analysis for this app, we may look into how the game talks players into interacting with others? Here again, as often in free-to-play, a ranking with facebook friends is available and informs with their progression and of course, encourages us to keep playing, and by the same token, paying.

We detailed how other members of the gaming community and their opinions have an influence concerning a game quality and thus if we should start playing a game or not. This is the reason why we are

rewarded diamonds if we push the "like" button within the game. I use an Iphone and I was redirected to the app store and was invited to rate the game with five stars.

Image 23: Rate the game in Learn 2 Fly
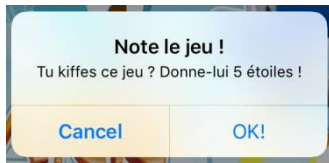
Source: Learn 2 Fly. (2019). My account.

5.2. Larian

The second Belgian Studio I would like to scrutinize is the biggest in Belgium, Larian. Its turnover represents 80% of total turnover of the country (Sacré, 2019, para.4). The Ghent company was set up in 1997 by Swen Vincke, according to their official Facebook page (2019)..

I decided to tackle this company strategy because the reasons for its success are to be highlighted in order to point out what differs from what has been discussed about strategies used across the world. In addition to that, we would have an analysis of one company from the South of the country and one from the North. Even though the company has opened other studios in Dublin, Saint-Petersburg and in Quebec, I will depict information concerning the Belgian territory and leave out on purpose what happens out of our borders.

In contradiction to Fishing Cactus, Larian has not launched free-to-play content and has focused, so far, on traditional pay-to-play to market their games (2019). However, most of their content is cross platform and are available on PC, MAC, Playstation, Xbox but not on Wii and mobiles.

The studio's most famous game is Divinity, launched in 2014 and exposed to company to the rest of the video game market.

5.2.1.Interactions with the public

Last year, in 2018, Larian participated to the Gamescon in Cologne. According to the website Geeko, they seized the opportunity to present their new game, wrote Etienne Froment (2018). Larian knew it could rely on its international renowned to promote its games. This year, they will also participate in the E3 event with a view to presenting their new game, Baldur's Gate 3 (2019).

The studio also interacts with its public through feedback collection. They set up their own forum where they keep an interactive contact with their community. If we look into this forum, we understand that its affluence is important. Even though I could not get the number of participating people, I saw that daily conversations bring relevant information for the company about their games thanks to people within Larian and users.

Image 24: Larian's interactions with the community

Source: Larian. (2019). Twitter official account. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/larianstudios

Moreover, the community manager seems to take into consideration opinions expressed on social media. For instance a person asked Larian, on Facebook, to offer for free a game content to players who had bought a previous opus. The studio took the decision to please this person's request which had a positive impact on the community. Thus Divinity's extension, called 'Definitive Edition' was offered for free to people who had bought Divinity: Original Sin II, stated Damien Greffet, journalist at Jeuxactu.com (2018). Below is a picture of this specific request.

Image 25: Larian fan request

Source: Larian Facebook page. (2018). My account.

What do I think about this decision? This is an efficient way of strengthening the relation between the company and its community by showing them that their first goal is not to take their money but to meet their expectations. Furthermore, it obviously encourages people to purchase Divinity: Original Sin II in order to get this extension for free and sales may be boosted. In other words, a decision which may seem as a loss of money at first sight, may turn into a profitable decision. Another aspect is that Larian, by doing so, showed to its community that they take into consideration their opinions and ideas put forward and, this, makes stronger gamers loyalty towards a studio, in my view.

However, taking such a decision may also represent a drawback. By offering content for free, Larian took also the risk that fans take up asking for the same each time the studio launches a game. Thus, fans may feel disappointed if this 'gift' does not occur again.

Moreover, the community is filled with news concerning the company thanks to social media and also platform such as KickStarted that we will tackle when Divinity game will be examined below.

Traditional social media have also to be tackled in order to know whether Larian uses them and how. On the official website, logos of Twitch, Steam, Twitter, Facebook and Youtube lead to the company's channels.

On Twitter, the company diffuses almost every day messages to followers for different purposes. From updates announcement, opinion surveys or simply to discuss about other topics than video games, Larian keeps interacting with their 57.000 followers.

Image 26 : Larian Interactions with the community

Larian Studios ✔ @larianstudios · 21 juin

Happy #SummerSolstice! It's the longest day of the year, and the official beginning of summer. Sooo, what are you plans for today? Any druidic activities planned? 😉

Source: Larian. (2019). Twitter official account. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/larianstudios
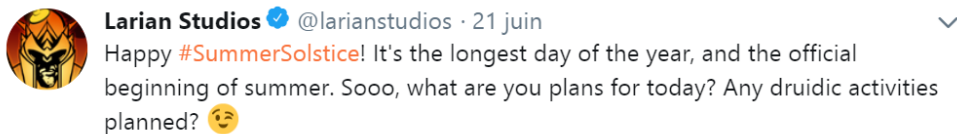
Concerning Twitch, the company has set up its own official account. However this channel seems not a priority to communicate about their games as, for instance, we can see that their last uploaded video was 8 months ago (2019). Furthermore, one streamer, Sefearion, followed by 13.000 people, has shared content with its followers about the game Divinity : Original Sin 2. This video was seen almost 90.000 times on Twitch. Seeing the frequency at which Sefearion used to share videos about Larian games, we may conclude that they decided to cooperate. Today, on August 7th and on the 5th, he posted content about Divinity. We have been through streamers and how they may influence the community and also represent spokesperson for gamers and for companies.

By the same token, the studio is also active on Discord platform where they interact with players. They share news, ask advice, release announcements and both Larian and their community know each other better. This interaction is an efficient technique with a view to winning people's loyalty. The platform allows the company to propose different spots to discuss the different games which helps gamers and the studio in terms of clarity and examination of comments .

A last platform used is Steam. The advantages brought by the platform have already been presented but here, there is an additional functionality that is interesting for companies willing to launch a game. Players willing to get information about a game, may find other people's opinions and reviews in one spot. Steam also proposes a virtual shop where acquiring games online is possible. In other words, the process of gathering information and taking a decision is simplified thanks to these platforms and brings a tool to both actors, video game companies and their target.
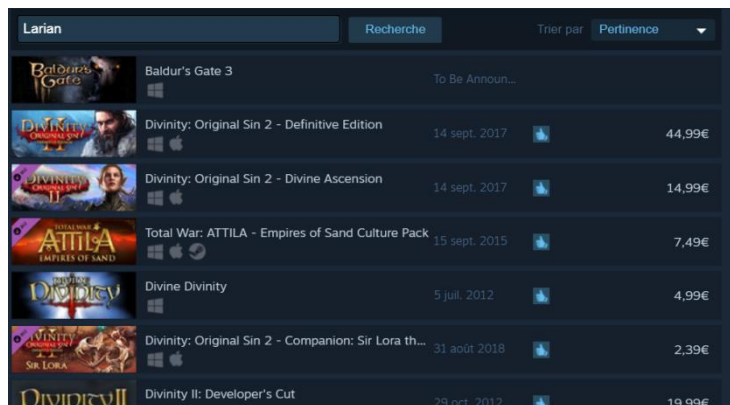
Source: Steam.(2019). Retrieved on 7th August from Steam, Larian official page

5.2.2.Work process

In Ghent, the company is supported thanks to 156 employees (Linkedin, 2019, page.1), and represents six times more than the leader in Wallonia, Fishing Cactus.

Before launching a game, companies may already interact with people they plan to sell the game to. As I explained, I had a conversation with Sana including Early Access on platforms such as Steam (2019). The aim of this process is not to market the game but rather give some parts of the game at disposal to gamers in order to get their feedback. Vincke, Larian CEO, pointed out that they used to tap into this technique to develop their games. Here is one sentence he used to describe this help among the target:" It's almost a co-development between us and them, because they pointed out things we were doing wrong, and encouraged us to expand on the areas we were doing right. As a result you get a group intelligence applied to a game. It's always much better than a single person." (Yin-Poole, 2014, Website, para.10).

We will see through the Divinity study case and an article from Het Laatste Nieuws, that Larian has already adjusted proposing content with the target. In order to reach precisely and younger and faithful segment of the community, they adapted the offer with a view to making them more profitable. Moreover, detailed the article, this package was also thought by members of the community who came up with this idea on forums (2014).

Concerning the funding of their games, the studio relied on a platform where members of the community help each other in achieving their goals. Why did I use the past? Because last year, in 2018, Vincke claimed that Larian will not use this process of funding anymore. This platform is called KickStarter and also provides a spot where a company interacts with people. Kickstarter presents itself as a worldwide community aiming to contribute to artistic projects and where adepts help each other. Thanks to this platform, Larian raised more than 2 million euro, for Divinity: Original Sin 2, provided by 42 713 people across the world during a period of only 35 days (KickStarted, 2015, para.1). This funding, comes mainly from US with 16.711 contributors while only 794 Belgian people supported the project through the platform (2015). Last year, Vincke pointed out that this crowdfunding will not take place anymore but feedback among the community will remain essential, wrote Hexen for Warlegend website (2018).

We have seen that Jeuxvideo.com was commonly used by gamers, but also by French speakers. Thus it is relevant to analyse whether Larian games have undergone reviews by journalists from the website. My conclusion is that Larian tapped into the visibility offered by such a website. All games have been reviewed but I am surprised when I saw the score given by journalists. The average is 17.7/20 (2019) which assures a solid support and probably talk people into buying their games.

5.2.3. Divinity case

Divinity, launched in 2014, is the game that increase the company's awareness on the market. It obtained the fourth best metacritic score of the year, argued Emmanuel Forsans, journalist for Focus Home Interactive (2014). It collected an average of 88% (Forsans, 2014,para.3). Metacritic is an American website collecting data about entertainment content such as movies or video games, and give a global note for them. The game, which is a Role Playing Game, RPG, takes place in a fantasy world where players, through their avatar, have to achieve different quests and fight enemies. The particularity of the mode fight is that each character attacks one at a time, according to Jeuxvideo.com (2014).

The website EuroGamer dedicated an article in order to tackle Divinity success. Wesley Yin-Poole, who wrote the article, stated that the game was bought 160.000 times and was, back then, the top sold game on Steam (Yin-Poole, 2014, para.2).

The main difference between Divinity : Original Sin and DIVINITY ORIGINAL SIN 2 is that the first one proposes an online mode where different gamers have the possibility to play the campaign while the second opus added an arena mode where players fight against each other. In terms of a gaming community aspect this element is relevant because it shows that Larian improved the possibilities of game mode between players. Furthermore, they completed the second opus with an extension. We have seen throughout this paper that companies have to tap into the appropriate monetisation model when they launch additional content of the game because it may happen it is interpreted as abuse among the community.

Another interesting aspect in Divinity strategy, as we have seen, is the offer, for free, of an extension to people who had bought Divinity Original Sin 2.

Moreover, according to Vincke, Divinity has become successful thanks to the gaming community (2014). How did they process? We have seen that Early Access of a game provides efficient feedback for game developers and talk the community into purchasing a game because gamers know that have been listened. Yin-Poole added that Larian used feedback from Early Access on Steam and on Kickstarter (2014).

Furthermore, one of the crowdculture's biggest advantages is also the free and efficient marketing occurred among members: word of mouth. Members influence each other because they share the same features, interests and basically have the same needs. Vincke highlighted that this process allowed Divinity to be, for a while, the top purchased game on Steam. For Divinity launch on the market, Larian took the decision to adapt their offer to their most engaged fans from their community who were committed to spending more for the studio. Larian even released a 53-pages document where they depict all news content brought in this extension.

According to the Belgian newspaper Het Laatste Nieuws, they sold collector editions including additional products in relation with the game, wrote Ronald Meeus (2014). However, what does collector edition mean ? The website Definitions-Marketing, depicted it as a limited number of packages dedicated for

collectors willing to pay a higher price for a specific product and its additional bonus products. They may be used for books, CD's, movies or other kinds of products release (2017).

Larian offered an additional copy of the game, a physical map of the open world of the game, a card game featured with Divinity theme. Meeus claimed that this marketing suits to the company's strategy to target younger but engaged fans (2017). Also, two copies of the games are aimed to encourage people to play together and cooperate during the campaign, he argued. This element is interesting because it provides the same advantages as a LAN where gamers play together in a delimited area but here, this limited area is not a barrier thanks to online possibilities.

What about reviews? As we saw, gamers tend to read about a game, about its reviews before buying it and it can convince, or discourage, players to acquire it. In the case of Divinity, Larian launch the game before any reviews had been released. The reason is simply because they did not have time to finish the game early enough to propose it to reviewers (2014). Concerning the improve of content after the launch, he claimed they released several updates in order to fix issues and add new content.

After the success of the first opus, Larian launched a second part, Divinity: Original Sin 2, in 2017. Pieterjan Van Leemputten, journalist at Datanews, wrote in his column that the studio was awarded by the BAFTA Games, a British award, for this opus (2018). It had competitors such as Fortnite, and as we depicted its success, can be considered as an achievement.

5.3. Abrakam

The last Belgian I would like to present is called Abrakam, located in Liege. I decided to depict this studiodue to its specificities. The two other studios that we have examined had already some experience on the market and have been set up years ago and have already launched several games on the market, with their different success. However, Abrakam was launched only six years ago, in 2013 and their first goal was to sell a unique game, Faeria.

Basically, Abrakam was set up with a view to launching Faeria and develop it through years (2019). In this part of my paper, we will see how the company, set up by two friends and a third person who had joined them, succeeded in adapting its strategy over time. Today, in 2019, the team gathers between 10 and 20 people, which is fewer than Fishing Cactus and, thus, the organisation has to be developed differently in comparison with a company such as Larian or a AAA company.

First, it seems essential to tackle specificities within Faeria and how features may be an advantage to use the gaming community. However, the game is available only on PC and in English and that could be a barrier to use fully the Belgian market on more probably the South, where Abrakam hails from.

Faeria is a virtual card game taking place in an environment composed of creatures. The aim is to gather cards and fight against the in-game ennemies or other players thanks to the online mode. Moreover, players have the possibility to create their own environment and use it during the battle, according to the website todayinLiège that provides diverse information about the city (2019).

5.3.1.Interactions with the public

Before launching Faeria on the market, the company decided to develop a contact with the target with a view to understanding the potential of their product and raise funds. According to the official website, in 2013 they also used KickStarter community to achieve these goals (2019). The output exceeded their expectations are they collected 94.008 dollar thanks to 2631 contributors (KickStarter, 2013, p.2).

After this first contact with the community, they kept elaborating Faeria before launching an Early Access on Steam on March 2016. Here also, feedback received from thousands of players on the platform had greatly helped developers to feel convinced that the game would be welcome on the market (2019). According to Laurent Cavenati who wrote an article about the company for the Belgian newspaper LaMeuse, Faeria received a global score of 85% on Steam (Cavenati, 2019, para.5).

An official website has been created in order to present to game and propose all services connected to Faeria. Thus on one spot people committed to purchasing the game have the possibility to acquire it or choose between several different packs. In comparison with Larian that provided different spots for different kinds of content such as game information or forums, Abrakam took the decision to gather all aspects on the dedicated website, also available only in English.

In a few words, the website fill users in with all news concerning the game updates, or artistic works created by fans, information about the community and its members, articles released, guides providing advice to players, detailed presentation of special attacks created by players , videos shared and of course a forum (2019).

This could be an excellent way of proceeding to keep the community in one spot. On the one hand, it boosts interactions between players and fruitful discussions because more people have the possibility to take part in it. On the other hand, we have seen that the gaming community and its quality has an impact on players motivation to play a game. Thus, by gathering everyone on one spot, it talks people into buying the game to join this community that is less fragmented.

Image 28: Faeria website
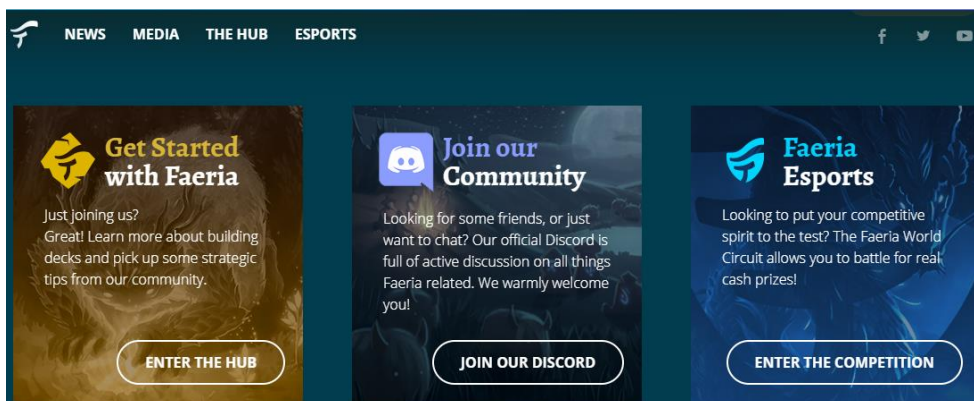
Source: Faeria. (2019). A True Strategy Card Game. Retrieved on August 8th from https://www.faeria.com/

An interesting strategy that we have not tackled yet is the recruitment of new players by players. This is a typical process to tap into crowdculture by encouraging each other to undertake specific actions, here being purchasing the game. The announcement clearly asked players to bring other people. What do they get if they do so? The game offers rewards within the game to recruiter according to the number of people they bring within the game and which level these new recruited players reach. The concept is clearly highlighted by this image where the main sentence is in the red box:"The more they play, the more rewards you get" (Abrakam, 2017, Website, para.1).

Image 29: Recruitment by gamers in Faeria
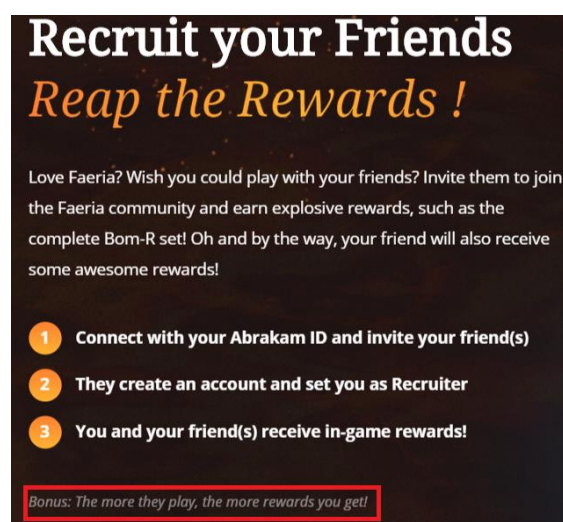
Source: Abrakam. (2017). *Recruit your Friends. Reap the Rewards !.* Retrieved on August 8th from https://www.faeria.com/recruit-your-friends

Even though the website is complete and provides all information for people having different relation with the game, I have to admit I felt sometimes lost in it. I felt that all kinds of information where provided in a very small area and it was not easy to find a specific information. Furthermore, pages lead to others page and this process seemed endless and, I even felt overwhelmed by the amount of information provided.

The E-sport stakes have also been examined throughout this paper and Abrakam has understood that it is an opportunity to seize. A specific area of the website is dedicated to this entertainment. In a nutshell, the Faeria World Circuit is a competition taking place seasonally and where a ranking is established and participants earn points. Each month, tournaments are launched and everyone has the possibility to subscribe. According to Gary Morris from the company, after each period, 32 players who had gained the most points compete with each other and the winner earns 2.500 dollars (Morris, 2018, para. 2).

When we tackled the E-sport aspect, possibilities to follow tournaments have also to be pointed out. They diffuse these contents on Twitch and Youtube. One the first mentioned, they are followed by nearly 23.200 people (Twitch, 2019, official page) and 4100 on the second (Youtube, 2019, official page). The interesting aspect of their Twitch use is that they reward randomly some viewers through a special event called the Egg (2016). People have to watch video in live.

Two channels diffuse the content, one in English and one in French. On the website, it is specified that more people spend time watching, higher are odds to earn a reward. Concerning performance figures on Youtube, the most viewed video about the game is called "WTF is...Faeria?" with 342.000 views (Youtube,

2019, p.1). The following most viewed videos were uploaded by a streamers followed by almost 1 million people (Youtube, 2019, p.1) and is called Kripparian. The most watched video uploaded by the studio itself is ranked 9th in the most viewed video concerning the game. However, they also launched another Youtube official Channel called 'Play Faeria', gathering 2.220 subscribers whereas they have only one official page on Twitch. I do not understand the aim of this second channel due to similarities of content shared between the official pages.

In other words, both streamers and spectators are encouraged to take part in tournaments and follow news about it in order to earn rewards.

As a last platform, they have their own channel on Discord and 19.000 people are following them. While other companies had divided the content shared by themes, here they created different spots for different languages: French, German, Spanish, Russian, Korean and Japanese. This is another possibility to sort out the community and improve exchanges quality. Furthermore, they share content such as announcements, tournament information, ask for feedback and so on (2019).

5.3.2.Work process

According to Etienne Froment form the website Geeko, the game was quickly adopted by the gaming community and reached, in less than a year, 500.000 uploads (Froment, 2017, para.4) across the world, even though the game was not completely elaborated.

Faeria was first launch on PC but developers understood the cross-platform opportunities and decided to work on this aspect of this game (2017). Their aim is to make platform choice irrelevant and allow people to compete no matter the platform used.

We have not depicted which strategy Abrakam decided to use in order to monetize its game. What I can already tell you is that presenting their strategy will be interesting because it will show that a company may change its monetization strategy at any moment, if done properly and without disappointing the community. Remember, if abuses are pointed out by the community, the company should modify it and please the target.

The game was released on the market as a free-to-play, explained the website Rock Paper Shotgun in 2018. When free-to-play strategy is tackled, in-app-purchase also have to. Players had the possibility to spend real money on content in order to get advantages such as pack of additional cards. However, it was impossible to know in advance which cards will be given. It is the same strategy as loot boxes expect that here the game was not a pay-to-play (2018). Last year, in 2018, the decision was taken to switch into pay-to-play game. Today, on August 2019, the game costs 20 euro on Steam.

Thus, from that moment the only possibility to get new cards is to increase the level, gain experience and thus play. For each new level reached, players are received four cards at the same time and the company made sure that in these four cards pack, they would never be a card that the player has already. However, what about those who had got the game from free? The studio offered them the new version for free and they did not have to pay for anything, which was appreciated by the community, according to Dominic Tarason who wrote the article for Rock Paper Shotgun.

Furthermore, an in-game currency has been invented and is called the Faeria. It is used to buy content or to launch attack during a battle. Tarason added that cosmetics are also available but are not pay-to-win items. The company set up a Premium content that, once bought, provides to the player twice more experience in the game. As most of the games, the experience allows to level up. The new economic strategy is highlighted on the website, as you may see on the below image.

Image 30: Faeria monetisation model
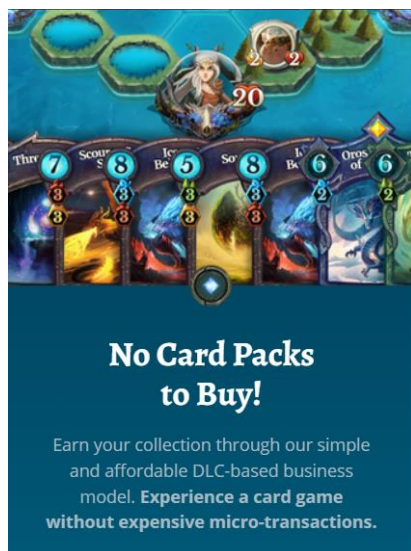
Source: Faeria. (2018). Retrieved on August 7th from https://www.faeria.com/

Since then, several DLC have been created and even a Faeria 2.0 providing many improvements has been proposed to the community (2018).

Jean-Michel Vilain, game designer for Abrakam justified this strategy during an interview for Jeuxvideo.com (2018). He argued that people were not convinced with the free-to-play aspect and it created an imbalance between those who used to pay and others.

The community has been filled in thanks to clear and complete announcements released by the company in order to clarify why they took the decision to change their strategy. Even though this was risky, it seems clear that it was the appropriate decision when we analyze the company's growth since it was set up.

5.3.3.Faeria case

On the website, all Faeria features are depicted but it seems important to highlight those tapping into the community and its members. While two players are on the virtual battlefield, others have the possibility to join and watch as spectators (2019). Furthermore, claimed the official website, interaction between gamers is enhanced thanks to a communication channel within the game allowing players to communicate with each other and also set up a friends list. The avatar customization is also possible and this aspect is important in the gaming industry as we have seen with games such as World of Warcraft or Fortnite.

It seems important that the game should insist on the easiness to start and avoid new players to feel lost with the gameplay. As we have been filled in, it takes only a few minutes to someone to get bored of a game and this feeling may appear due to different elements such as the complexity of the game, the different steps to create an account or the apparition of ads.

The game is complex, admitted developers, in the presentation of the game (2017). Thus, its play process may be beyond most of new gamers and, in one side, it can be attractive for those who like hard games but a drawback for those who do not. This is the reason, why the game shows the ropes on the website through their virtual 'Faeria Academy' that contains eight chapters explaining different aspects of the games (2017).

5.4. Discussion with gamers

My final goal of this paper is to bring practical recommendations to Belgian video game companies concerning the use of crowdculture and the gaming community. We have seen throughout this paper how gamers have gained more power in their relation with gaming companies. Three Belgian video game companies have been depicted but this provides, in my opinion, an imperfect analysis to answer the main question properly. This is the reason why opinions and behaviors understanding among players is relevant. I had the possibility to have discussion with nine players who have different behavior towards video games. Eight of these players are between 16 and 20 years old and are still at school while one of them is 23 and has been working for a few years in a company. How did I pick up the participants? Concerning the eights students, I went to my secondary school and I looked for specific students with the help of another student and an employee from the school. Few days later I came back and I carried on my survey through two groups of four students. In this part I will detail the main elements to bear in mind and that provide answers to the main question of my thesis. Below, I gathered main information and classified by themes in order to compare the different groups.

The methodology and information about participants are to be found in the appendix, number 12, Discussion with gamers.

5.4.1. What do they like in their games?

<u>Group A:</u>

Concerning important features that a game should provide, Rénas pointed out that the story must be long enough and special events within the game should appear in order to avoid a kind of routine that can lead to feel bored. Nicolas saw eye to eye with Rénas but added that violent content depicting what we find in our real world should be developed within the game. The added

that forbidden activities should be present in a game and have thus the possibility to do activities they cannot do in real life, through their character. When I asked whether other participants agreed with this point of view, all claimed that yes, they did agree. They saw video games as a kind of extension of real world where everything is allowed. They also claimed that identification to the character is important in order to feel it.

Group B:

My first question to the group was aimed to Maya and I wanted to know why she does not dedicate a lot of time on video games. She said that it is a matter of time and if she could, she would spend more time on this entertainment. Another condition is to have someone who would play with her because this is not an activity to do alone, she claimed.

To the question aimed to look into their motivation to play, their answers differed from the first group. They all declared that the main aspect is the competition, especially for Andy whose goal is to earn cash prizes thanks to tournaments. He added that his goal was to become a professional and make a living thanks to this activity.

Adrien: Adrien used to play different kinds of games but he considered that nowadays battle royal mode game is the most successful because there is no need a lot of time to enjoy it.

5.4.2.What do they like in the online mode ?

Group A :

Afterwards we discuss the online mode in video games. They argued that this aspect has to be well developed but not for all kinds of games. Nicolas gave the example of GTA, where we play a character in an open world and where freedom is the particularity of this game. In his concern, this kind of game online mode is irrelevant in contradiction to games aimed to online mode such as Call of Duty where the story is not an important aspect.

Dylan argued that the online mode on FPS (first person shooter) games may also lead to a routine but playing with friends avoid feeling bored.

Rénas and Nicolas claimed that online games are the best, such as Fortnite that does not contain any story. But admitted that some games are not to be played online such as Skyrim.

Group B :

When I asked Maya if she was interested by online mode she noticed me that she was not because her friends do not spend time on it so she does not feel the need to.

Adrien :

Thus, I asked him if he played rather alone or online and he replied he used to play both. The interesting aspect of playing alone is the possibility to end the game fully and even achieving secondary tasks that are not part of the main story. He justified it by highlighting that it extents by two or three the duration of the game and pleasure.

He rather plays online with his friends than with people he does not know because he had been disappointed by the quality of the gaming community that gather too many kids, he argued. Thus, insults are often heard, and interactions are not leading to fruitful conversation.

He mentioned an interesting aspect about online gaming. When a player stops playing online with others, it means he is angry because, he argued, people do not stop online gaming when they are doing well and are satisfied but instead are losing.

We then tackled the features a good online mode must require. An active community with a good mentality and kinds of mode are important. Furthermore, he added that the game must not be too easy. He put forward the example the example of World of Warcraft that has become easier from many aspects. In his opinion, the aim is to encourage new players to keep playing and not being discouraged by the difficulty and, by the same token, bring more gamers together.

5.4.3. How do they spend their money?

Group A:

After that I decided to ask them whether they used to spend money within a game. Rénas answered yes but specified that it was only for DLC and get more content to be played. They also claimed not spending money in pay-to-win but also in cosmetics content. They were aware that strategies were set up to rise the need among players to spend, such as limited edition content and scarcity. They highlighted an element that we have tackled in this paper which is the availability of content for specific events such as Christmas. They put forward that prices are increased on purpose concerning these specific items, which they claimed was a kind of abuse. Nissrine declared that video game companies where seeing players as idiots form who they can earn money due to their naivety. She claimed that it is beyond her that players are aware of all these strategies but still fall into the trap. She added that the first goal for these companies is not to please their clients but take their money.

Group B:

The first group had mentioned FIFA and the aspect that it is not a free-to-play but still cards are available. In a nutshell, a game mode in FIFA consists in developing a team and earning points. Thanks to these points, players may receive cards that are actually football players for their team. By spending real money, they receive additional cards. During our conversation, they explained that this is an investment because they can sell players on a virtual market where trades are

possible and get back their money. Another interesting aspect is that the value of a player is determined by his performance for that period. Thus, earning even more that what was basically invested is also possible and investment have thus to be made wisely. For this reason, they follow football and news in order to increase their odds to earn money.

Maya argued not understanding them and why they are committed to spending real money, except for Andy who wants to become a professional and, in that case, it makes sense, she said.

I wanted to know if they used to spend money in virtual cosmetics that do not bring any advantage. The only who used to spend is Andy because he pointed out that he often earns money thanks to E-sport, so he permits himself these expenditures.

Other participants stated having stopped spending money. They used to do so two years ago but it is not the case anymore. Nouh claimed that he does not feel the need anymore because he only plays with his friends he knows. Thus, they agreed that spending real money for cosmetics content is a waste of money.

Adrien:

Adrien admitted having spent money in a free-to-play but never in a pay-to-win content because he considers it as a trap for gamers and, in his case, frustration does not encourage him to pay. However, the relation between people who pay and companies relying on this strategy is beyond him. He does not understand why people pay when it seems obvious that developers are seeking it and how these companies do not feel ashamed.

He has already spent in cosmetics content on the game Rocket League, which is not a pay-to-win. He specified that his expenditures amounted to 100 euro spread in three years. The reason he is committed to spending money in virtual cosmetics is the duration of the game. If developers release a game that needs a lot of hours of play to be fully finished, Adrien feels the need to thank the company. Thus he would enjoy longer the cosmetics content bought and this does not make sense if the game lasts only a few hours.

5.4.4. What do they think about new monetization models?

Group A:

Concerning their opinion about expenditures within a game, diverse views were put forward. Nissrine, who plays games mainly on her phone when she feels bored, admitted not understand those who spend money. In her opinion, this real money spending cannot bring them anything positive in the real life.

However, other participants disapproved of her point of view. Indeed, they highlighted that some games allowed virtual items transactions between gamers. They mentioned the loot boxes and the uncertainty of these boxes content. Nevertheless, they pointed out a process I was not aware of which consists in selling items if the player did not need them. Thus, there is a possibility to get back the money spent within a game. That aspect strengthens interactions between players through another form. To the question where these transactions may take place, they answered that there are specialised website dedicated to this activity.

Dylan insisted on another interesting aspect. He is active in the industry by developing servers for the game Minecraft and has a closer contact with gamers. He claimed that he was astonished when he figured out the amount of expenditures in virtual items from very young gamers.

Dylan, the developer, admitted using this technique in his content. He detailed that his team had released a special rank that lead to additional content. However, this rank was not free and was available for only one months and disappeared about this period. He claimed that thanks to this strategy they could earn a lot in a short period of time even though purchaser knew they were going to lose everything but still were committed to paying.

Afterward, we went through the pay-to-play and free-to-play model and if they had a preference between these two acquisition possibilities. They all pointed out that most of the pay-to-play games include content that players may buy, such as FIFA.

To that point, Rénas added an interesting point that refers to an aspect we have looked into. He tackled that Destiny, released by Larian, was cut on purpose in order to sell parts of the game separately and thus earn money several times instead of one. This is a kind of abuse we have discussed, and he also argues that because of this, the community started to run away from this game.

I asked them if it was a problem that studios sell extra playable content separately and they said that, at some extend no if the company does not exaggerate. They put forward the example of additional map that cost 10 euros sometimes while there is also other content available to buy. Their conclusion for that point is that it happened that the game, at the end, cost nearly 100 euros. They highlighted another problem which the difficulty is to sell these games after another opus is released. Indeed, they claimed that if they spent 100 euros within a game, they would probably expect 20 euros back because the value would have plunged due to the new opus on the market.

Dylan added that dematerialized video games and DLC where connected to the player account. This is why it is impossible to sell them and receive back money from it such as Steam for instance whereas they cost the same price as traditional games on CD.

The aspect of unfinished games released, including elements such as bugs, participants had different views. Nicolas pointed out the pressure and the studios' and their deadlines that do not

let them choice but released the game even though it is not completed. I was surprised that it was not considered an issue because problems within a game released would be noticed by players, they declared. However, Dylan differed from this view and told that if bugs appeared, he would feel discouraged to keep playing and would simply stop spending time on it. To that point, Rénas replied that it is players' duty to gather information about a game before purchasing it.

<u>Group B:</u>

After that we tackled the monetisation in the video games industry and money spent on virtual items. Alican explained that his cousin had already spent nearly 50 euros in Fortnite for skins and that does not make a lot of sense. However, he admitted that he spent more than 200 euros in the same game and that makes himself an 'idiot', he claimed.

From that point we discussed an interesting aspect that spending in a game virtual items, can also be considered as an investment and that the money is not necessarily lost. For instance, it may lead to additional content, new maps or online modes but not only.

<u>Adrien:</u>

After that we tackled the DLC aspect. He claimed not understanding charges required to get them for pay-to-play games. He argued that companies do so because they make use of their previous success in order to earn more from the community.

Adrien plays rather free-to-play than other kinds of games because he does not feel the pressure to play. Indeed, spending in order to get a game, he would feel that he has to end it otherwise it would be a waste of money.

Concerning updates brought to a game, he argued that it makes sense in the free-to-play industry but not for other games that you expect receiving without any issues and complete with the full experience.

5.4.5. What are the In-game important features?

<u>Group B:</u>

After that, I wanted to look into the main criterias a good game should provide according to them. The first to answer came from Nouh who declared that the main aspect are the graphics. Alican agreed and completed by saying that a game should be complete, thus, unobstructed. He points out that a game should require the full experience and frustration occurred due to missing content should not be a strategy set up by the company. They all stated that the duration of the game is also essential and if it can be ended within three hours, no matter how good it can be, it would not reach their expectations. Two of the participants argued that a game is perceived as

incomplete if there is not a story but without an online mode it can become boring. In other words, a game should contain both online mode and a story.

<u>Adrien :</u>

To the question aimed to know the most important features of a video game, he put forward the music, the story, graphics and the online mode.

Their knowledge about the gaming industry

<u>Group A:</u>

When I ask them whether they knew any Belgian video game company, none of them were able to name even one, while they knew the game Divinity.

<u>Group B :</u>

To the question asked to the second group concerning their awareness about Belgian video games, I received the same answer as the first group which is nothing. People do not know video game companies of our country while they spend time on this activity. However, they could easily companies from other countries such as Blizzard, Epic Games, Ubisoft.

To the question whether they knew what E-sport was and what they could tell me about it, none of them, except Andy, knew what this entertainment is and had never heard about that.

<u>Adrien:</u>

Afterwards, I wanted to know about how far he knew about e-sport and he seemed to know a lot about it. What he likes in this entertainment is the atmosphere. People do not judge, there are almost no arguments due to different opinions, such as with football, he claimed.

He has already been to e-sport events and tickets are affordable. However, he pointed out that cash prices are too high amounts and this is a problem.

The particularity of e-sport is the possibility to follow it through different platform, for free. Furthermore, it is easy to keep in touch about news or events because most important information may be followed on Twitch only.

5.4.6.How do they communicate with other players?

<u>Group A :</u>

I wanted to know how they used to interact with other players and on which platform. Participants who are more engaged in the video game industry have interactions with the

community on channels such as Discord that they considered as the fundamental. They named another I had never heard about, TS.

Group B:

When I asked the group B whether they were interacting with others on platforms such as forums, they declared not using such communication channels, except Andy who subscribed on platforms that organise tournaments.

Nouh, who plays only with his friends, communicate with them thanks to a headset.

All of them admitted following their friends' progression on different games thanks to specific app, where they also can communicate.

When I wanted to understand what was the reason that explain their lack of commitment to discuss, interact with others or give their opinion about games on the platform, they pointed out that they do not know who will read them. They justified it by telling me they wanted to avoid interactions with kids or people with different mentalities.

Adrien:

During games he writes or talk. However, outside the game, on other channels, he does not interact with players, except his friends. He follows discussion on forums or specialised websites but does not take part in it.

5.4.7.How do they keep up to date concerning video games?

Group B :

Through my paper, we have seen how video game companies may inform players about their news, content, all kinds of information that could interest them. Thus I was curious how players use this channel to be filled in about the gaming market. Nouh argued paying attention on social media and generally on internet and ads. Other participants stated proceeding the same way and even Maya who do not ignore content released on Instagram. In other words, we can say that messages diffused come to them but they do not seek by themselves on the website, except Andy who follows streamers and spend time in specialised E-sport websites.

Adrien:

Talking about critics on the internet towards video games, he pointed out that people write easier an unsatisfied opinion when they are disappointed than letting a positive comment. In order to be filled in with news of the gaming industry, he read articles, reviews, read on Steam and watch trailers on Youtube.

6.My recommendations:

The last part of my work is my recommendations to Belgian video game companies. I would like to show how they can improve the use of gaming communities in order to boost their sales and enhance in-game content.

We have seen that companies set up different strategies that allow them to interact with the gaming community. The three different companies we have analysed, Fishing Cactus, Larian and Abrakam, use the tools at their disposal differently. These tools have been tackled throughout this paper and we have examined their advantages. However, we have also highlighted that these three companies do not always fully use these tools or sometimes, not at all.

I have also presented my discussions with Belgian players that provides us information concerning their needs, behavior and preferences towards video games.

Thus, what should Belgian video games company improve in order to tap into crowdculture?

Attend the GameForce

During my investigation, I understood that the studio should first create a community and then launch the game. Players should be looking forward to buying the game before its release. There are several possibilities to do so.

The attendance of video games companies to gaming conventions has been tackled in this paper and advantages have been highlighted. During my discussions with Belgian players, I noticed that Belgian video game companies remain unknown among players. Thus, attending gaming conventions could be one way to improve it in order to increase gamers' awareness about these companies and their games.

In Belgium, the main gaming convention is called "GameForce" and takes place once a year in Mechelen, according to the newspaper Metro (2018). The article pointed out that it gathers video game enthusiasts from Belgium and Holland. Furthermore, we have seen that the age range of players is wide. For instance, 18% of Belgian PC players are between 36 and 50 years old, while 39% of the total players are female. In other words, there is a real potential in adults. The GameForce proposes products from the retro-gaming type that are more dedicated to this older target, added the Metro. Furthermore, this convention organises the biggest e-sport tournament in the Benelux where the cash prize for the winner amounts to 25.000 euros (Metro, Article, 2018, para.4). On the one hand it could attract professionals and spectators. These spectators could be people who knew about e-sport or not. And as we saw with my interviews, even players are not always aware of what e-sport consists in.

Moreover, the GameForce event will establish a spot where cosplay enthusiasts will have the possibility to meet, informed the metro article (2018). The kinds of profile visitors will be diversified.

Image 31: GameForce activities

Source: GameForce. (2019). Que pouvez-vous faire à la GameForce?. Retrieved from https://gameforce.be/fr/daccueil/

Use feedback

There two main advantages for video game companies of having a community. First, members promote your games and encourage each other to acquire your products. Secondly, they provide a massive source of opinions about how to improve a game. The feedback may occur before and after the launch of a game or update.

I advise game companies to collect feedback before the launch, through soft launch, in order to make sure that players' needs would be satisfied. Furthermore, feedback after the launch are essential. I insist on the frequency of these feedbacks that should take place before and after each updates. Moreover, during my investigations I noticed that companies used to collect feedback on specialised platforms such as Steam or Discord. However, social media are sometimes not enough used by companies to get feedback. I suggest that gaming companies should communicate about these feedback processes and schedule them on social media. These latter should be tapped into in order to bring people on platforms such as Discord and Steam and encourage them to participate and express their opinion .

We have depicted the scrum process of work and how it implies accelerated interactions with players of the community. For instance, fishing Cactus clearly communicated on the official website about the use of scrum. Thus, it encourages video game companies to use this process of

work coupled with a high rate of activity on social media in order to invite more people with different profiles to the elaboration of games.

Appear in reviews

We have also pointed out that reviews may talk players into buying games. I was surprised when I noticed that the biggest Belgian video game company in Wallonia, Fishing Cactus, does not offer its games for reviews to a website such as Jeuxvideo.com. If someone is committed to gathering information about Fishing Cactus games, he will probably enter this website, which is the most visited by the French speaking community. He would not find the information he is looking for and could conclude that Fishing Cactus games are not worth it then. The reason is that the Fishing Cactus page on Jeuxvideo.com exists but is quite empty and lacks information. I recommend companies not to appear on video game reviews websites if their pages are empty. For instance, the official website of the company may propose links that lead to reviews or dedicated websites that propose enough relevant information about the company and its games.

For instance, all Larian games appear on Jeuxvideo.com. People who look for information about this company on this website would be filled in with all their games. This is not possible with Fishing Cactus because all their games do not appear on the page.

Communicate on social media

Tapping into crowdculture means also using efficiently social media. The reasons have been explained and detailed thoroughly pwa hus aizit throughout this paper.

I encourage Belgian gaming companies to diffuse messages through different social media channels. Different types of players are active on different social media. Some told me being active on Snapchat looking at gaming news on it. Other pay more attention on content related to videos games on Facebook. I insist, being on a social media and not being active on it is inefficient. For instance, Fishing Cactus as set up official pages on Twitch and Youtube but does not share any content. Larian, the biggest Belgian video game company, uses efficiently social media while Fishing Cactus does not. Another possibility is to cooperate with streamers in order to boost views and increase the awareness of the company among players. Indeed, none of those interviewed players could name at least one Belgian company.

Furthermore, the content shared with the community should be available in English, French and Dutch. English in order to be able to play with players from other countries and French and Dutch with a view to encouraging Belgian, French and Dutch speaking players. Unfortunately, I noticed that companies used to focus mainly on one language even though several languages are spoken in our country.

Furthermore, links leading to one communication channel to another should be clearly put. For example, the description on a Youtube video must contain the link to the official website. This website should not be overwhelmed with information. Abrakam gathered all kinds of information on their official website. The problem is that it is easy to get lost in it and thus not find the information needed.

An aspect that gaming companies should improve is the kinds of ads that appear in their games. Throughout this paper I have pointed out that ads may have a bad influence on users. However, some of these ads are welcome. For instance, those informing about rewards or, generally, those directly connected to the game. Thus, ads content that do not have connection with the game should be avoided.

Encourage mutual help within the game

Interviewed players highlighted that on the one hand, online gaming is important and that game mode are features to analyse. Furthermore, they also pointed out that playing with their friends represents an added value to the game. Thus, developers should also think their gameplay through mutual help. As we saw, this mutual help may take several forms. An interesting possibility could be to release additional content such as special challenges within the game. I advise companies to make these challenges hard to be achieved by one single. Thus, hardcore players who like difficulty withint a game would appreciate that. Furthermore, cooperation should be available to fulfil these missions in order to encourage players to help each other. Furthermore, rewards value gained after having achieved these challenges should be more important than other rewards. This process could be ended by communicating on social media about players who achieve these challenges. On the one hand, players who achieved these challenges would diffuse messages about their achievements on their social media account? On the other hand, it would motivate others to participate

Furthermore, communication channels allowing players to discuss should also increase the player experience. What do I mean? The use of such tools must be easy to use. Gaming companies could also provide their own tool to communicate, such as Fortnite that acquired HouseParty app, allowing players to communicate in a creative way while playing.

Thanks to my conversations with players, I understood that a player is paying attention to other members of the community and their behaviour. For instance, Adrien, the older interviewed person, claimed having stopped playing several games due to the low quality of the community. Thus, do not hesitate to crack down on misconduct among players in order to keep your most loyal players. If you do not, players with a good behavior will leave and the community would be constituted of less respectful people.

This picture below is taken from my Clash of Clans account. We see that they warn that disrespectful behavior may lead to a ban. This is an efficient communication strategy. On the one hand, it warns players to behave with respect. On the other hand, it shows that respectful players are the priority.

Image 32: Clash of Clans chat rues

Source: Clash of Clans. (2019). My account

Thank your community

Keeping a reliable community is essential. A company should also communicate with its community not only as they were clients, but also as they both were co-workers. They work together, they communicate about different topics, related to video games or not. For instance, Larian used to upload messages on social media in order to ask how players were feeling, what they planned to do for holidays and so on.

Thus, outside a video game, the company may use different communication channels to interact with them and, by the same token, diffuse an image of a company which is concerned about how the clients feel.

Within the game, for instance, they can thank players for their loyalty. Companies should reward members according to their activity. The longer they stay in the game, the more they achieve challenges, the easier they should receive rewards. It would encourage them and other players to spend more time in the game and they would feel grateful for that.

Another possibility is to create special event content within the game. Players I talked to, pointed out that additional content encourages them to keep playing and they enjoy it. For events such as the birthday of the studio, Halloween or New Year, special game mode, maps, character, should be released. It would strengthen their reliability and it could bring advantages in the long term.

Furthermore, players' activities on social media could also be rewarded. I saw that several Belgian video game companies ranked users according to their activity on their official website. The company was taking into account criteria such as the number of messages posted, number of likes received. I recommend proceeding the same way on social media such as Facebook, Instagram or even Youtube. This would encourage players to interact and share relevant messages.

Use the appropriate monetisation model

This aspect is probably the most important one. We have tackled the different monetisation models that video game companies can use for launching their game.

Even though the free-to-play model is more attractive than the pay-to-play model, developers have to set up strategies to make it profitable.

Casual players, who play from time to time video games, are more reluctant to spend real money on virtual items. However, players from the gaming community are more committed to spending in virtual content. Thus, revenues received through free-to-play are more uncertain because there is not a fix amount received when a player acquires the game.

Players I had a discussion with, clearly told me that they would not spend money in pay-to-win games. They seem aware of most of these strategies. A video game company has better avoid setting up strategies that clearly aim to take money from the people, even though it can be profitable on the short term. However, tapping into crowdculture implies long term processes.

Moreover, developers should limit virtual items that make the purchaser player too strong. On the one hand it will fragment the community between those who had paid and will compete with each other, and those who did not spend. On the other hand, new players would feel discouraged to start the game due to the impossibility to reach the purchaser player level.

Another aspect that could be highlighted is the virtual market within a game. I have been told that some players are reluctant to spend money because it would not be possible to get it back if they changed their mind. Thus, I recommend companies to developers to create a virtual spot where trades between players are possible. Interactions between players would be accelerated and players would feel more confident in spending. Furthermore, these virtual market could take place on the official website, on social media or within the game.

If the company released pay-to-play games, such as Larian, I advise them to offer free content at certain period of the year, such as special events for instance. Adrien argued not understanding why DLC are so expensive even though he has already paid for a game. Here again, the community would be fragmented between those who paid this additional content and other players who did not. Owing to creating a DLC costs to the studio, a hybrid solution could be possible. For instance,

the company could release several less elaborated DLC and then propose a purchasable more elaborated content. Players would be more encouraged to spend in this new content for two reasons. First, if they appreciated the free released content, they would understand that the new content is of a better quality and that they cannot miss the opportunity. Secondly, as Adrien pointed out, they would be grateful for the previous free DLC and then would feel as if they were to own money to the company.

As a last point, I insist on transparency. Each monetization strategies should be justified. Abrakam explained clearly to the community why they shift from free-to-play to pay-to-play model. If a company decides to do so, they should not charge those who got the game through the first model.

7.Conclusion

To conclude, I will sum up the main points to bear in mind.

Belgium video game market lags behind in comparison with other countries. We saw that Belgian gaming companies have to survive in an environment that does not provide an ecosystem. In contrast to other countries, different actors of the Belgian market, such as companies, schools or our Government work separately.

Thus, Belgian companies have to compete with studios that receive financial help from their governments. However, hopefully the Tax Shelter will improve the situation.

I came up with recommendations in order to show that Belgian gaming companies may tap into the crowdculture and and its members. Even though they already do it, some aspects might be improved. Their communication and work process should be developed through the cultural branding and tap into the culture, values of their target.

In the future, technology development will lead users to adopt new kinds of behaviors. Thus, companies will have to adapt and new strategies will occur.

Throughout this paper, I proved examples about how the gaming community leads companies to adapt their strategies. When I focused on the Belgian market, I depicted three companies with different features. Larian, the leader in Belgium, Fishing Cactus the biggest video game company in Wallonia and Abrakam that was set up to market one game and then had to adapt its strategy due to the growing success of Faeria.

The environment in which video game companies are active will continually undergo evolution. They should adapt and not underestimate the influence of the gaming community. Throughout my investigation, I highlighted strategies aspects that could be improved in order to cooperate efficienlty with the crowdculture. Companies have to stop seeing players as client they have to withdraw money from.

Stakeholders have to show them that they are close to the community through interactions, adapted video games, fruitful communication and work processes.

If Belgium wants to catch up with other countries market, they should start to take this entertainment seriously and start to, finally, develop an ecosystem in which gamers are the centre.

8. References

- a.list. (2019). *The Marketing Power Of DLC*. Retrieved on July 3st 2019 from https://www.alistdaily.com/digital/marketing-power-dlc/
- Abrakam. (2016). *The Egg*. Retrieved on August 8th from https://www.faeria.com/news/announcements/28-the-egg
- Abrakam. (2019. *Play on your own terms*. Retrieved on August 7th from https://www.abrakam.com/
- v Audureau, W. (2018). *Celia Hodent, la psychologue française derrière le succès du jeu vidéo « Fortnite »*. Retrieved on June 28th from https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2018/05/10/celia-hodent-la-francaise-derriere-le-succes-du-jeu-video-fortnite_5297079_4408996.html
- Aupers, S. (2007). *"Better than the real world". On the Reality and Meaning of Online Computer Games*. [Book chapter]. In Fabula (48(3-4):250-269). Rotterdam: De Gruyter.
- Bachelot, B. (2017). *Définition : Edition collector*. Retrieved on July 5th from https://www.definitions-marketing.com/definition/edition-collector/
- Barbet, P. (2019). *Sur Steam, l'avis ne fait pas le moine !*. Retrieved on June 27th from https://www.blacknutlemag.com/avis-utilisateurs-steam
- Barrett, J. (2019). *UPDATE: How's Gillette Doing Since Its 'Toxic Masculinity' Campaign? Very, Very Badly*. Retrieve on April 20th from https://www.dailywire.com/news/50122/update-hows-gillette-doing-its-toxic-masculinity-james-barrett
- Batchelor, J. (2018). *GamesIndustry.biz presents... The Year In Numbers 2018*. Retrieved on 7th May 2019 from https://www.gamesindustry.biz/articles/2018-12-17-gamesindustry-biz-presents-the-year-in-numbers-2018
- Bay, J. (2018). *How To Become A Video Game Community Manager*. Retrieved on 12th from https://www.gameindustrycareerguide.com/how-to-become-a-video-game-community-manager/
- Benrath, B., Jansen, J. (2019, 8th May). *Jouerons-nous bientôt sans console et ordinateur?Courrier International*. pp.48-49
- Blacknut. (2018). *Twitch, mais qu'est ce que c'est ?.Retrieved on July 11th 2019 from https://www.blacknutlemag.com/twitch-c-est-quoi

➢ Bloom, D. (2019). *Fortnite Becomes The Social-Media Experience Of Teens' Choice. Retrieved on June 29th from* https://tvrev.com/fortnite-social-media-teens-tweens-nrg-study-brands-impact/

➢ Brown, T. (2016). *Le design: un levier pour l'action. Harvard Business Review, 16, 42-49.*

➢ Buist, E. (2014). *Should thieves in World of Warcraft be sent to real prisons?. Retrieved on 1st May 2019 from* https://www.theguardian.com/technology/shortcuts/2014/jul/24/thieves-world-warcraft-real-prisons-tory-mike-weatherley

➢ Button, C. (2019). *The Communities Working To Give Gamers A Good Name Again. Retrieved on July 17th from* https://junkee.com/building-communities-around-games-love/210839

➢ Cagnard, M. (2018). *GAMESCOM 2018 : UN RECORD DE FRÉQUENTATION POUR L'ÉVÉNEMENT, VOICI LES PREMIERS CHIFFRES. Retrieved on July 20th from* https://www.jeuxactu.com/gamescom-2018-decouvrez-les-chiffres-de-frequentation-ici-le-record-ba-115132.htm

➢ Cavenati, L. (2019). *La société liégeoise Abrakam va lancer son nouveau jeu vidéo. Retrieved on August 8th from* https://www.lameuse.be/401850/article/2019-06-16/la-societe-liegeoise-abrakam-va-lancer-son-nouveau-jeu-video

➢ Clementoss. (2018). *Faeria : le jeu de cartes est passé du free to play à un modèle payant. Retrieved on August 8th from* http://www.jeuxvideo.com/news/893898/faeria-le-jeu-de-cartes-est-passe-du-free-to-play-a-un-modele-payant.htm

➢ Coldewey, D. (2019). *Free to play games rule the entertainment world with $88 billion in revenue. Retrieved from* https://techcrunch.com/2019/01/18/free-to-play-games-rule-the-entertainment-world-with-88-billion-in-revenue/

➢ Craven, J. (2019). *Black Ops 4 players still furious after "pay to win" weapon is nerfed. Retrieved on 18th June 2019 from* https://www.dexerto.com/call-of-duty/fans-still-furious-with-treyarch-despite-nerfing-pay-to-win-weapon-in-black-ops-4-719457

➢ Dabi-Scheweb, G. (2018). *Fortnite Battle Royale : une stratégie marketing bien élaborée.Retrieved on June 29th from*

https://www.1min30.com/inbound-marketing/fortnite-bonne-strategie-marketing-1287462123

➢ *daFrans. (2019). Discord propose enfin des dossiers pour classer ses serveurs.Retrieved on 3th August from http://www.jeuxvideo.com/news/1084049/discord-propose-enfin-des-dossiers-pour-classer-ses-serveurs.htm*

➢ *Dartmouth College (2018). Children's Violent Video Game Play Associated with Increased Physical Aggressive Behavior. [Press release]. Retrieved on 5th April 2019 from https://www.dartmouth.edu/press-releases/childrens-violent-video-games-increased-aggressive-behavior.html*

➢ *Demailly, A. Jacob, B. (2014). Jeux vidéo: ASPECTS ET ENJEUX DES ECHANGES COMMUNAUTAIRES VIRTUELS". [Master Thesis]. University of Caen: Caen*

➢ *doi:10.1515/FABL.2007.020*

➢ *Ecenbarger, C. (2014). The Impact of Video Games on Identity Construction Pennsylvania Communication Annual. 70 (3), 34-50. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/lorenzo/Downloads/PCA_VG_Identity.pdf*

➢ *Enjolras, B., Steen-Johnsen, K., Wollebæk, D. (2012). Social media and mobilization to offline demonstrations – transcending participatory divides?. New Media and Society. 15(6), (890-908). doi: 10.1177/1461444812462844.*

➢ *Faeria. (2019). Faeria official page. Retrieved on August 8th from Discord.*

➢ *Feldmann, E. (2008). Netherlands Teen Sentenced for Stealing Virtual Goods. Retrieved on 1st May 2019 from https://www.pcworld.com/article/152673/virtual_theft.html*

➢ *Fishing Cactus. (2019). We don't just make games, we craft Smart Games with Soul. Retrieved on 3nd August from http://www.fishingcactus.com/*

➢ *Flunger, R., Strauss, C., Mladenow, A. (2017, December). The Free-to-play Business Model. Conference paper for The 19th International Conference on Information Integration and Web-based Applications & Services, at Salzburg, Austria. (373-379). Austria: ACM Conference Proceedings Series. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322234515_The_Free-to-play_Business_Model*

➢ *Forbes. (2019). Nike, 47 Ans De Combat Pour Le Sport Féminin. Retrieved on August 4th from https://www.forbes.fr/business/nike-47-ans-de-combat-pour-le-sport-feminin/*

➢ *Forsans, E. (2017). Classement des sites Internet dédiés aux actualités des jeux vidéo.France: AFJV. Retrieved from* https://www.afjv.com/news/7183_classement-des-sites-internet-de-jeux-video-janvier-2017.htm

➢ *Forsans, E.(2014). Focus Home Interactive - 2015, année record.Retrieved on August 4th from* https://www.afjv.com/news/5945_focus-home-interactive-2015-annee-record-c-a-69-1-m.htm

➢ *Fourny-Arrivé, S. (2017). Contenu de marque : nature de la pratique et tensions associées à la formation d'une stratégie marketing hybride.(PhD Thesis). PSL Research University, Paris. Retrieved form* https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01635262/document

➢ *Froment, E. (2017). Faeria, un jeu développé à Liège, dépasse le demi-million de téléchargements.Retrieved on August 8th from* https://geeko.lesoir.be/2017/01/27/faeria-un-jeu-developpe-a-liege-depasse-le-demi-million-de-telechargements/

➢ *Froment, E.(2018). L'industrie du jeu vidéo belge fait son show à la Gamescom.Retrieved on August 4th from* https://geeko.lesoir.be/2018/08/22/lindustrie-du-jeu-video-belge-fait-son-show-a-la-gamescom-video/

➢ *FuturaTech. (2019). Version bêta. Retrieved on July 23th from* https://www.futura-sciences.com/tech/definitions/informatique-version-beta-2522/

➢ *GameArt. (2019). Lexique du Jeu vidéo : Casual gamer. Retrievd on May 6th from* http://www.gameart.eu/publi/dossiers/lexique/casual-gamer.html

➢ *GameLearn. (2017). Qu'est-ce que le game learning ou g-learning ?. Retrieved on April 8th 2019 from* https://www.game-learn.com/quest-ce-que-game-learning-g-learning/

➢ *Game Marketing Genie (GMG). (2019). 11 VIDEO GAME MARKETING STRATEGIES YOU CAN USE RIGHT NOW. Retrieved on July 17th from* https://www.gamemarketinggenie.com/blog/11-video-game-marketing-strategies

➢ *Garnier, M., Prostak, G. (2015). POURQUOI PAYER DANS UN JEU PAR NAVIGATEUR GRATUIT ? MOTIVATIONS À JOUER ET ACHAT D'OBJETS VIRTUELS. [Book Chapter]. In Management & Avenir (82th edition, p. 183-207). Cormelles-le-Royal: Management Prospective Ed.*

➢ *Gaylord. (2015). Lexique : c'est quoi un DLC ?. Retrieved on July 3st 2019 from* [*https://www.journaldugeek.com/2015/05/29/lexique-dlc/*](https://www.journaldugeek.com/2015/05/29/lexique-dlc/)

➢ *Gordard, S. (2018. 21.08). Le gaming belge fait front commun sur un marché à 100 milliards de dollars. L'Echo. Retrieved from* [*https://www.lecho.be/economie-politique/international/general/le-gaming-belge-fait-front-commun-sur-un-marche-a-100-milliards-de-dollars/10041698.html*](https://www.lecho.be/economie-politique/international/general/le-gaming-belge-fait-front-commun-sur-un-marche-a-100-milliards-de-dollars/10041698.html)

➢ *Gray, P. (2018). Benefits of Play Revealed in Research on Video Gaming. Retrieved on 3th April 2019 from* [*https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/freedom-learn/201803/benefits-play-revealed-in-research-video-gaming*](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/freedom-learn/201803/benefits-play-revealed-in-research-video-gaming)

➢ *Greffet, D. (2018). DIVINITY ORIGINAL SIN 2 : DES IMAGES ET LE PLEIN D'INFOS SUR LA DEFINITIVE EDITION.Retrieved on August 5th from* [*https://www.jeuxactu.com/divinity-original-sin-2-toutes-les-infos-sur-la-version-console-114800.htm*](https://www.jeuxactu.com/divinity-original-sin-2-toutes-les-infos-sur-la-version-console-114800.htm)

➢ *Grumiaux, L. (2019, 9th April). Face à Vous - Laurent Grumiaux, gardien des âmes - Fishing Cactus.[Interview]. In Face à Vous. Retrieved on August 3th from* [*https://www.telemb.be/article/face-vous-laurent-grumiaux-gardien-des-ames-fishing-cactus*](https://www.telemb.be/article/face-vous-laurent-grumiaux-gardien-des-ames-fishing-cactus)

➢ *hexen. (2018). Larian Studios ne comptera pas sur Kickstarter pour ses prochains jeux.Retrieved on July 5th from* [*https://www.warlegend.net/larian-studios-ne-comptera-pas-sur-kickstarter-pour-ses-prochains-jeux/*](https://www.warlegend.net/larian-studios-ne-comptera-pas-sur-kickstarter-pour-ses-prochains-jeux/)

➢ *Hoggins, T. (2019). Fortnite earned record $2.4bn in 2018, the 'most annual revenue of any game in history'. Retrieved on June 28th from* [*https://www.telegraph.co.uk/gaming/news/fortnite-earned-annual-revenue-game-history-2018/*](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/gaming/news/fortnite-earned-annual-revenue-game-history-2018/)

➢ *Holloway, C. (2013). Chris Moneymaker, dix ans après. Retrieved on 2nd may 2019 from* [*https://fr.pokernews.com/news/2013/05/main-event-wsop-chris-moneymaker-10-ans-victoire-interview-14030.htm*](https://fr.pokernews.com/news/2013/05/main-event-wsop-chris-moneymaker-10-ans-victoire-interview-14030.htm)

➢ *Holt, D. (2016). Branding in the Age of Social Media. Retrieved from* https://hbr.org/2016/03/branding-in-the-age-of-social-media

➢ *J., Cleghorn, and M.D., Griffiths. (2015). Why do gamers buy virtual assets'? An insight in to the psychology behind purchase behaviour. Digital Education Review, 27, 85-104. Retrieved from* [*https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1065003.pdf*](https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1065003.pdf)

➢ Janik, J. (2017). Glitched perception: beyond the transparency and visibility of the video game object. [Book chapter]. In Loska, K. (dir). TransMissions: Journal of Film and Media Studies. (2nd ed., pp.65-82). Krakow : Jagiellonian University academic journal

➢ Jansz. J, Martens. L. (2003, January). Gaming at a LAN event: the social context of playing digital interactive games (DIGs). [Project]. Amsterdam. The Amsterdam School of Communications Research. Retrieved on 7th April from file:///C:/Users/lorenzo/Downloads/Gaming_at_a_LAN_event_the_social_context_of_playin.pdf

➢ Jeuxvideo.com (2019). Larian. Retrieved on August 7th from http://www.jeuxvideo.com/recherche.php?m=9&q=Larian

➢ Karapinar, O. (2017). Hooked : Comment créer un produit addictif. Retrieved on July 1st from https://medium.com/essentiels/hooked-comment-cr%C3%A9er-un-produit-addictif-adb17495c6de

➢ Kaye, L., Bryce, J. (2012). Putting The "Fun Factor" Into Gaming: The Influence of Social Contexts on Experiences of Playing Videogames. International Journal of Internet Science, 7 (1), 23-36. Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/1be8/380a1f45ac7c720273b0ee5723ded1e214e7.pdf

➢ KickStarted. (2019). Notre mission est de vous aider à réaliser vos projets créatifs.Retrieved on August 5th from https://www.kickstarter.com/about?ref=global-footer

➢ KickSTarter. (2013). Faëria - Strategy Card Game. Retrieved on August 8th from https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/abrakam/faeria-strategy-card-game/description

➢ Kipplet, C. (2019). L'ESA dévoile les chiffres de l'E3 2019, et c'est en baisse !. Retrieved on August 1st from https://www.presse-citron.net/lesa-devoile-les-chiffres-de-le3-2019-et-cest-en-baisse/

➢ Kirsh, S. (2002). The effects of violent video games on adolescents The overlooked influence of development. [Book chapter]. In Aggression and Violent Behavior (page 377 – 389). New York : Pergamon. Retrieved from https://www.geneseo.edu/~kirsh/vita/avb.pdf

➢ Knowledge Works (2017). Annual report. Elverum: Knowledge Works. Retrieved from

https://kunnskapsverket.org/sites/default/files/Redefining%20the%20Value%20Chain%20of%20Video%20Games%20Industry%202017_final.pdf

➢ *Labbe, P. (2019). Les enjeux d'un salon dédié aux jeux-vidéo : types de salons et organisation.Retrieved on July 18th from https://www.evenement.com/guides-professionnels/salon-jeux-video-types-organisation/*

➢ *LaProvince. (2019). Fishing Cactus en quelques chiffres. Retrieved on July 2nd from https://www.laprovince.be/378141/article/2019-04-22/fishing-cactus-en-quelques-chiffres*

➢ *LaProvince. (2019). Fishing Cactus: «On a formé nos propres compétiteurs à Mons». Retrieved on July 2nd from https://www.laprovince.be/378142/article/2019-04-23/fishing-cactus-forme-nos-propres-competiteurs-mons*

➢ *Larian. (2019). Forums Larian. Retrieved on August 7th from http://forums.larian.com/ubbthreads.php?ubb=activetopics&range=30&type=t*

➢ *Layton, M. (2015). Video Game Development with Scrum. Retrieved on July 2nd from https://www.dummies.com/careers/project-management/video-game-development-with-scrum/*

➢ *Le Mag. (2019). Parlez-vous jeu vidéo ? Petit lexique à l'usage des joueurs occasionnels : Les DLC.Retrieved on July 3st 2019 from https://www.blacknutlemag.com/lexique-jeu-video-dlc-explication*

➢ *L'Echo. (2019). marché LEADERSHIP flamand. Retrieved on July 2nd from https://www.lecho.be/actualite/archive/marche-leadership-flamand/10119196.html*

➢ *Lehu, J-M. (2011). Haine du marketing: analyse d'une relation consumériste ambivalente. Retrieved on 2nd April 2019 from https://ezproxy.ichec.be:2081/business/docview/1541674939/9527CA4BB4E24F10PQ/10?accountid=164977*

➢ *Leskin, P. (2019). These are the 23 most popular YouTube stars in the world. Retrieved on 20th May from https://www.businessinsider.fr/us/most-popular-youtubers-with-most-subscribers-2018-2*

➢ *Louvigny, A. (2019). Epistory, un jeu indépendant belge au gameplay dactylographique qui vaut le détour.Retrieved on August 3th from https://www.rtbf.be/culture/article/detail_epistory-un-jeu-independant-*

belge-au-gameplay-dactylographique-qui-vaut-le-detour-adeline-louvigny?id=10204164

➢ Maricha, T. (2019). "E-sport" : La nouvelle tendance !. Retrieved on July 24th from https://www.rtbf.be/tv/article/detail_e-sport-la-nouvelle-tendance?id=10192544

➢ McFadden, H. (2016). Redesigning Adirondack Adventures: Analyzing Crowd Culture to Develop Social Media Marketing Strategies. (Master's Thesis). State University of New York Polytechnic Institute, New York.

➢ Meeus, R. (2014). Belgische studio Larian weet hoe ze een 'collector's edition' moet maken. Retrieved on August 5th from https://www.hln.be/ihln/games/belgische-studio-larian-weet-hoe-ze-een-collector-s-edition-moet-maken~ad56b8b5/?referer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

➢ Merriam-Webster.(2019). Definition of guild. Retrieved on August 8h from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/guild

➢ Miceli, M. (2019). First half 2019 Report. Berlin: The Esport Observer. Retrieved from https://esportsobserver.com/top10-twitch-content-h12019/

➢ Midnailah. (2019). La défense d'Electronic Arts au sujet des loot boxes.Retrieved on 25th June from http://www.jeuxvideo.com/news/1063925/la-defense-d-electronic-arts-au-sujet-des-loot-boxes.htm

➢ Morris, G. (2018). Introducing: The Faeria World Circuit. Retrieved on August 8th from https://www.faeria.com/news/announcements/210-introducing-the-faeria-world-circuit

➢ Nathael, ?. (2018) le branding culturel, (web)marketing de la fierté des communautés: explications et cas. Retrieved on 13 April 2019 from http://comunity.paris/branding-culturel/branding-culturel-marketing-communaute/?fbclid=IwAR2vCqk5MRsNz3UVXaNUyOo-sPe6Z7RbgXenXSXzWXnwM8rf70aDjM39WNU

➢ Newzoo (2017). The Belgian Gamer. Amsterdam : Newzoo. Retrieved from https://newzoo.com/insights/infographics/the-belgian-gamer-2017/

➢ O'Brien, L. (2018). The (Sometimes Dangerous) Power of The Video Game Community. Retrieved on July 1st from https://www.ign.com/articles/2018/08/31/the-sometimes-dangerous-power-of-the-video-game-community

➢ *Pannekeet, J. (2018). Quarterly update report. Amsterdam : Newzoo. Retrieved from* https://newzoo.com/insights/articles/content-rights-take-center-stage-in-esports-newzoo-updates-revenue-forecasts-and-introduces-league-and-tournament-classification/

➢ *Perez; D. (2018). Skinner's Box and Video Games: How to Create Addictive Games. Retrieved on July 29th from* https://levelskip.com/misc/Skinners-Box-and-Video-Games

➢ *Raluca, A. (2016). Agile Game Development – A Quick Overview. Retrieved on July 2nd from* https://marionettestudio.com/agile-game-development-quick-overview/

➢ *Rambusch, J., Jakobsson, P., Pargman, D. (2007). EXPLORING E-SPORTS: A CASE STUDY OF GAMEPLAY IN COUNTER-STRIKE [Book chapter]. In Situated play: The 2007 world conference of Digital Games Research Association, (4th ed., p.157-164). Tokyo: B. Akira*

➢ *Sacré, J. (2019. 21. 04). Après le cinéma et la scène, le tax shelter boostera le gaming. L'Echo. Retrieved from* https://www.lecho.be/entreprises/tic/apres-le-cinema-et-la-scene-le-tax-shelter-boostera-le-gaming/10119261.html

➢ *Sana, T. (2019, 25th May). Le jeu vidéo dans la stratégie de marketing digital. [Course]. Brussels: HEAJ*

➢ *SensorTower. (2018). Clash of Clans Daily Revenue Still Exceeds $1 Million After Six Years.California : SensorTower. Retrieved from* https://sensortower.com/blog/clash-of-clans-daily-revenue

➢ *SimilarWeb (2019). Top Websites Ranking. Retrieved on 20th May 2019 from* https://www.similarweb.com/fr/top-websites

➢ *Statista (2019). Video Games, Belgium. Germany: Statista. Retrieved from* https://www.statista.com/outlook/203/129/video-games/belgium

➢ *Stoddart, J. (2018). Soft launch vs. hard launch: taking a new product to market. Retrieved on August 1st from* http://marketing.channelcreator.com/blog/all/soft-launch-vs-hard-launch-taking-a-new-product-to-market

➢ *Szriftgiser, G. (17 September 2012). Gameblog. Retrieved on 25th March 2019 from* http://www.gameblog.fr/chronique_495_edito-47-paidia-et-ludus-les-deux-mamelles-du-jeu

➢ *Takahashi, D. (2018). Drilling deep on how to monetize esports. Retrieved on 5th July from https://venturebeat.com/2018/12/16/drilling-deep-on-how-to-monetize-esports/*

➢ *Tarason, D. (2018). Free-to-play card strategy game Faeria goes buy-to-play today. Retrieved on August 8th from https://www.rockpapershotgun.com/2018/07/18/strategy-ccg-faeria-buy-to-play-today/*

➢ *Tiberi, J. (2019). Co-branding. Retrieved on 26th June from https://www.e-marketing.fr/Definitions-Glossaire/branding-238969.htm*

➢ *todayinLiège. (2019). Crowdfunding pour le développement d'un nouveau jeu vidéo liégeois.Retrieved on August 7th from https://www.todayinliege.be/crowdfunding-pour-le-developpement-dun-nouveau-jeu-video-liegeois/*

➢ *Turcan, M. (2018). De 5 à 2 000 € dépensés sur Fortnite : pourquoi ces joueurs paient tant pour un jeu gratuit ?.Retrieved on June 28th from https://www.numerama.com/pop-culture/425830-de-5-a-2-000-e-depenses-sur-fortnite-pourquoi-ces-joueurs-paient-tant-pour-un-jeu-gratuit.html*

➢ *Turkay, S. (2016). The Effects of Avatar-Based Customization on Player Identification. International Journal of Gaming and Computer-Mediated Simulations, 6(1), 1-25. doi: 10.4018/ijgcms.2014010101*

➢ *Unity. (2015). In-game advertising the right way. United States : Unity. Retrieved from http://images.response.unity3d.com/Web/Unity/%7B149b1a2e-f137-4a49-8f76-5760b58d5258%7D_UnityAds_SurveyWhitepaper_FINAL.pdf*

➢ *Van Leemputten, P.(2018). Un studio belge de jeux décroche une récompense Bafta. Retrieved on July 4th from https://datanews.levif.be/ict/actualite/un-studio-belge-de-jeux-decroche-une-recompense-bafta/article-normal-826299.html*

➢ *Vivas, R. (2017). Game devs: Build your community as you build your game. Retrieved on July 24th 2019 from https://venturebeat.com/2017/11/13/game-devs-build-your-community-as-you-build-your-game/*

➢ *Wijman, T. (2018). Mobile Revenues Account for More Than 50% of the Global Games Market as It Reaches $137.9 Billion in 2018. Retrieved on 7th May*

2019 from https://newzoo.com/insights/articles/global-games-market-reaches-137-9-billion-in-2018-mobile-games-take-half/

➢ Yin-Poole, W.(2014). Divinity: Original Sin Larian Studios' fastest-selling game ever. Retrieved on July 4th from https://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2014-07-03-divinity-original-sin-larian-studios-fastest-selling-game-ever

➢ Yun, Z. (2011). Social media's role, utility, and future in video game public relations. (Master Thesis). University of Southern California, Ann Arbor. Retrieved from https://ezproxy.ichec.be:2081/abicomplete/docview/884618079/fulltextPDF/371FBBD1D2BE4F66PQ/1?accountid=164977