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## **PROMOTING THE EVENT FOR GAME DEVELOPERS TO JAPANESE MARKET**

Case: Game Development World Championship

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Case: Game Development World Championship

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## ABSTRACT

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The commissioner of this thesis is GDWC – the Game Developers World Championship, which is an online event for game developers and the managements are based in Finland. The author had practical training at GDWC in 2020 and worked to increase number of participants from Japan. The subject of this thesis which is focusing about Japanese game developers was selected to find out more effective way to reach potential participants from Japan.

The research question of this thesis is to discover why there are fewer Japanese participants in GDWC and how to attract them to participate GDWC. The thesis is consisted of introduction to the topic and GDWC, literature reviews, research, and conclusion. Conclusion includes suggestions of how GDWC can solve the research question. In literature review, various aspects about marketing communications are studied from literature sources and digital sources. In the research part of this thesis, both qualitative and quantitative research were conducted. The survey and interviews were held to Japanese developers who have participated in GDWC to gather their information and learn about the research question.

The findings from literature review and the research shows interesting factors about marketing communications and unique Japanese characteristics in marketing communications. Suggestions in the last part of the thesis gives development ideas for improve GDWC marketing communications activities to Japanese game developers.

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Keywords: Marketing Communications, Promotions, Japanese Market, Game Developers, Social Media

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the author introduces about the topic, and explain about purpose and aims about the topic.

## 1.1 Background

As technology develops, there are more ways that many people can make games by their own using software available for everyone. With the help of those software, any types of games can be developed without specialized skills, and it can be released to public by many different platforms, mainly online. Nowadays developer of the games is not limited to professional game creators, but also game developers as hobbies, or as student. The ultimate reason why they make games is because they want someone else to enjoy their game, so game developers are seeking opportunities to get visibilities of their games to numerous game players. (Panourgias, Nandhakumar, & Scarbrough, 2014)

## 1.2 The Game Development World Championship

GDWC, the Game Development World Championship, is a worldwide annual event for game developers. Anyone who are interested in game development, big or small teams of game developers, students, professional or hobbyists as well can participate GDWC. By participating GDWC, game developers can have an opportunity to gain more visibility on their games to larger audience.

Game developers can join the event by registering their games which have not been released before this year. In the year of 2021, the registration period has started in 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2021, and the game registration is going to close on 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2021. Registration is open to any type of digital games, from commercial games to non-commercial games and Game Jam games too. In 2021, GDWC has nine categories: Pro PC Game of the Year, Pro Console Game of the Year, Hobby Game of the Year, Mobile Game of the Year, Best Game Jam Game, VR Awards - Best VR Game, VR Awards - Best VR Prototype, Student Game Award and Fan Favorite. Winners for each category is picked by a jury of professionals and stakeholders, after game registration closes. For Fan Favorite category, the finalists are picked by fans by weekly qualifying votes which happens

every week throughout the year. In the end of the GDWC Season, final vote for Fan Favorite is taken to decide on the winner. Winners for all categories are announced in the early following year.

To make sure any game enthusiasts can be involved in the event, participation to the event is free of charge. Also, most of the part of the event held online, so everyone around the world can join the event without traveling. GDWC will also be showing up at game developer events and visiting industry hubs. In addition, the winners of the Pro PC Game of the Year, Pro Console Game of the Year, Hobby Game of the Year, and Mobile Game of the Year is awarded a trip to Finland to visit game companies.

GDWC originally began in 2012 under a different name and form and became current format in 2016. Since then, GDWC's number of participants has been growing every year. In 2020, GDWC had the biggest number of participants ever, which was more than a thousand game developers from nearly a hundred countries participated for the event. 2021 has over 2500 development teams as of December 2021, therefore the event is on the way to even bigger growth. (GDWC 2021)

### **1.3 Japanese Game Developers in GDWC**

Although there are big number of participants, they are mostly from European countries, or from Americas. As the author has been involved in the event as a staff in year 2020, the author learned there were much fewer participants from Asian countries, especially from Japan despite its popularity in gaming market. It is well known that in gaming industry, Japanese game creating companies such as Nintendo, Sony Computer Entertainment are a huge market leader in the world for decades, even though gaming industry originally began in the United States. (Aoyama & Izushi 2003) Because of mentioned issue of GDWC, the ways to make a Japanese developer feels easier to participate and can attract them shall be considered.

### **1.4 Aims and Research Methods for the study**

This thesis aims to discover why there are fewer Japanese participants in GDWC and how to attract them to participate GDWC. Research will be conducted by taking survey to Japanese game developers who are participating GDWC. In addition to the survey, interview will take place and inter-

viewees will be picked from survey respondents. This thesis focusses on Japanese market; however, the methods used in this thesis can be used by GDWC to help planning such regional events or country-specific event planning in future.

## **2 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS**

Elements of marketing can be broad such as product development, processes management and pricing and so on, but in this thesis the focus is put on marketing communications. The reason is that the process of the research includes to find out effective communication methods to the targeted audiences of GDWC in Japan. As introduced in the previous chapter, GDWC has a great potential to gain more popularity in gaming industry because of its characteristics and tons of benefits for the participants. If marketing communications is done properly to the right audiences such as game developers, as well as game players, also anyone who is related to the games, GDWC can be a big event. Right now, the event is already running and have been succeeding in smaller market, so next step to grow the event is to gain the audience and promote the event to larger populations, to be specific to Japan, thus understanding about the marketing communication is essential to find out how to effectively plan marketing communications.

Marketing communication is defined as the mix of elements to take to connect with target audiences, to have attention to company's products or services, by advertising sales promotions and direct marketing or other means to reach target audience. (Govoni 2003, 123) As people's lifestyle changed day by day, the way to reach audience is spread in multiple platforms, different focus, or design for each media. As the number on engagements on digital media increases, it gets more competitive to succeed in reaching audience, thus it is important to know how to get emotional attention from right audience. Advertisers can use different digital media flexibly to develop tailored designs to engage audiences. In order to attract audience in effective way, it is needed to understand behaviours of audience in different medias and processes to use medias in different situations. (Chan-Olmsted & Wolter, 2018, 562)

### **2.1 Marketing Communication Mix**

Marketing communication mix, which is also called as simply "communication mix" is the units of marketing communications plan. It consists of 5 elements: advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, and personal selling.



Figure 2.1 the marketing communications mix, (Todorova, 2015).

Those five elements have strongly interrelated each other and to be used as tools to create an integrated marketing communications to deliver a consistent message to the targeted audience to achieve the common goal. (Govoni, 2003, 39)

### 2.1.1 Advertising and Sales promotion

Although the border between advertising and sales promotion have been getting a bit blurred, the fundamental difference in roles of those two are, advertising is meant to raise brand awareness and build positive brand attitudes, meanwhile in sales promotion, the expect return is more in short time driven, for example an immediate product sale and usage. Messages about brand awareness can be delivered in any terms of marketing communications, but advertising is the most long-term effective way. Positive brand image in memory that is obtained from advertising can help to interest in products, when it is needed. (Percy, 2014, 77-78) Advertising can be also differentiated from other components of the marketing communications mix, that the message is paid. Since it costs some, advertiser has strong control over the message, hence the message can be fully what advertiser intends to deliver to the audience. (Kokemuller, 2019)

Sales promotion can influence the target audience to take quick action for the deal by adding value on the product. There are several types of the promotion which involve retail or sales force, but the

most common type of promotion is called consumer promotions, which is directly benefits the target audience. In addition, promotion have two broad categories, first is the immediate reward, which the target audience can receive the benefit immediately after acting in response to the promotion, such as discounted prices in products, or free gifts with the participation with the event. Another category is delayed reward, in contrast, the target audience would benefit sometime later after their action, for example frequent flyers programme of airlines company, or a reward as a prize for an event.

| Promotion                       | Examples  |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Coupons                         | Coupon for reduced price delivered via FSI or other print media, also internet  |
| Sampling                        | Free distribution of product to home, in-store samples, free trial of product   |
| Refunds and rebates             | Automatic rebate on initial purchase price of expensive goods, or mail-in proof of purchase for refund  |
| Loyalty and loading devices     | Continuity programmes such as frequent flyer or frequent stayer, multiple or bonus packs, price off marked on package   |
| Premiums                        | Product-associated items such as Pepsi-wear, use of other products as premium with purchase   |
| Sweepstakes, games and contests | Free products or trips as prizes for mailing participation, entry for chance or prize for accepting product demonstration, 'scratch' cards or bottle caps identifying winners |

Figure 2.2 Six basic consumer incentive promotions (Percy, 2014)

Consumer promotions can be broken down into six types as the figure 2.2 shows. It includes sweepstakes, games, and contests, which is most relevant to GDWC has to offer. This promotion can give the audience interests and excitement to the event, give consolidate concept to whole marketing communications, and the costs of the promotion can be rather low because a limited number of participants can only receive benefits from the promotion. The downside of the promotion is that legal problems shall be carefully considered in this type of promotions, so when taking this promotion into effect, asking for a legal expert advice is recommended. The way to promote this type of

promotions can be regulated by the government and it differs country to country. (Percy, 2014, 103-112)

GDWC has already implemented advertising and sales promotion for Japanese audience by several ways, such as the event being fully online. Anyone can participate GDWC online and there is no need to travel, therefore it is a benefit for participants who lives far from Finland. Also, GDWC offers products as prizes as for their sales promotions. There are prizes for winners in different categories of the competition and most of them includes free or discount on partnered company's products or service. In several categories, trip to Finland and visits to top games studios are offered as prizes for winning. In addition, GDWC does streaming of game play of the games from participating game developers. The game developer joins the streaming so they can promote their games by themselves and show how their games looks like to the audience. It is also an added value on GDWC because games has opportunity to gain more visibility.

### **2.1.2 Personal Selling and Direct Marketing**

Considering GDWC's characteristics, personal selling is integrated with direct marketing. Personal selling is the social, direct communication process to meet the customer's needs and it is not always just persuading to buy a product but also meant to build a good relationship with the customer. (Rajput & Vasishth, 2008, 126) Direct marketing includes aspects from personal selling and sales promotion as well since it involves interaction with targeted audiences. Messages often includes with special offers to call for a quick action, an immediate reward promotion in other word. Direct marketing is the most fast-growing element of the marketing communication mix, as it involves email and direct mail as most common formats for the message. (Kokemuller, 2019) Direct marketing is easy to see the response from the targeted audiences so the marketing activities can be improved to be more effective, in addition, it is affordable when it is done in email. However, this easiness causes the receiver of those direct marketing messages to think messages are intrusive and annoying. There is possibility that most of the messages are ignored and even make the brand image negative. (nibusinessinfo.co.uk, 2021) To avoid that situation, message should be delivered to more precisely targeted people, and message shall be personalized to make more close and personal communication with the targeted audience. (Naumovska & Blazeska, 2016)

GDWC contacts potential participants by direct messages, including Japanese games developers. Usually, emails are sent with automated message and direct messages on social media is more tailored for each person. This helps to engage with game developers more closely and can encourage to participate in the event. To take more attentions from Japanese audience, social media posts in Japanese were posted many times, though GDWC's multiple social media platforms.

### **2.1.3 Public Relations**

Public relations, PR, is defined differently nowadays among different era, region, and people. PRSA: Public Relations Society of America defines PR as "Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics." (PRSA, 2012) PR takes important role in the marketing communication mix. Even though some of the PR activities are out of marketing communication focus, any PR activities relates to communication must have persistent message from the organization as it reflects organization's image and reputation. PR does not involve direct media, so the cost is relatively low, but still the message has more credibility since the message is independent from advertising. Also, PR can be done to specific targeted audiences. On the other hand, message is not fully under control, as it is published through media's view. (Percy, 2014, 147-150)

As for PR activities, GDWC issues press releases about major updates on the events. In 2020, many press releases were issued in Japanese language as well. It resulted GDWC getting featured by Japanese online news media.

## **2.2 Marketing Communications in Japan**

In the past pages, the five components of the marketing mix have been reviewed. When putting focus into the marketing communications in Japan, some unique characteristics are found out, which could help to plan a marketing communication in Japanese market.

### **2.2.1 Advertising and Sales promotion**

Advertisements in Japan has some unique developments and impressive displays. The picture below is from the main street from Osaka, Japan.



Figure 2.3 Advertisements in Japan (Culture Trip, 2020)

As seen in picture above, advertisements in Japan seems different from the west. It uses so many colors and texts, being very eye-catching design. In general, Japanese do not find advertisement disturbing, instead many people have positive attitude to the advertisements, both offline and online advertisements. (WordBank, 2021)



Figure 2.4 Marie Kondo's YouTube channel for Western & Japanese people comparison

Same thing can be said on YouTube channels. The above screenshots are from Marie Kondo's YouTube channel. She has two YouTube channels for western and Japanese viewers. It is very

easy to tell that thumbnail are made very differently for each audience. For western, less colours are used with no texts at all, meanwhile the videos for Japanese, thumbnails have more focus on her face and always have text of short summary of the video.

As for sales promotion, a risk for sales promotions was mentioned, that there is downside in sales promotion in games and contests that may break the law depending on the country. According to Clifford Chance Law Office, the open prize competition which gathers participants for free of charge and giving gift to the winner is not prohibited, and there are no restrictions on maximum value of the gift either. (Clifford Chance Law Office, 2012) It is recommended to ask for the latest legal advice from the professionals when starting sales promotions in Japan.

## 2.2.2 Personal Selling and Direct Marketing

When considering about personal selling and direct marketing, social media stands in a very important position. In Japan, the most popular social media is YouTube, and the second-most popular social media is LINE. Later it is followed by Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. (Bigbeat Inc., 2021)

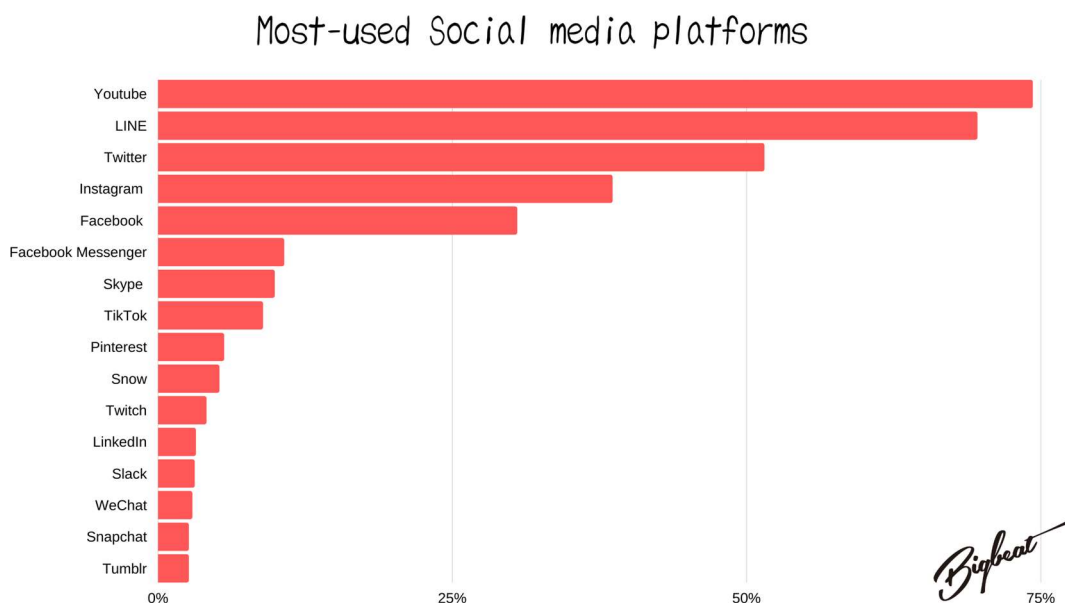


Figure 2.5 Most used social media platforms in Japan (Bigbeat Inc., 2021)

LINE is a social mobile media which is commonly used among Japanese people because of many cultural reasons, but especially since 2011, the great earthquake disaster. (Ohashi, Kato & Hjorth, 2017) LINE is an app just like Whatsapp in the west, which is used to exchange messages with

friends or family usually. However, on LINE, a business can have an official account where the company can engage with users directly. Message appears on the same screen as users send messages, so when the company sends message through LINE, users can easily see them. LINE also offers advertisements in different features of LINE, such as timeline, LINE news, LINE manga and so on. Therefore, company can promote the event or update to the users by messaging or advertising through LINE, and even give a customer service with LINE message.

### **2.2.3 Public Relations**

Although Japan's advertising is very big, PR market stays relatively small. In addition, advertising and PR is mixed up often in Japan. Advertisements in Japan often includes an aspect of corporate image, which is in general a PR function. A company gives message to the audience in more emotional way, rather than informational way thus advertisements have more power than PR to inform to the audience. A cultural and linguistical background also affects how PR is done in Japan. Japanese language is a High Context Communication language, which lets reader or listener to guess the meanings of messages by themselves, rather than putting information straight in the message. One another concept to be noted about PR in Japan is, uncertainty avoidance is recommended. Japanese culture appreciates "no surprises" to avoid embarrassment and troubles caused by unprepared situations. Preparation for a special event as well, should be done very carefully, obeying rules and no sudden decision. (Cooper-Chen & Tanaka, 2008)

### **2.2.4 Language of Communications**

Language of communications takes big part of marketing communications in Japan. Japanese is a primarily spoken language in Japan. When in a multi-national situation, English can be spoken, as Japanese study English at school for years. However, fluent communication in English is not expected to every Japanese. According to The EF English Proficiency Index, Japanese' English proficiency is assessed as "low level" and ranked 55# out of 100 countries. (EF, 2020) Also, it should be kept in mind that sometimes Japanese will not tell that they did not understand, when they want to be too polite. Therefore, when communicating in English, it is recommended to use easy words, and avoid complicated sentences. Communicating through interpreters or translators is recommended for more accurate communication. (IMA, 2015)

### **3 GAMING INDUSTRY AND GAME DEVELOPERS IN JAPAN**

As mentioned in the introduction part of this thesis, Japan's gaming industry has quite a long history and it is easy to imagine that Japan has huge market in gaming. Japan has the third largest digital games market in the world, following China and the US. Japan's digital games market is even larger than Germany, UK and France combined. (DMFA, 2021) The revenue in the video games is expected to reach US\$18,248m in 2021, and almost 70% of the market volume is taken by mobile games. (Statista, 2021)

#### **3.1 Trends of Games**

Mobile phone games take the largest market in Japan, and growing, as 50% of Japanese internet users plays mobile games on their smartphone. It is affected from a society background of Japan, where many workers spend hours everyday basis commuting by train or bus, and many people spending time playing games in their smartphones. (DMFA, 2021) In addition to the mobile games, the online-communication games have been growing as well. As the COVID-19 pandemic limited people to meet others, people seeking opportunities to meet their friends in the virtual world. More people will enjoy people interaction in the gaming world. (Geekly, 2021)

#### **3.2 Game Developers in Japan**

In recent years, game developers' market in Japan has got many programs or competitions to support indie game developers, such as iGi Indie Game Incubator, Shueisha Game Creators CAMP and more. In Japan, small communities for hobbyist individual game developers have been existed since 80s that has gathered through game exhibitions and events. And younger or newer generation of doing indie games developments joined in the communities since mid-2010s, and the communities are still growing nowadays. (Ichijo,2021) Especially "Asobu", a support community for indie game developers provides a community hub for those developers who needs networking, share knowledge with others and promoting games. While large game corporations follow growing mobile games, more developers in Japan are starting indie games studios, and several support communities are available, therefore more indie game's growth is expected in Japan. (Grubb, 2020)

## 4 RESEARCH METHODS

There are two types in collecting empirical data for the research: qualitative research, and quantitative research. The quantitative research makes the data easy to be comprehended by numbers, and it is done based on the hypothesis with a survey to the large number, to learn the things can be measured. In the other hand, the qualitative research has more loose principle than that, in other words it is more flexible way to conduct the research. It also helps to gain new knowledge about something not easily being measured and understanding why/how/what is something that is happened.

In this thesis, both the qualitative research and the quantitative research are used for the empirical data collection. The reason for conducting both types of research is that, with quantitative research, general viewpoints from Japanese game developers can be learned as the samples are bigger number than qualitative research. However, the survey that is used for this research includes several open questions and those questions can be also qualitative and informative. In addition to the survey, an interview was held to two Japanese game developers, who have answered to the survey and have agreed to have an interview. This interview helps to learn deeper insights from smaller numbers of individuals with their experiences and thoughts that interviewee would freely discuss. Interviews are hold online since the interviewees are in Japan mostly.

Types of interviews can be structured interview, semi-structured interview, and open interview. This research applies semi-structured interview where the researcher prepares several basic questions beforehand and ask interviewee for answers, and interviewee can also tell their thoughts. Semi-structured interview takes time than structured interview, but it can collect in-depth information.

## 5 RESEARCH RESULT

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the data collection was held in two different ways. The quantitative survey is held by sending the questionnaire form by email to Japanese game developers who have participated to GDWC before. Email was sent to more than 80 recipients, and the survey had total 15 responses. The qualitative research is held after the survey because interviewees are picked up from respondents of the survey.

### 5.1 Survey for Japanese game developers

The survey was sent to about 80 Japanese game developers, who have participated in GDWC. Survey is consisted of 13 questions. All the questions can be found on appendix 1. The survey was sent by email to them from GDWC. There are 15 responses in total and all the responses answer survey carefully.

Question 1 asked how the developers learned about GDWC. 11 of 15 respondents learned about GDWC through direct marketing, where GDWC staffs contacted them directly by email, social media, or their website. Rest of them have learned about GDWC by other means, for example reading an article about GDWC or through social media.

Question 2 asked if they know anything about GDWC before participating. 11 of 15 respondents did not know anything about GDWC before, and 4 of 15 respondents knew about GDWC.

Question 3 asked why they decided to participate in GDWC. Most popular answer was “to promote own game”. Other answers were “it seemed to be easy to participate” “participation was free of cost” “just to have a try” and “GDWC staff sent very trustworthy message”

Question 4 asked if there were any difficulties in participating GDWC. 7 of 15 respondents mentioned about language. For example, it was difficult to read website and understand rules as they all in English, they needed to make game descriptions in English, forms on the website did not accept Japanese. Four respondents answered it is difficult to understand the rules, since “voting

for favourite games may not be familiar with Japanese” and “how the games picked for weekly vote is unclear”. Another four respondents mentioned there was no difficulties.

Question 5 was about, in contrast, what was easy in participating. 8 of 15 respondents mentioned that registration process was easy. It is also mentioned that the registration period is long so that they could register the game whenever their game is ready.

Question 6 asked about what social media they use for game development. Individual can answer multiple social media, so the sum of the answers is not 15. Others includes social media that is answered once, such as SecondLife, itch.io, lexaloffe.com, chatwork, Shueisha game creators camp and developer’s DMs. One person answered “none”.

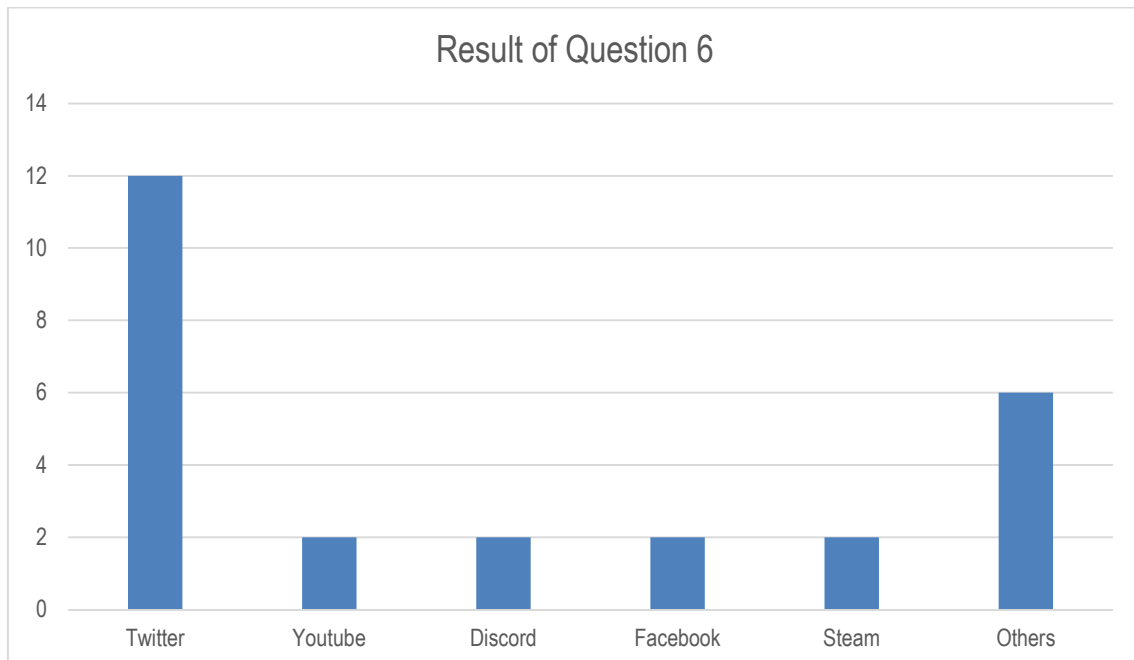


Figure 5.1 Result of Question 6: What social media do you use for game development?

Question 7 asked if they follow GDWC's social media. 6 of 15 follows GDWC's social media and 9 of 15 do not follow GDWC's social media.

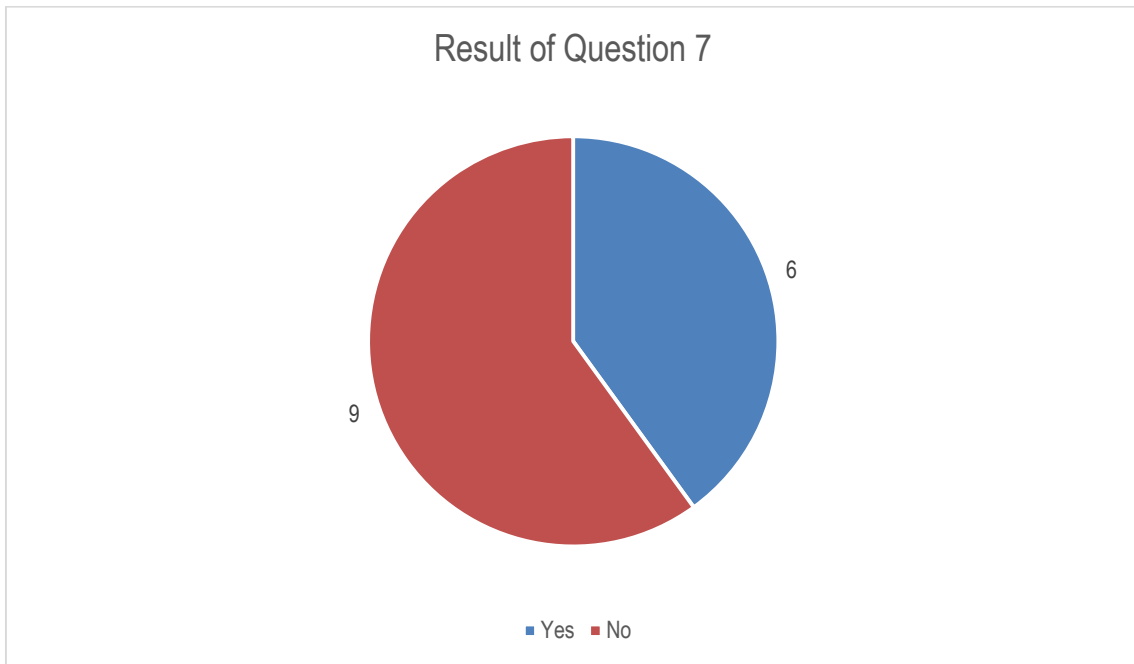


Figure 5.2 Result of Question 7: Do you follow GDWC's social media?

Question 8 is asked to those who answered "yes" in previous question, to ask if they find GDWC's social media informative. 3 of 6 answered yes and another half of the respondents answered no.

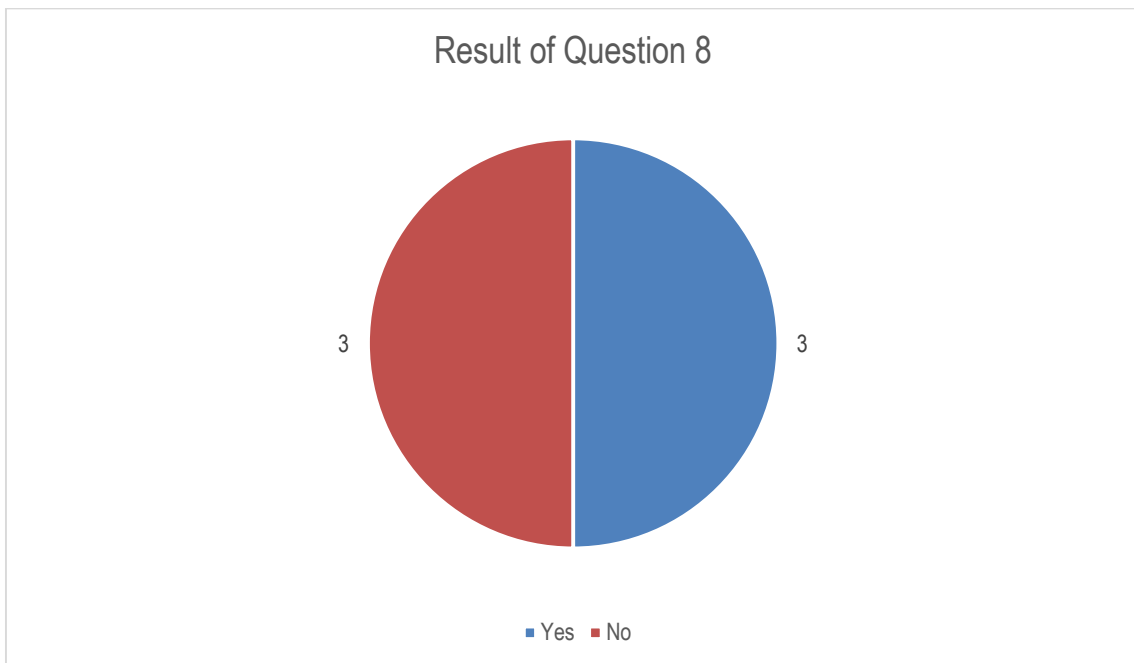


Figure 5.3 Result of Question 8: If yes, do you find them informative?

Question 9 asked what kind of information they want to see from GDWC's social media. Answers were "posts in Japanese" "information about registered games" "post about own game" "trend of highly ranked games in fan favourites" "trend of different countries' indie games" "posts about games that GDWC judges personally like".

Question 10 asked if they participate in Japanese game developer's event. 9 of 15 respondents answered yes and the rest answered no.

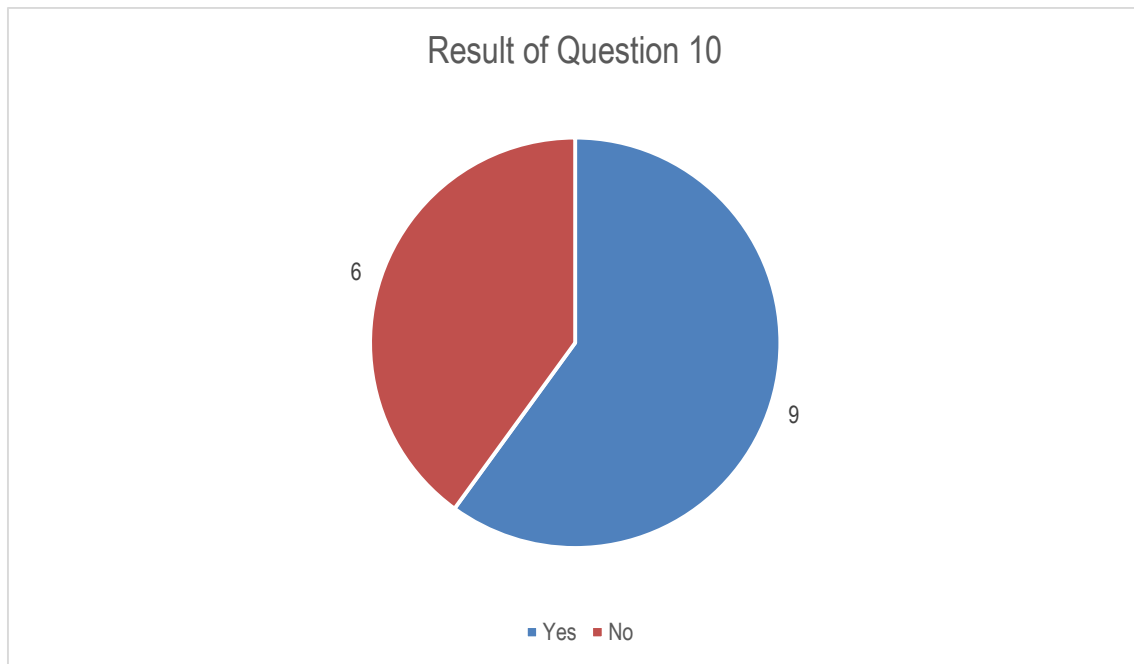


Figure 5.4 Result of Question 10: Do you attend Japanese events for game developers?

Question 11 is asked to those who answered yes in previous question, asking what event they have participated in Japan. Answered were "Bit summit" "Digigame expo" "Comic treasure" "Tokyo Game Show 2021" "Asobu indie game showcase" "INDIE game Expo 2021", and "Nintendo Space World".

Question 12 was also for those who answered yes in Question 10, to ask what benefit they expect from participating Japanese game developer's event. 6 of 9 respondents answered, "to promote own game" and two respondents mentioned that they want to "expand network" and also other two respondents mentioned that they want to "improve game developing skills" by participating such events.

Question 13 asked what benefit they expect from participating GDWC. 12 of 15 respondents answered, “to promote own game to worldwide audiences”. Two respondents answered “nothing” and one answered, “to have an interesting ideas”.

## **5.2 Interview for Japanese game developers**

In addition to the survey, two interviews were arranged to understand better about the research questions. Two interviewees, Mr. Dendaira and Mr. Mitobe, are both participating in GDWC. They have answered to the survey, and they accepted to take interview as well.

Regarding the first question, which is about how they gets information about game developer’s events in Japan, Mr. Dendaira answered that such information is not very open for every people, but there is a closed communities of game developers, so the news about developers’ events is shared inside of those communities. There is a problem, that many Japanese game developers are not interested in the events outside of Japan, so he felt that most of the Japanese does not know about GDWC at least, or not paying attention about the events in outside of Japan. Mr. Mitobe answered that he does not know many Japanese game developer’s event, but he picks up interesting events if he finds some on internet.

Second question was about prize, asking if Japanese game developers in general are interested in prizes. The reason this question is asked is because in the question 13 of the survey, none of the respondents mentioned about prized that GDWC offers. Mr. Dendaira said that Japanese game developers might not pay attention to the prizes because many Japanese developer’s events do not have prizes. Mr. Mitobe did pay attention to the prizes of GDWC, however, he said that those prizes did not meet his needs, so he is more interested in promoting his game by participating GDWC.

Next question is that why GDWC is not expected to help giving new ideas and build networks, while those are expected to Japanese game developers’ event. Mr. Dendaira assumed that Japanese participants are just not used to such a worldwide open community, so they are hesitated to have connections to other people on GDWC. Mr. Mitobe mentioned that GDWC participants varies, from students, hobbyist to professional game developers, so it may be difficult to find people you want

to connect with. However, one thing that every participant has in common is that the passion to the games, so at least gaining visibility through GDWC would help to have network.

Last question is asking what they expect GDWC in future as a Japanese game developer. Mr. Dendaira addressed that current form of GDWC is already very well designed, that it was easy to understand about GDWC and register his game to participate. The games GDWC has are at so high level and he had so much to learn from them. Mr. Mitobe said he wants GDWC to grow to bigger event even more than now. Before he participates GDWC, he has been struggled with how to improve sales from overseas, and he and other staffs worked very hard to promote the game. However, when his game has been picked weekly fan-favourite games, he realised good impact of participating GDWC by his game getting popular than before. Thus, he wants GDWC to keep encouraging game developers by giving opportunity for showing their games to large audience.

## 6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis focused on promoting side of marketing as this thesis aims to discover the reasons why there are less participants in GDWC from Japan and find out how to attract them to participate in GDWC. The literature reviews and the result of the research show unique characteristics about Japanese marketing communications and Japanese game developers. They indicate that ineffective marketing communications could prevent Japanese developers to participate GDWC. More precisely, GDWC needs effective marketing communications, decrease language barrier and variety in social media posts to attract Japanese game developers. Insights in those points are explained in later part of this chapter.

As the long-term goal, those method used to data collection can be applied to learn markets of other countries. When reaching potential participants from other region, learning about their marketing communications from the aspects that are studied in the literature review, such as advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, and personal selling is required to find out issues in reaching them and how to communicate in better way, since each region may have different characteristics.

There are several recommendations and suggestions for GDWC to expand market in Japan, based on finding in literature reviews and the research.

### 6.1 Indirect marketing

According to question 1 of the survey to the Japanese developers, most of the participants from Japan leaned about GDWC through direct marketing. Although one of the developers mentioned that he/she decided to participate because of a trustworthy message from GDWC, direct marketing has limit to reach large number of audiences. Instead, consider using LINE (see chapter 2.2.2) as it is the most popular social media in Japan. LINE for business does not cost anything and it allows one account to send up to 1,000 automatic messages per month, therefore it should be enough number to start from small number of audiences. (LINE, 2021) Through LINE chat, GDWC can remind audiences about coming fan favourite votes, streaming events, reward events or information about sponsors. Comparing to Twitter, the message will less likely be flown away in the timeline,

but the message is sent directly so it has lower chance to the message to be ignored. LINE account can also be used to answer inquiry from game developers. Twitter is the popular social media for many Japanese developers as well, therefore reaching Japanese game developers there can be effective. According to question 7 of the survey, more than half of the Japanese game developers who participated GDWC do not follow GDWC's social media, so it is recommended to remind them to follow their social media when registering their games, so that GDWC's posts can be seen by participants and spread out through them.

## **6.2 Lower language barrier**

As mentioned in chapter 2.2.4., language barrier is a bigger issue than western countries since Japan have lower English proficiency, so majority of people hesitate to use services provided only in English. In the survey, question 4 asked if there were any difficulties in participating GDWC and almost half of them had problems in language understanding. Although all of them made it to participate, some of the Japanese developers has concerned if GDWC is an event that they are eligible to participate, or they do not clearly understand the rules of GDWC, because the website is English only. Therefore, the ideal situation is that website has multi-language, at least few parts of the website for example info about GDWC and the rules, so that it can help the developers better understanding, and give them feel they are welcomed to participate. One other possibility is to have a partnership with Japanese game developer's events or organizations. There are many events for game developers in Japan, as mentioned in question 11 of the survey. Also, there are community hubs for Japanese game developers for example, Asobu as mentioned in chapter 3.2. It may be possible that those events or organization stands as an agent for GDWC for Japanese game developers to lessen the difficulties for Japanese game developers. As Mr. Dendaira mentioned in the interview, such communities help very much to know about updates, so using this network would be effective to reach more Japanese developers.

## **6.3 Various posts on social media**

It is essential to gain more followers on social media to reach more Japanese developers, and to attract them, more attracting social media posts from several different aspects should be made. According to question 9 of the survey, the posts they want to see was obviously about their games, because most of them participate GDWC to promote their games. As Mr. Mitobe mentioned in the

interview, GDWC putting highlights on the game has a big influence to increase visibility of the game. Therefore, for example, making a post for highlighting the games from Japan, or specific countries would be interesting. In addition to that, several Japanese game developers mentioned that they want to see the trend of the games. GDWC has a game gathered from all over the world, so sometimes posting or writing article on the blog about analysis or overview of the games they got, would be also interesting. According to the survey, when Japanese game developers attend game developer's events in Japan, they expect to gain network and improve their developing skills as well as promoting their games, while most of them only expects GDWC to promote their games. Although many Japanese expects GDWC to promote their games, most of them do not see their games on GDWC's social media posts, as GDWC has so many games to highlight in their social media. Relating in the first part of this paragraph, making different kinds of social media posts would help GDWC functioning as a community hub or information hub for Japanese game developers.

## 7 DISCUSSION

At the start of this thesis project, original idea was to plan a regional GDWC that can be applicable to other regions than Japan. However, the focus on the topic has been changing during the process because planning the whole event is a very broad topic, and I thought it needed to be narrowed down. When narrowing down the topic, I went back to the basics - 4Ps of marketing - and I found out promotion is the most appropriate point to study about GDWC. The literature review part was more narrowed down, that is focusing on marketing communications, as those concepts can be interesting to investigate country-specific characteristics. I have satisfied with how the topic of the thesis became, however, I wished I had gathered more concrete idea from the beginning, so that I would not have to spend long time getting lost about what to write. It was most nervous and unstable time during the process of this thesis.

After the plans of the thesis is settled, everything went smoothly and accordingly to the schedule that has planned in the beginning. I reserved long time to work on this thesis, so I spend enough time to read literature sources and internet, which also gave me some extra knowledges that I have not included in the thesis. The research part was especially interesting. I have not prepared any returns to respondents for answering the survey, however, all the respondents of the survey gave very good answers in the survey with explanations in details. One answer in the survey mentions that the developer decided to participate GDWC because GDWC staff's sincere message – I was so glad and impressed when I read this, because that message was sent from me during my practical training since I was only one wrote message in Japanese. Interviews were also interesting and productive time. We had a fruitful discussion and it helped me to give many new ideas and view-points about contents in the thesis. I continue to keep in touch with one interviewee to help his new game development and I am very excited about this opportunity.

I want to thank my supervisor for being always helpful and supportive, giving clear answers and directions to any questions I have had. Also, I appreciate GDWC to be the commissioner and helped me to study about interesting topic. I hope in the future GDWC become even bigger event and hope this thesis will help GDWC.

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## **SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR JAPANESE GAME DEVELOPERS**

## **APPENDIX 1**

Question 1: How did you learn about GDWC?

Question 2: What did you know about GDWC before participating?

Question 3: Why did you participate GDWC after hearing about GDWC?

Question 4: Did you have any difficulties in participating?

Question 5: What was easy about participating?

Question 6: What social media do you use for game development?

Question 7: Do you follow GDWC's social media?

Question 8: If yes, do you find them informative?

Question 9: What kind of posts do you want to see from GDWC's social media?

Question 10: Do you attend Japanese events for game developers?

Question 11: If yes, which event?

Question 12: If yes, how do you expect to benefit from participating in the Japanese event?

Question 13: How do you expect to benefit from participating in GDWC?

## **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR JAPANESE GAME DEVELOPERS**

APPENDIX 2

Question 1: How do you learn about Japanese game developers' event?

Question 2: Are you interested in prizes?

Question 3: Comparing to Japanese game developers' event, why GDWC is not expected to help giving new ideas and build networks?

Question 4: What do you expect GDWC in future as a Japanese game developer?