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Viral Marketing As a Means of Promoting Video Games

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Title

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Abstract

This thesis examines the topic of viral marketing as a means of promoting video games. The aim of the study is to research the concept of viral marketing and its relevance in the video game industry.

The literature review is presented by theoretical review method. This section presents the background of viral marketing, its main theories and approaches. It also includes a review of the video game industry and examples of successful viral marketing campaigns. The research method of the thesis is a quantitative study, conducted with the help of an online survey. The aim of the primary research was to determine the types of content that people prefer to share, motivational factors for playing and types of emotions players are looking for. The statistical data was collected and analyzed by the author. The results of the literature review and quantitative study were combined, analyzed and presented in the discussion and conclusion part. The collected data was aimed to answer three main question of the thesis.

On the basis of the results, it can be concluded that that viral marketing is an effective tool as a part of complex marketing activities of a company, while individually it is not a powerful tool that can turn potential audience into active players.

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thesis, viral marketing, video games, viral content, player behavior

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1 INTRODUCTION

The author is strongly interested in studying phenomenon of virality, and viral marketing particularly. The phenomenon of viral marketing is that people are the main spreaders of information, which forwards from person to person and multiplies in geometric progression. The key factor is that people share information in a way that other people do not identify it as a commercial, but more as an entertainment. If an advertisement became viral, it would have a major impact and would provide a company with more visibility on the market. Despite of the fact, there is not any unique technique on how to make something viral, there are different approaches, which showed good results. Depending on a product or service some approaches seem to be more effective than others. (Goldsmith 2002, 3-6.) However, there are no guarantees that viral effect will not turn against the company and damage its reputation (Josic Media 2013). The unpredictable nature of viral marketing and high potential results have motivated the author to study this subject deeper, since understanding of particular approaches and elements increase chances for successful outcome.

The author is involved in the game industry as an active user and follows the latest news and trends. This aspect became an additional motivational factor to research effectiveness and relevance of viral marketing in the video game industry. Moreover, viral marketing is a phenomenon, which has appeared because of the development of digital technologies (Goldsmith 2002, 3), which turns the video game industry into a perfect environment for virus spreading, by the author's assumption. This research paper is aimed to prove or disprove this.

1.1 Relevance of the thesis

There is no doubt that marketing activity in enterprises of any industry is important. The key element of marketing activity is the marketing strategy, its planning and implementation. Nowadays, mostly modern technologies and innovations determine the development of marketing environment of the company. The internet, digital environment, interactive marketing, social media, and phone applications are result of technological progress, which are actively

used by marketers. (Mahea 2014.) There are a lot of ways of promoting products or services. One of the most popular and effective ways is viral marketing, which gained a major boost in the era of total globalization (Goldsmith 2002, 1-2).

One industry which shows enormous growth is video games. In the period of 2012-2018, the global games market has grown from 70 billion to 137 billion dollars, which is almost 100% growth (Wijman 2018). Due to the fact that video games are digital products, and information about games is spreading mostly through the digital environment, the author found it interesting to research the concept of viral marketing from the viewpoint of promoting video games. Even though there are multiple studies about viral marketing itself, the author had not found any research about the effectiveness of viral marketing in the video game industry, although some companies use it actively. That fact combined with the great interest to the concept of virality and video game industry became the main motivational factors for conducting this research.

1.1.1 Aim of the research

The aim of the study is to research the concept of viral marketing and its usefulness in the video game industry. The study investigates theories of viral marketing, its methods and elements. The examples of implemented viral content are aimed to support studied information and explain how one or the other aspect is able to affect the results of a viral campaign. The goal of the primary research is collecting statistic about gamers' preferences in content forwarding and their playing behaviors. This is expected to help getting better understanding of the elements and aspects of viral contents which are needed to be focused, if a viral marketing strategy is implemented in video game industry. The author has composed three main research questions, which are as follows:

1. What makes people share a content with their network?
2. Are the popular games viral by their nature or do they require separate marketing activity? What makes people advise video games to their network?
3. Is it correct to state that viral marketing is an effective way of promoting video games?

1.2 Structure of the thesis

The structure of the thesis is a basic model: Introduction-theory-results-discussion. The secondary data research is presented by literature review. The main sources of information are books and online sources, such as articles, blogs and annual reports. The literature review is related to viral marketing and description of video game industry and its main aspects. It also includes a review the examples of viral marketing campaigns which were implemented.

The primary data research is presented by a quantitative research method. The author created an online survey that consists of multiple-choice questions, with the possibility to choose option “Other” and answer in an open manner. The questions have been created based on the literature review and theories of viral marketing. The questionnaire also included a couple of examples of viral content to which the respondents needed to react. The data has been gathered, analysed and presented in the chapter 4. The conclusion and discussion based are presented in the chapter 5.

1.3 Dictionary

Meme – An Internet meme is a joke, image or catchphrase, which gets popularity and spreads rapidly through the Internet (Techopedia 2018).

Vlog – A video blog or vlog is a method of expressing own thoughts. Unlike the general blogs, where information is presented by text or images, vlog is done with help of video, which makes it more interactive and easier for perception. Vlogger is creator of vlog. (Techopedia 2018.)

Console – Computer system, which is designed for video gaming. It is usually connected to any display or TV. (Techopedia 2018).

F2P – Free-to-play model provides free access to the game, where monetization is done with help of advertisement or in-game purchases (Techopedia 2018).

P2P – Pay-to-play model is referred to online games, where access to the game must be paid (Techopedia 2018).

Seeding - The initial spreading of information by company in aim to turn it into a virus (Hinz, & Skiera & Barrot & Becker 2012, 4).

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology consists of two big sections: primary and secondary research. The secondary research is based on the literature review, which is presented by articles, reports, internet sources, books and interview of an expert. The author focused on the theoretical literature review, since his goal at this point was to study the existing theories about the subject, based on which survey for primary research was composed. This combination of research methods provided the author with an opportunity to form his own opinion about the problem and to make further conclusions. The primary data research was aimed to connect the theoretical knowledge with the statistical data gained through the online survey and prove or disprove the existing assumptions. The main goal of the primary research is to answer on three research questions, and to become a foundation for the conclusions of the thesis paper.

2.1 Primary data research

The primary research is presented in the form of statistics, which were gathered through the online survey. The questions for the survey were composed according to the theoretical knowledge gained during the secondary research. The total amount of questions was 12. The main respondent group consisted of people of any age, who are interested in video games. The main aim of the primary research was to complement the theory knowledge and answer the three main questions, which were stated at the beginning. The local goals for this survey were:

1. To understand, what kind of content people prefer to share and what motivates them to do it.
2. To understand, what types of gaming behaviour prevail among respondents.
3. To understand, what emotions people like to get from playing games.

In addition, there have been shown two videos of popular video game commercials and respondents were asked to express their opinions. The videos were chosen because of their popularity (amount of views) and content. The author considered that the content corresponds to the typical elements which refer to the viral marketing.

The online survey was conducted between 4 December 2018 – 5 December 2018 with the help of Google forms. This is a free online tool that allows to create questionnaires in different forms, to monitor, and to collect statistical data. Respondents were found in social medias, such as Facebook and Reddit. The author was surfing public pages related to gamers and asked to complete the survey. There were two approaches: direct contact with a person or just leaving the link to the comment section. The total amount of respondents, who have completed the survey was 107. The original survey sheet is presented in Appendices 1-7.

2.2 Secondary data research

The secondary research is presented by a literature review. The author has chosen a theoretical literature review method, in which are studied existing theories and previous researches. That section also includes elements of historical review, since it consists of history of viral marketing and video game industry development. That type of approach allows to become more familiar with the subject before conducting the primary research and forming one's own opinion and conclusions. The literature review is divided into three major sections:

- Definition of viral marketing and its theories
- Description of video game industry
- Review examples of viral marketing

The first section is important, since it presents the main statements and theories of the concept of viral marketing. The author describes the background of viral marketing which consists of brief history, advantages and disadvantages, and two theories. Those theories explain why something has possibly become viral.

The second section provides description of the video game industry, its brief history, type of gamers' emotions and industry's trends. The third section reviews the examples of viral marketing campaigns which were implemented in the past.

The main foundation for literature review is books:

- Jonah Berger - Contagious. Why things catch on? (2013)
- Russell Goldsmith - Viral Marketing: Get Your Audience to Do Your Marketing for You (2002)
- Emanuel Rosen - The Anatomy of Buzz (2009)

And research articles:

- Jonathan Frome - Eight Ways Videogames Generate Emotion (2007)
- Newzoo - "2018 Global Games Market Report – Light Version" (2018)

The author considers these sources are the most valuable in a way of studying background of viral marketing and video game industry. There are other sources which support the main ones. They are research articles from the internet, journals, reports, interview, blogs, statistical figures, and videos. A variety of sources provide the wide picture of the subject.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing is an important part of a company's activity. It covers branding, participation in publicity activities, advertising and communicating with customers. Companies are competing to be more recognizable than others and at the same time trying to save their market share. Marketing is the key of creating and saving customer loyalty and maintaining strong relationship with them. One of the marketing functions is advertising, which is delivering message of the company to their target audience. Messages can be different. For instance, description of a new product or discount period. The goal of marketing messages is also different, increasing awareness of the product or brand among target audience, stimulation of sales or informing about new sale places. (Kotler 2013, 4-6.)

According to the original survey completed by Advertiser Perceptions (2017), the top challenges faced by marketers are: reaching potential customers in a meaningful and compelling manner, accurate and reliably measurement, and reaching attention of the target audience. The other two challenges which are in top five, but have less percentage are: brand differentiation and determining overall right media/advertising budget. The full results are presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Marketers' Top Advertising Challenges. (Marketing Charts, 2017)

3.1 From an idea to a report

The basics of viral marketing consist of explanation of the concept, its advantages and disadvantages, brief history, main objectives and theories, and solutions which viral marketing offers to challenges stated before.

3.1.1 Definition

“Viral marketing describes any strategy that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message’s exposure and influence” (Wilson 2000).

The gist of virality is passing information to others which can be related to almost anything. Some things have more potential to become viral, such as scandals, inventions, funny videos or extraordinary events. People express their opinions about a subject (make comments) which provokes discussion. Besides traditional way of passing information, such as personal communication, phones or mailing, in the era of the Internet people use e-mails, quick chats, blogs, and social medias which help information to spread multiple times quicker. Usually, virality has a temporary effect, which means that there is a splash of discussion for a period, while effect is gradually decreasing in a process of time. Sometimes virality has a random effect when an author did not want to make viral content. Viral marketing aims to study how to make content viral and what tools are more effective than others. (Rosen 2009, 2-6.)

3.1.2 Background of viral marketing

Viral marketing is an heir of older form of marketing, which we know as "word-of-mouth" marketing. The operating principle is the same: people sharing interesting things with their circle of communication, after which receivers of information pass it further to their circle. People are inclined to follow personal recommendations and to trust to public opinion in many cases. (Nielsen 2015.) Thus, word-of-mouth marketing perhaps one of the oldest forms of advertising, even if first merchants did not realise its power. People were recommending products to their friends, if

they were surprised by their quality or novelty. This principle survived till the modern era. (Fergusson 2010, 22-25.)

The first who invented the new term was Jeffrey Rayport in his article named "The virus of Marketing" (1996). The difference between these two concepts is that viral information is spreading most likely through the Internet, while word-of-mouth implies personal communication (Rayport 1996).

Any viral marketing strategy should include stage named "seeding". It means that a virus has to be seeded at certain place(s) where it can start to spread itself. There are many different seeding strategies. It can be online portals, opinion leaders, newspapers, existing communication networks (such as Facebook public pages). Moreover, seeding can be accidental. For example, if someone starts to spread rumors in a small group of people, but then it starts to grow exponentially. (Hinz, & Skiera & Barrot & Becker 2012, 2-5.) Some of the strategies are explained below. Viral marketing can be separated into two categories by channels and methods that used. Offline viral marketing includes:

- **Buzz.** It is a planned spreading of rumors about company and its products in a commercial purpose. It is interesting that company benefits if the original information is complemented by additional details even unreal ones which boost level of discussion. That is very dangerous path, since the result is unpredictable and can turn against the company and spoils its reputation. (Rosen 2009, 158-161.)
- **Opinion leaders.** They are famous people who have own fan base. They usually can influence people's opinion, since they are authorities, and people trust them. There are different opinion leaders depending on the market or region, thus a company is able to choose the one who has bigger influence on their target audience. (Hinz, & Skiera & Barrot & Becker 2012, 2-3.)
- **Friend's strategy.** It implies different bonuses or prizes when customer offers a company's products to his friends. In the best-case scenario this chain is endless. (Hryszko 2018.)

Online viral marketing includes:

- **Viral videos.** A company creates a video which can be interesting, funny or emotional and downloads it into its media. It does not necessarily need to be connected to a company or a product. It has to cause emotions and a wish to be shared. It also has less limitations (censorship), because it is for the Internet audience which is more loyal in this sense. The information about a company is usually added in form of a subtitle or in form of phrase of a character. The main requirement is that it cannot be intrusive. (Goldsmith 2002, 79-82.)
- **Viral games.** They are aimed to entertain their players. Usually, it means some simple mechanism and hours spent in the game. The good example of viral game is "Angry birds" which has a very simple gameplay and tasks and does not require a long time to learn how to play. Levels are interesting and different; thus, it is not surprise that this game became popular at some point and made a real boom at the mobile game market. (Kendall 2010.)
- **Blogging.** This is another way of online viral marketing. There are many different social medias, including such as Twitter and Instagram where people can share their pictures, short videos, and blogs. If the content is interesting, it can quickly be shared by subscribers and become a trend. (Scott 2010.)
- **E-mail.** The classic example of viral marketing is Hotmail.com case. This happened in year 1999 while e-mail services were not free, thus not everyone was able to use it. The strategy of Hotmail was very easy: they provided free email addresses and service for certain number of users in a random way. They sent a message for these people, which contained only one sentence: "*Get your private, free email at <http://www.hotmail.com>*". The result overcame all the expectations. People started to send on this message to all their familiars, since many people wanted to have their personal e-mail. Thus, such a simple strategy became the first excellent example of viral marketing. (Wilson 2000.)

3.1.3 Advantages and disadvantages of viral marketing

Viral marketing provides weighty advantages which are hardly to be ignored, because of their effectiveness. Perhaps the most obvious advantage is the fast growth. The nature of viral marketing campaign is explosive, people start to spread information exponentially and as more people are involved in then faster and bigger influence is. It is especially effective to compare traditional methods when success is achieved over years step by step. (Sukhraj 2016.)

Low costs become a major advantage of this strategy, since the idea of viral marketing that potential customers share information by themselves. Of course, there are cost related to creation of viral content and to first steps of spreading, or in other words for seeding. For example, company may partner with media or opinion leader to launch a virus. When it reaches to a tipping point then it expands in a natural way. (Shukla 2017.)

As were noted, personal recommendation is an important factor in a viral campaign. This provides two major advantages. Firstly, people trust their network most likely. Personal recommendation does not sound like a "call to purchase", unlike the commercials (which comes from every TV adaptor). Moreover, information about product or company is hidden behind the viral content. It is usually presented in an unobtrusive way and does not call an annoy. That provides more loyal audience to the brand. Secondly, people share information mostly with people, who are interested in it. Unlikely, a person would tell someone, who does not fish at all, about a new innovative fishing stick. A person would more likely discuss it with someone who goes for fishing every weekend. Thanks to this effect information is received by a person in which company particularly is interested in as a potential customer. Thus, it is also a good targeting tool. (Berger 2013, 18-19.)

The absence of guarantees perhaps is the biggest disadvantage of viral marketing. Not everybody is ready to invest in a campaign, which result is unpredictable. Unfortunately, the luck has a great influence on success. The content might be made by all the canons, but it will not become a virus if it was released in a wrong place, in a wrong time, by a wrong company. From the other hand, some videos which were made within a minute without any investments

can gain millions of views. There is no 100% recipe how to make a content viral, but there are instructions on to increase chances for it. The effect of virality can be hard to measure, since it is moving very fast from person to person. We can consider it as a big disadvantage, due to the fact that measuring of the marketing activity is one of the biggest challenges for marketers. (Josic Media 2013.)

Additionally, even if content becomes viral, it does not automatically create a lead. There are no guarantees that person who watched a video will purchase something. Thus, a company needs to support the viral content with other marketing activities. Moreover, a virus can turn against the company image if the audience consider content in a negative way which can produce a wave of anger. (Valdellon 2018.)

3.1.4 Wilson's six elements theory

According to Wilson (2000), there are six elements of viral marketing, which can be included in any viral marketing strategy. The chosen strategy does not necessarily need to include all six elements, but as more elements are included, it has better chances to reach the success. (Wilson 2000.)

1. Gives away valuable products or services

Viruses are patient and smart, they can exist in the body of their host for the long time before making itself visible. The first element states that free things at the beginning attract more attention, while in the process when consumer realizes all advantages of the product (s)he can't refuse it. Good tools which attract attention are: free button, trial period, basic version of software which is powerful, but not as much as "advanced version". Once customer tried a free product, it is good time to offer additional bonuses/services. (Wilson 2000.)

2. Provides for effortless transfer to others

Viruses need correct environment for spreading, just like real viruses spread during autumn/winter time while people are most vulnerable. The chosen channel must deliver message freely and without interruption. Viral content must be created in a way which encourages people to pass it further. (Wilson 2000.)

3. Scales easily from small to very large

If the viral campaign is successful, it brings a lot of users to company's website which should be ready to service all of them. The weakness of Hotmail case is that they needed own servers, since big number of users increase the load and slows them down. Thus, company has to increase its productivity in advance to be ready to satisfy large amount of people who have been caught by viral content. (Wilson 2000.)

4. Exploits common motivation and behaviours

All the people have their own needs and wants; however, some behaviours are common for the whole humanity and we know them as basic needs. They are food, communication, self-expressing, respect, love and so on. Many marketers exploit them in their campaigns. The success of Instagram is built on the desire of self-expression and desire of sharing experience. Of course, the platform must be functional and stable, but the foundation is simple human's need. (Wilson 2000.)

5. Utilizes existing communication networks

Most people are social, although there are exceptions. Each person has close and broad network of people. Close networks consist 8-12 persons in average while broader network is endless and can reach hundreds and thousands of people, depends on the social status. The era of Internet provides brilliant opportunity to expand broad network further and further. People are uniting in communities of interests, communicating with people from abroad, playing online games and so on. Utilizing those existing networks is a good tool to place a message and spread the virus among people who are involved in. (Wilson 2000.)

6. Takes advantage of other' resources

Using others' platforms for own purposes is a good move especially if the business was just started. Simple example of partnership is purchasing advertising banners on someone's website which target audience coincides with target audience of a company. Another example of this element is newbie vloggers. They place a link to their video in the comment section in hope that people will click it. However, this method is not effective, since it is usually lost behind thousands of the same comments from other people. (Wilson 2000.)

3.1.5 Jonah Berger's STEPPS theory

According to Berger (2013), there is no unique technique of creating 100% successful marketing message. However, there are methods and strategies, which make marketer's chances higher. Unlike of the Six elements theory of Wilson (2000) which studied what kind of components should be included in viral marketing strategies, Berger's STEPPS-model explains what factors encourages people to share information with their network. Understanding those factors helps to built up a strategy that takes them into account and provide higher virality. Factors are displayed in Figure 2 and explained below:

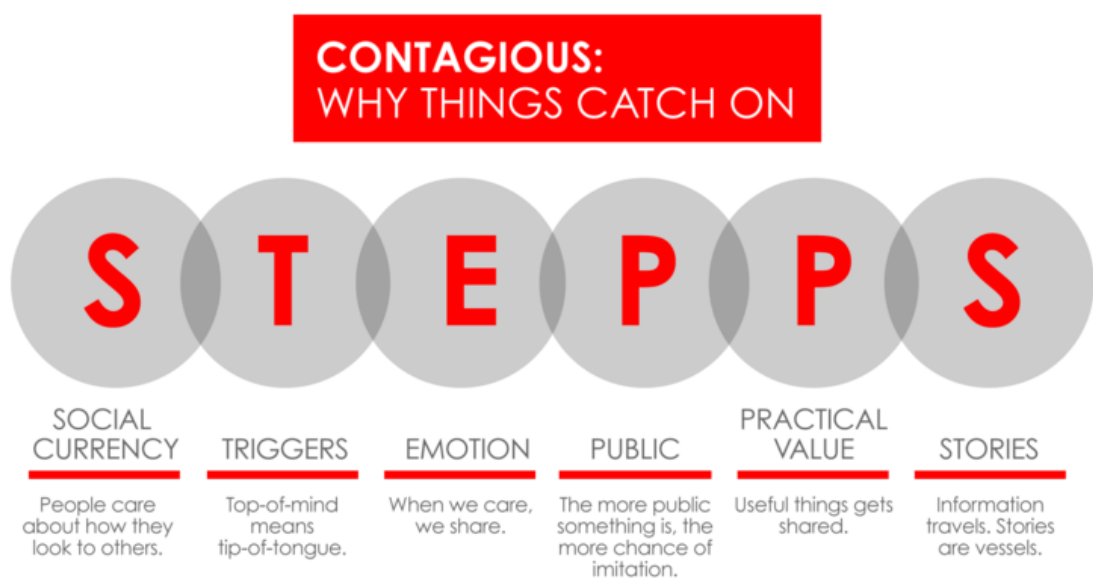


Figure 2. Berger's STEPPS-model (Jonathan Becher, 2018)

1. Social Currency

It is important for many people how society perceives them. People like to build their own image in the other's' eyes and being intelligent, attractive, and interesting, instead of silly, untidy, and boring. Those (and many others) qualities are social currencies. Sharing a content is one of the ways to change and improve others' opinion about itself. For example, when someone shares documentary historical movie, it subconsciously says that (s)he is interested in it. (Berger 2013 31.)

2. Trigger

Triggers are anything which remind about a product or service, and they follow people everywhere. They can be very different, starting with a slogan and ending with another product which calls associations. For example, a pack of milk in a store may remind how tasty are cookies with milk. An interesting case has happened in 1997. The company "Mars" which produces chocolate with the same name, noticed increased sales, although they had not carried out any marketing activities in the recent times. The reason was that NASA declared their plans of expedition to the Mars (planet) which became a trigger and reminded people about chocolate bars. (Berger 2013, 31-32, 74.)

3. Emotion

Content which consists of emotional elements has better chances to be shared. People like to share emotions with others and let them feel the same. Naturally, the more powerful emotions are the more likely they are to be shared. For example, funny videos provoke laugh, potential increasing of tax provokes anger, tricks provoke amazement. (Berger 2013 32.)

4. Public

Most people like to follow the lead of trends and fashion. It explains popularity of some subcultures or styles of music. It is impossible to follow the lead of something invisible. Thus, important factor is to create content which would be visible and easily sharable to a large public. (Berger 2013, 32.)

5. Practical value

Differentiation is an important aspect in the modern business. The competition becomes tougher and it makes it harder to prove the practical value of the product or service. Thus, content which shows relevance is favorably different from the others. (Berger 2013, 33.)

6. Stories

People like to tell and listen stories since they became able to do it. Stories are also social currency, they describe own or others' experience. But there is always something behind the plot of the story: moral, fun, warning or metaphor. Marketers came up with an idea to hide a marketing messages behind interesting stories which allows to get attention and freely deliver their message to audience. Product placement works under the same principle. Simple example is any brand product which is shown in popular movie. (Berger 2013, 33.)

3.1.6 Conclusion

The author reviewed the basic idea of viral marketing, its advantages and disadvantages, elements which increase chances for success, and factors which makes people share the content. According to the top marketers' challenges stated in the chapter 3.1 it can be concluded that viral marketing is a good concept, which allows to overcome or at least improve situation in such areas as:

- Reaching customers in a meaningful and compelling manner
- Getting attention of target market
- Determining right budget
- Brand differentiation.

Such conclusion was made based on the studied theory, particularly in Advantages and Disadvantages part. It was found out that viral marketing is a good targeting tool, since information can be spread through personal recommendations. Due to this reason and because viral content is supposed to be unobtrusive, marketing message delivers in a correct meaningful and compelling manner. The nature of viral content is to call to viewer's emotions which provides strong brand differentiation (Berger 2013, 32). Low costs of viral marketing campaign allow to avoid high investments in advertising budget (Shukla 2017). All these advantages work only in case of well prepared and planned viral marketing strategy. The unplanned exceptions which became viral are the result of the pure luck.

However, there are disadvantages as well. It was found out that measuring of the viral marketing campaign is complicated, since information jumps from person to person very fast. It can be considered as a big con, due to the fact that measuring of the marketing activity is top second biggest challenge for marketers. (Josic Media 2013.)

3.2 Video game industry

“The Video Games industry develops, produces, spreads, and sells gaming devices, software, and accessories” (Langlotz & Rhode & Whaley 2008, 6). Today's market, which is estimated in billions of dollars is the result of perennial development history of video game industry (Newzoo 2018, 5).

3.2.1 Brief history

The first video games which were invented in the middle of 20s century, were just instruments for demonstration of new technologies. Academics showed primitive forms of artificial intelligence on example of games such as tic-tac-to or chess to public to prove AI's capabilities. Development of technologies and computers' power allowed to commercialize video games in 1970s. Game developer Atari created a game “Odyssey” which was the first TV-based game that became a major hit in 1972 at its launch. Their next project was "Pong" which was the first simulator of table-tennis. Both games became extremely popular, because of their arcade-based game style and opportunity to play against each other. The next key stages of video game industry are market entry of such platforms as: Nintendo Entertainment system (1984), PlayStation (1994), XBOX (2001) and accordingly such companies as: Nintendo, Sony Entertainment Network and Microsoft. The active development of those platforms and PC and mobile is the rest of the story till to current moment. (Desjardins 2017.)

3.2.2 Description of the market

More than 35 years passed since primitive games like "Pong" were created, and games market reached the point of 35 billion dollars in 2007. Same market is expected to generate 137.9 billion dollars revenue in 2018 and to have 2.3 billion gamers all around the world. 100 billion dollars of additional value were created just in 11 years. The forecast predicts further growth, which will reach 180.1 billion dollars annual revenue in 2021. The main segments of the market are mobile games, PC games and console games. (Newzoo 2018, 5-8.)



Figure 3. Global games market (Newzoo Global Games Market Report, 2018)

2007 was the year when first iPhone was released. That is not a coincidence that increased competition on mobile market reflected to the video game industry. The figure 3 demonstrates a major and stable growth of mobile games in total turnover. It has grown to 51% in 2018 and for the first time in the history has reached a dominate market share, since year 2012 when mobile games had 18% of market share. The further growth is expected. PC and console gaming are losing their market share in total revenue slowly, despite of the fact that they are showing slow growth themselves. (Newzoo 2018.)

3.2.3 Emotions and motivation

It is important to know what kind of emotions players get during playing a game and what motivates them to do it, since emotions play an important role in virus marketing.

A person feels uncountable number of different emotions every day, due to its variety. Same happens during the game play process. There are many ways of categorizing emotions where the simplest one is valence method (Positive/Negative emotions). (Frome 2007, 832.) Frome selects four types of emotions, which a gamer can feel during playing process. There is a brief description of each of them below.

Game emotions are related to a player's performance in the game and can be generated due to winning, losing, achieving or frustration. They are connected and affect each other. For example, poor game performance causes sadness, self-doubt or anger. Then self-doubt causes poorer results in further games. Or vice versa, bad results can cause a wish to prove oneself being a good player and trying harder in the future. The other example of game emotion is satisfaction of a hard completed task. Social interaction is also an example of game emotions. A player can feel frustration for the results of his/her teammate or happiness because of the misfortune of the opponent. (Frome 2007, 832.)

Narrative emotions are based on a storyline, characters, events or plot twist. The simple example of narrative emotion is happiness that a storyline has ended in a good way and evil was beaten, or vice versa sadness caused by the death of a main character's friend. Many game developers are criticised for being focused on visual effects, rather than elaborating the story. (Frome 2007, 832.)

Artefact emotions are related to a player's attitude to the game as an art piece. In other words, artefact emotions are emotions of aesthetic evaluation. Artefact emotions are complicated to describe, since they are very personal and depend on a person's preferences. For example, a person can feel satisfaction during gameplay when s/he realizes that developers made a hard and painstaking job, the final product is high quality, and money was not spent for nothing. Vice versa frustration can be caused by the brevity of the game or by many unfixed errors. The picture inside games is developing from year to year and becoming higher and

higher quality which is important for many gamers. The delight of high quality and realistic graphic is also part of artefact emotion. (Frome 2007, 832-833.)

Ecological emotions refer to situations, when gamer associate itself with a character and environment in the game. Artefact emotions caused by video game at the level of representation. Ecological emotion is caused by video game's event in a way if it were real. The realism is one of the important elements for many gamers, since video game is a method of getting away from reality and imagine itself another person or creature. For example, fans of virtual football can create a player inside the game and complete the whole career which is accompanied by the all spectre of emotions, such as happiness for scoring or sadness of being injured. The other example are games which provide opportunity for stealth walkthrough. Many gamers can feel real fear and stress for being almost spotted. (Frome 2007, 833.)

According to Quantic Foundry (2018) there are six motivational categories which are presented in Figure 4. Players can feel different emotions of the same game, depends on the motivational factors which effect their perception of games.

GAMER MOTIVATION MODEL



 Action "Boom!"	 Social "Let's Play Together"	 Mastery "Let Me Think"	 Achievement "I Want More"	 Immersion "Once Upon a Time"	 Creativity "What If?"
Destruction Guns. Explosives. Chaos. Mayhem.	Competition Duels. Matches. High on Ranking.	Challenge Practice. High Difficulty. Challenges.	Completion Get All Collectibles. Complete All Missions.	Fantasy Being someone else, somewhere else.	Design Expression. Customization.
Excitement Fast-Paced. Action. Surprises. Thrills.	Community Being on Team. Chatting. Interacting.	Strategy Thinking Ahead. Making Decisions.	Power Powerful Character. Powerful Equipment.	Story Elaborate plots. Interesting characters.	Discovery Explore. Tinker. Experiment.

Figure 4. Gamer Motivational Model. (Quantic Foundry, 2018)

Each player that play games has its own number of personal motivational factors which makes his gaming experience interesting. It cannot be stated that player can be sorted out just for 1 category, usually it is combination of them, where some factors have prevailing value. Just for example, the author has completed

a survey on Quantic Foundry (2018) and has gotten personal motivational model, which is presented in Figure 5. High percentage means more than other users have. For example, Action percentage is higher than 81% of other players.

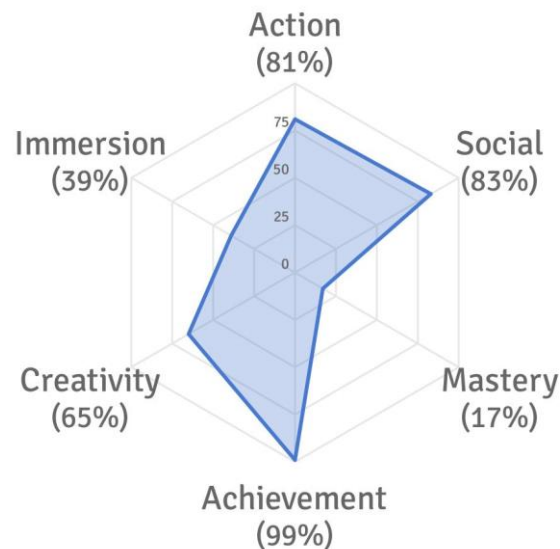


Figure 5. Personal Motivational model. (Quantic Foundry, 2018)

According to this chart, a recommended game for the author is sort of a shooter, which provides opportunities for exploring the virtual world, finding interesting items, and completing different achievements. One of the famous games in this genre is Fallout series (Brown 2015).

3.2.4 Trends in 2018

1. AR vs. VR.

VR (Virtual reality) still requires expensive equipment due to which it is not in a massive usage yet or at least not as it has been expected, despite of its potential and interest from gamers. However, further growth of VR technologies is expected. AR (Augmented reality) is becoming a major trend, due to its lower production cost and accessibility for final user. Taking into account the growing mobile game market and popularity of AR games like Pokémon GO, it is easy to predict further growth of this segment. AR games based on other famous franchises like Harry Potter or Jurassic world are already in development phase and are expected to be released in the near future. (Silverman 2018.)

2. Rapid growth of eSport

Figure 6 represents dynamic of growth of eSports segment. The segment increased its revenue from 130 million dollars in 2012 to 655 million dollars in 2017. The evaluated revenue for 2018 is 906 million dollars. (Statista 2018.) The development of this segment directly affects the whole industry of video games, since the increasing popularity of eSport's broadcastings attracts more people and encourages them to play. The industry provides more and more working places and creates new specializations, such as eSport commentators or journalists. There are TV broadcasts of eSport in some countries which attract attention from people who previously did not have gaming experience. However, the main platform of eSport development is still internet. (Plarium 2018.)

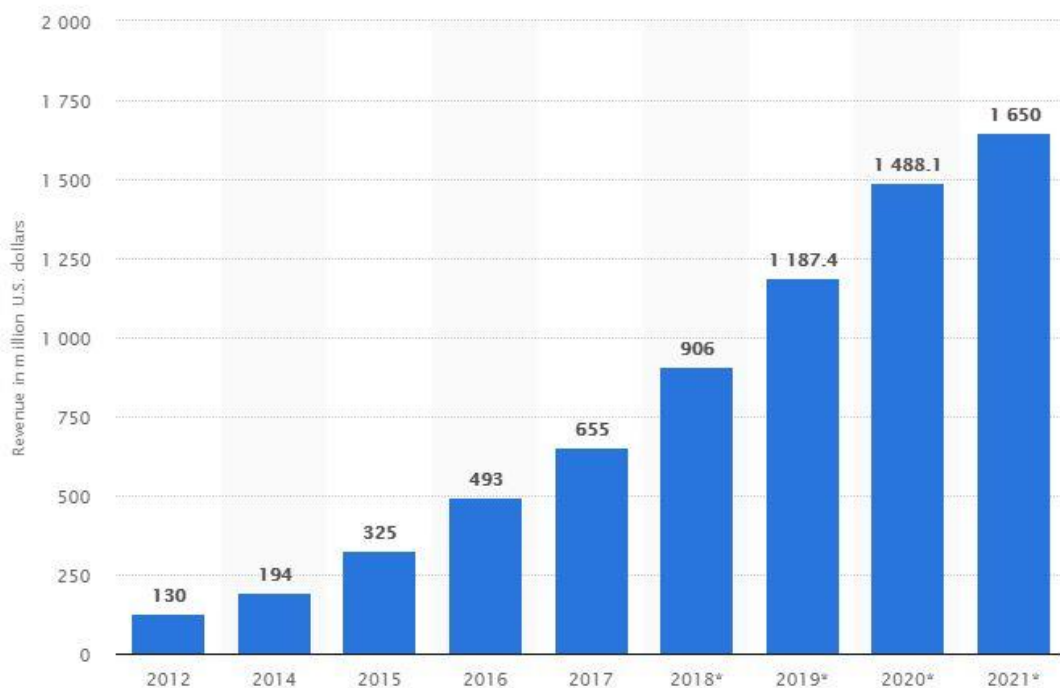


Figure 6. eSports revenue (Statista, 2018)

3. Growth of Asia-Pacific regions.

China is generating about 28% of revenue in global game industry in 2018. Asia-Pacific region is generating about 52% of total revenue. The Asia-Pacific countries are the main driver of further growth for the global games industry, since the number of mobile devices in emerging markets such as India and Southeast Asia grows exponentially. At the same time, readiness to spend money on games grows in such markets as China and Japan. (Wijman, 2018.)

Figure 7 represent the full picture of the global video game industry per regions.

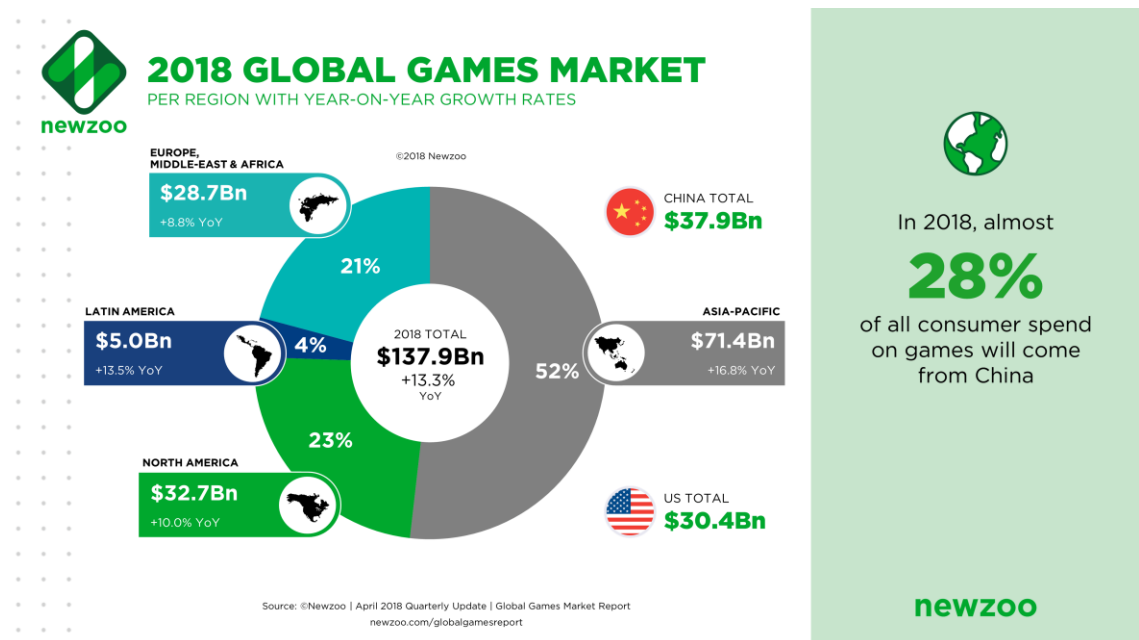


Figure 7. Global Games Market per region. (Newzoo Global Games Market Report, 2018)

3.3 Examples of viral marketing in video game industry

3.3.1 HQ Trivia

HQ Trivia app was launched in August 2017. It is available in AppStore and Play Market. It is online a quiz where people can win real money. Live broadcast starts at certain time and people can join it through the mobile application. There is a host who asks questions and says answers. Usually, a game consists of 12 questions where the difficulty of each question increases a step by step. Each question consists of three options to answer where only one is correct. People who answered all 12 questions without mistakes share the prize. The game created a major noise and became popular largely due to its viral effect. HQ-trivia collaborates with big brands and this partnership is beneficial for both parties. The app gets additional investments and makes a game where questions are related to a brand they cooperate with. People get to know a lot of information about a company during their attempt to win a prize. (Romano 2018.)

There are several reasons, why people started to talk about it. The first and main one is that game is absolutely free and gives a chance to win real money. People like free things as it was learned from six elements theory of Wilson (2000). Moreover, the prize is absolutely reachable, which refers to a practical value of the application. Secondly, even in a situation when person does not win a prize, (s)he still gets to know new interesting things and facts that (s)he can share with friends, which refers to the social currency. Thirdly, people feel different emotions during the game, such as excitement, feel of competition, happiness of the win which makes them want to share them with their close network. (Berger 2013, 31- 32.) In addition, the game provides different bonuses which stimulates people to invite friends, such as "Extra life", which allows to make mistake once in a game. Fourthly, celebrities lead the game sometimes, which makes this app even more popular. To summarize, HQ trivia is a perfect example of viral marketing. All these reasons and conclusions are based on the author's personal experience of playing this online game and theoretical knowledge learned from the secondary research.

3.3.2 Pokemon GO

Pokémon GO is Augmented Reality mobile game, which was released in 2016. The goal of the game is finding, collecting, training and fighting virtual creatures named Pokémon. The feature is that Pokémon can be located in different real-world locations, thus player has to walk there to interact with it. Creatures are shown on the screen in a way that they are really existing which is provided by AR effect. The game became extremely viral and popular and there are several reasons for it. (Peckham 2016.)

Firstly, media franchise of Pokémon was created in the 90's and was popular even before Pokémon GO was released (O'Neil, 2016). Thus, the original fanbase is the first target group of this project. Secondly, the game is free-to-play which means that a player does not need to pay money to start. It refers to one of the elements of Wilson's theory (2000) which states that people like free things. However, there is an opportunity to buy in-game products for real money which is typical for F2P games. Thirdly, game forces people to move and interact with

other players, due to the fact that usually Pokémon are located in public places which makes gameplay even more interesting, because it is perfect opportunity to share experience and to compare results. Moreover, there is possibility to see other players on the map, thus it is easy to find new friends and like-minded people. This aspect creates Social Currency for the players. (Berger 2013, 31.) Fourth reason is that game became a real trend. Thus, even people, who do not play mobile games, heard about it from somewhere. As it was learned from the STEPPS model of Berger (2013) people like to follow the current trends. Finally, there were a lot of different things happening with people during their play time. For example, one player found a body near the river where she was trying to find another creature (Worldnow 2016). There were thousands of different stories which happened with players of Pokémon GO, and the most interesting ones were printed by news sources. According to the Berger's STEPPS theory (2013), people like to tell and discuss stories. Thus, this aspect played a big role in popularity of this mobile game. Reasons and conclusions are based on the author's personal experience of playing this game and theoretical knowledge learned from the secondary research.

3.3.3 Ozzy Osbourne and World of Warcraft

The first video was made in support of expansion for World of Warcraft, named Wrath of the Lich King. Link to the original video is provided in Reference section. The plot of the video is that Ozzy Osbourne is arguing against Lich King, who is the real Prince of Darkness, as he states. The video is accompanied by music by Osbourne and consists of his short speech and frames from the game. Ozzy uses his provocative image which is expressed by appearance and adult language. Link to the website is shown at the end of the video, and it was said that joining the game is free. The video has reached more than 5 million views and positive ratio of likes/dislikes. There are several reasons which provided success for this video. The first one is the celebrity or in other words the opinion leader. In many cases participation of a celebrity attracts attention faster (Hinz, & Skiera & Barrot & Becker 2012, 2-3). The second one is the interesting and funny plot, which was supported by frames from the game. As it was learned, positive emotions like laugh motivates people to share content (Berger 2013, 32). The notification that

game is free to join motivates people to try the game before they would start to make any in-game purchases (Wilson 2000).



Figure 8. "Ozzy Osbourne – World of Warcraft Commercial. (Blizzard, 2008)

3.3.4 Game of War Campstories

The second video was made as a promotion for mobile game named "Game of War". The link to the original video is provided in the Reference section. The video tells a story about group of people who are chilling at a camp and discussing some mysterious hero which is the most powerful in the game. No one knows who he is and how he can be defeated. The only nickname is known – "TheLegend27". The video has gained more than 168 million views. Amount of likes/dislikes are hidden. There are several reasons that the video was shared so many times. The first one is the story. People love stories, as it was stated before. (Berger 2013, 33), and here is a good example of it. From the one hand, characters talk about an unknown hero, from the other they describe the

gameplay. They repeat the nickname multiple times, which eventually led it to become a meme. This nickname is funny, since many new gamers in any game try to choose some epic nickname for their character, while their game skills say otherwise. The funny plot of the video and a meme are the good triggers for sharing (Goldsmith 2002, 98-99). Moreover, commercial challenges viewer to join the game and become the new legend, by saying "This hero is undefeatable". Free access to the game is additional motivator for trying a product (Wilson, 2000).



Game of War: Campfire Stories ft. TheLegend27

168,005,980 views

👍 LIKE 👎 DISLIKE ➦ SHARE 📌 SAVE ⋮

Figure 9. "Game of War: Campfire Stories ft. TheLegend27" (Game of War: Fire Age, 2016)

3.4 Short summary of the secondary research

The author has conducted a secondary research, which consists review of the books and online sources. The author studied the basic concept of viral marketing and two theories that describe elements which are usually included in viral content, and factors which affect people's motivation to share information. The second part of literature review describes video games industry and its key aspects, such as short history, brief market review, gamers' motivation for playing and current trends. The third part of the secondary research is combining the first two parts, since the author applied theoretical knowledge of viral marketing on

the real examples of games which became viral and, on the videos, which became viral as well. The author explained which factors became the main drivers of virality. The next step is conducting the online survey in aim to test how people's opinion is correlated with the theoretical knowledge gained through the secondary research. Second aim is collecting information which will help to answer on main three questions of the research paper.

4 RESULTS OF THE PRIMARY RESEARCH

The following section demonstrates results of the online survey, which was conducted with help of Google forms. The data was analyzed in a way of an exploratory analysis, which explains the main characteristics of the results. The analysis tool is inbuilt graphs of the Google forms from where the screenshots were taken. The original question sheet is presented in Appendices 1-7.

4.1 Results of the primary research

4.1.1 Age of respondent

Please specify you age

107 responses

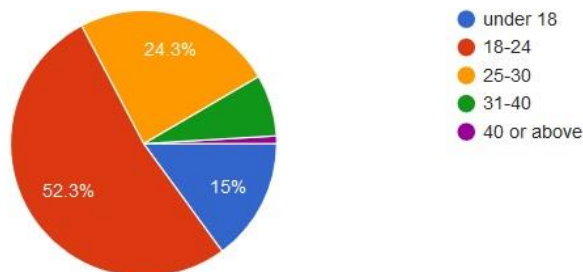


Figure 10. Age of respondents (2018)

The first question was aimed to establish the age of respondents. There were 5 options to answer. The results showed that biggest group of respondents (56 people or 52.3%) in the category of “18-24”. The second biggest group is in category of “25-30” (26 people or 24.3%). The third place was taken by respondents of category “Under 18” (16 people or 15%). The smallest respondent group is people of “31-40” years old (8 votes or 7.5%). The only one respondent (0.9%) of age “40 or above” has taken participation in the online survey.

4.1.2 Gender of respondent

Please specify your gender

107 responses

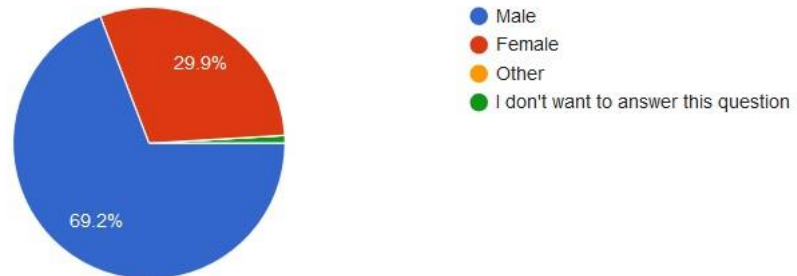


Figure 11. Gender of respondents (2018)

The second question was aimed to determine gender of respondents. The majority of respondents were males (74 votes, 69.2%). In opposite to this, 32 votes (29.9%) were from females. One respondent decided not to answer this question. There was alternative option "Other", but no one have chosen it.

4.1.3 Type of content people share mostly

What kind of content do you like to share with your friends? (You can choose more than 1 option)

107 responses

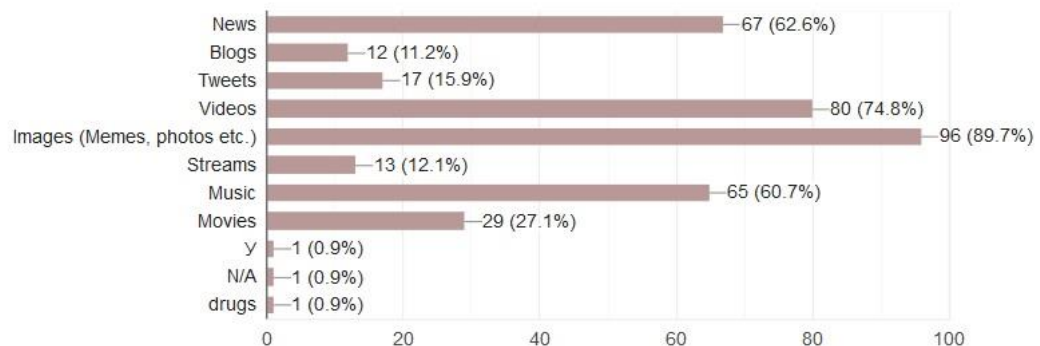


Figure 12. Type of content people share mostly (2018)

The third question was aimed to determine types of content, which are more shareable among others. The respondents were able to choose more than one option, in case if they like to share different types of content. The division of votes is:

Images (Memes, photos etc.)	96 (89.7%)
Videos	80 (74.8%)
News	67 (62.6%)
Music	65 (60.7%)
Movies	29 (27.1%)
Tweets	17 (15.9%)
Streams	13 (12.1%)
Blogs	12 (11.2%)
Others (Y, NA, drugs)	3 (0.3%)

Images are top shareable type of content based on the results. This is explained by the easiness of sharing pictures. They usually have small size and can be simply transferred through any modern social medias. The second place was taken by videos. The one reason is the same as images have. Although, videos are harder to transfer due to their length, since not everyone watch them till the end. In addition to this, videos contain stories which are discussed by people. Videos also can call to persons' emotions, which they would share most likely. News are the third top type of content which people share. The reason is that news provokes discussions, and the hotter the news, the more discussions it provokes. Music is the last type of content which has gained more than 50 votes. The reason is that music calls to emotions and people like to share it with others. Other options have gained less than 30 votes. In addition, there were three answers, which do not belong to any category. One of them "drugs" was obviously a try to joke from a respondent.

4.1.4 How often do people play games?

How often do you play video games?

107 responses

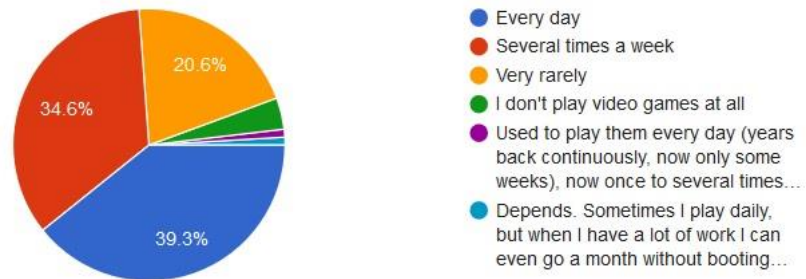


Figure 13. How often do people play games? (2018)

The fourth question was aimed to make the author sure that the method of finding respondents has been chosen correctly. To remind, the target respondent group were people of any age who are familiar with video games and play them with any frequency. The answers for this question provided the author with information that the chosen method was right, since 75.7% of the respondents play video games more than once a week. To be more precisely, 42 respondents (39.3%) play video games every day. 37 respondents (34.6%) play games several times per week. The number of respondents who claimed that they play games very rarely is 22 (20.6%). And only four participants (3.7%) said that they do not play games at all. One respondent answered that frequency of his(her) playing depends on the workload. Another one claimed that (s)he used to play a lot, but now (s)he does it only from a time to time.

4.1.5 What platform people prefer for gaming?

What game platform do you prefer?

107 responses

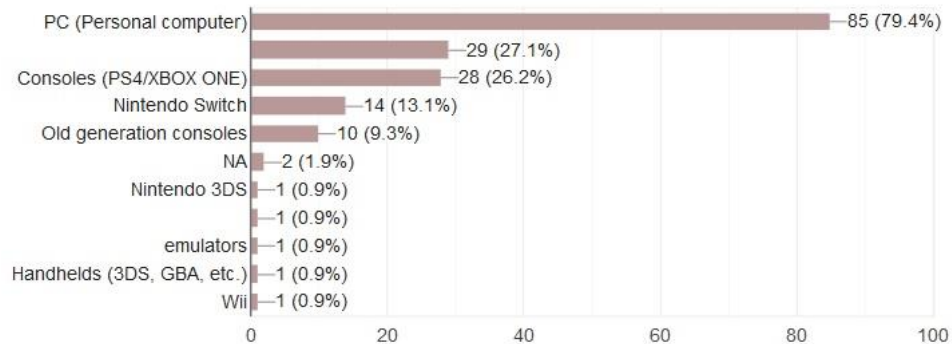


Figure 14. What platform people prefer for gaming? (2018)

The goal of the fifth question was determination of the most popular platform for gaming. The results of this question were a surprise. The first place was taken by people who prefer PC gaming (85 votes, 79.4%), despite of the overall popularity of mobile games which have more than 50% of the total global game market's revenue in 2018 (Wijman, 2018). This can be explained that survey was conducted among people who consider video games as a hobby. Moreover, survey was conducted among English speaking audience, while major popularity of mobile games is mostly spreaded in Asian-Pacific region. Nevertheless, the second place with 29 votes (27.1%) was taken by people who prefer mobile games. Just one vote behind (28) are console users (26.2%). Nintendo switch's users have gained 14 votes (13.1%). Ten people (9.3%) claimed that they play on the old generation consoles. There are five (0.9% each) individuals which gave their own answers which are empty space, emulators, Nintendo 3ds, handhelds and Wii. Two respondents (1.9%) have not chosen any option.

4.1.6 Type of monetization

What type of monetization do you prefer in video games?

107 responses

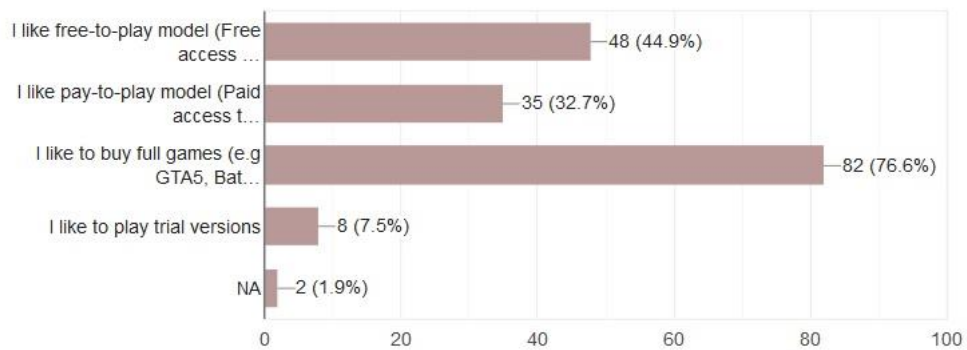


Figure 15. Type of monetization (2018)

The sixth question was aimed to study if people are ready to invest money in their gaming experience. The number of respondents who answered that they like to buy full games is 82 (76.6%) which proves again that respondent group are people who take video games seriously. However, 48 votes (44.9%) were given to free-to-play model which allows to make in-game purchases, but access to a game is free. 35 (32.7%) votes were given to pay-to-play model which means that those people are ready to spend money regularly to have the access to the game. Eight respondents (7.5%) answered that they like to play trial versions which means that game is absolutely free but consists of a limited gameplay. Two people (1.9%) did not choose any answer. People were able to choose more than one option in this question, since it is possible that they like to play games with the different type of monetization. However, the results showed that dominant part of respondents prefer full games. It can be explained also with help of previous question which shows that one of the most important part of the game is storylines and characters which are more thoughtful in full games, while free-to-play games are mostly online and focused on the competition and action.

4.1.7 In-game preferences

Please specify your game preferences (You can choose more than 1 option)

107 responses

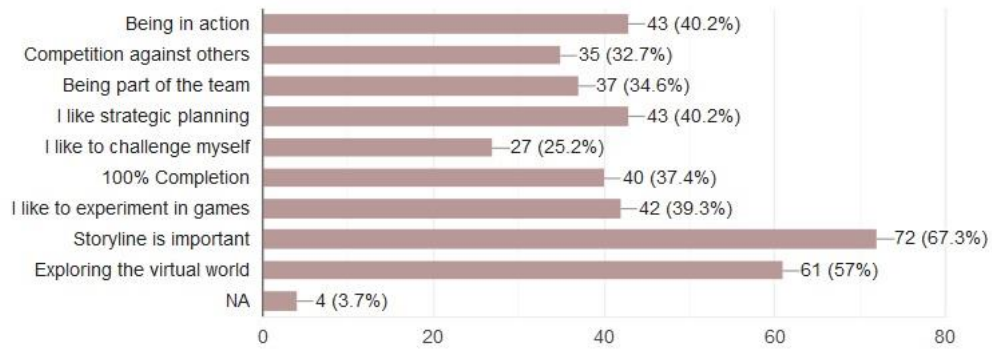


Figure 16. In-game preferences (2018)

The seventh question was one of the most important ones, since it was aimed to determine in-game preferences of the respondents. The content of the game is what makes people happy and motivates them to play. The division of votes was almost equal, although there were two options which prevail among others. Storyline and characters are very important for 72 respondents which is 67.3%. The number of votes which were given to exploration of virtual world is 61 (57%). Challenges and hardest difficulty level are attractable only for 27 respondents (25.2%) which is the least popular answer, besides answer "NA" which has been chosen by four respondents (3.7%). The division of votes among other options is almost equal where each answer gained around 40 votes. This question showed that people who plays video games are mostly focused on the background of the plot and how virtual world was constructed while styles of gameplay are on the second role.

4.1.8 What emotions motivate people to play?

What emotions motivate you to play ?

107 responses

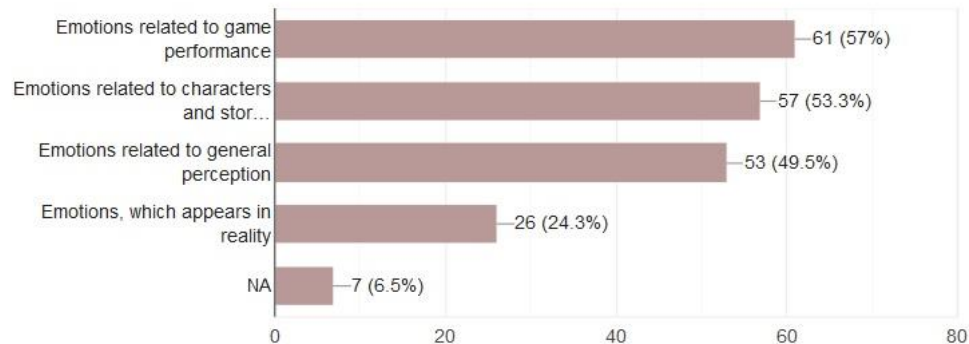


Figure 17. What emotions motivate people to play? (2018)

Understanding of emotions which gamers feel through their playing experience is important, since emotions are one of the key factors that motivate people to play and share games to their network. This question was aimed to establish the types of emotions which are more important for players. These questions are based on the study of Frome (2007). The division of votes is almost equal, since the only one option "Emotions, which appears in reality" has gained 26 votes (24.3%). Those emotions are named Ecological (Frome 2007, 833). Three other options have reached more than 50 votes and it seems that they are more important for typical gamer. To be more precisely, the emotions of gaming performance (winning/losing) are important for 61 respondents (57%). Narrative emotions are related to being worried about characters and plot, and they are important for 57 respondents (53.3%) which coincides with the fact that storyline is important for dominant part of the respondents as it was learned from the question number six. And finally, 53 votes (49.5%) were given to emotions of the general perception of the game, such as amazement of the high quality of the graphic.

4.1.9 In which situations do people advise a game to their network?

In which cases do you advise a game to your friend?

107 responses

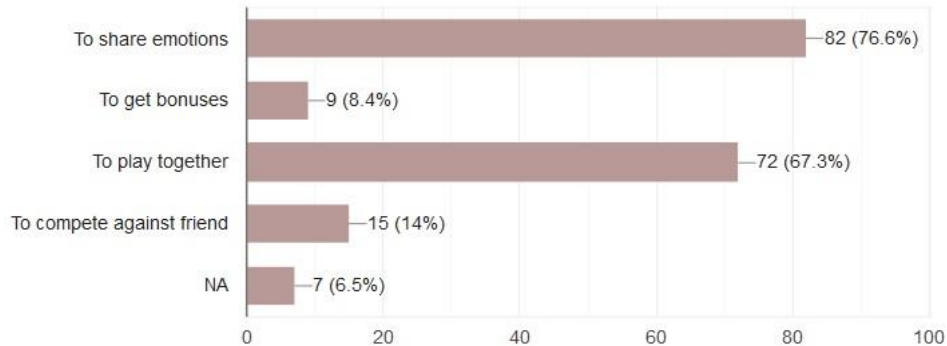


Figure 18. In which situations do people advise a game to their network? (2018)

This question directly asked respondents in which cases they would advise a game to their network. The number of respondents who have given their votes for the option "When I liked it and want to share emotion with my friend" is 82 (76.6%). It emphasizes the importance of emotions which video games provide for the players. The second popular option is "Playing together with my friend", which were voted by 72 respondents (62.3%). This points out the importance of multiplayer mode in modern games. 15 (14%) people claimed that they like to compete against their friends online. This shows the importance of multiplayer too, although this option is less popular than "Playing together". The least popular answer is "To get bonuses for invited friend" which has gained only nine votes (8.4%). This answer shows that "Friend strategy" (Hryszko 2018) is not beneficial in video game industry, unlike of the personal recommendation caused by strong emotions or interesting multiplayer mode.

4.1.10 What do people think about shown videos?

What do you think about these videos?

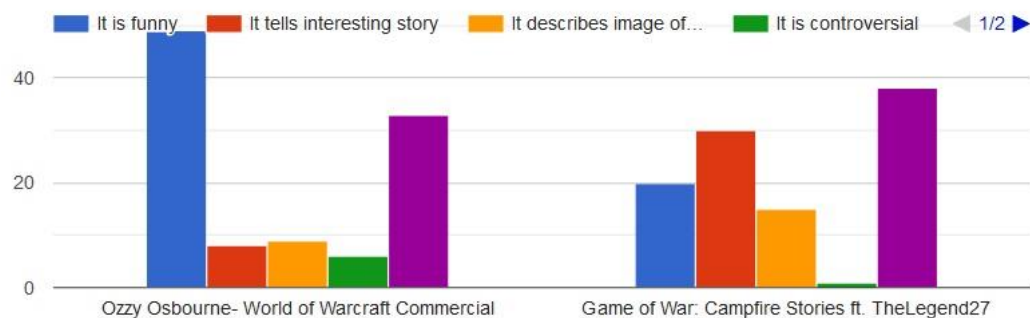


Figure 19. What do people think about shown videos? (2018)

This question asked people to express their opinion about shown videos. The video with Ozzy Osbourne has gained much better results than the video about the camp stories. The number of respondents who considered video with Ozzy as funny is 49. The fun is a perfect motivator to content forwarding. 33 respondents said that this video is not interesting at all. This can be explained by the lack of interest for the such game as "World of Warcraft" or not-knowing Ozzy Osbourne. However, it might be simply because respondents did not like the video. Other options, such as "It tells the interesting story," or "It describes the image of the product" have not gained a lot of votes. However, this video has a good potential for spreading, based on the responses. This is proven by the amount of views it has (more than 5 million) (YouTube 2018).

The other video which is commercial of the "Game of War" showed worse results. The number of respondents who considered this video as "Not interesting at all" is 38 which is the most popular answer. It might be explained by the fact that it looks like a commercial, despite of the interesting plot. As it was learned, viral video must not be intrusive (Goldsmith 2002, 79-82). The second popular answer (30 votes) is "It tells interesting story" and 20 people considered this video funny. Together they have more votes (50) than most popular answer (38). The video has around 168 million views which means that viral effect was reached. The author studied comment section of the video aiming to understand what element of the video provokes people to discuss it. As it turned out, the video has launched

a new meme "TheLegend27". The comment section is full of the responses of the people who create funny rhymes and sentences about this. Thus, video told a story which became a fuel for the hot discussion. The video became viral despite of the intrusive content in this case (YouTube 2018)

4.1.11 How likely would people share shown videos?

How likely would you share these videos with friends?

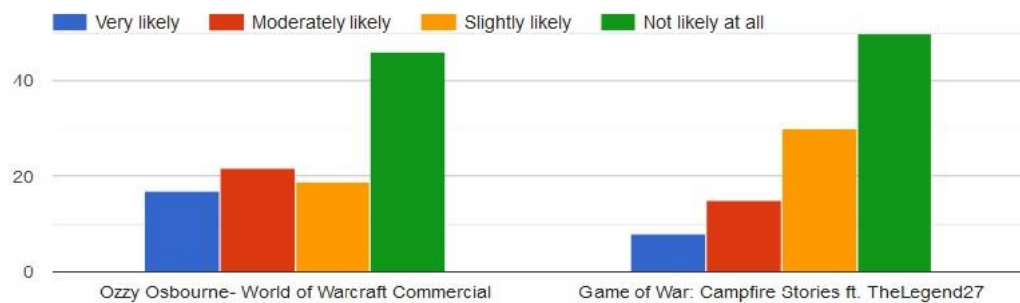


Figure 20. How likely would people share shown videos? (2018)

The eleventh question asked directly if people are ready to share shown videos to their network. The result is disappointing, since most of the respondents answered that they would not share them.

However, the author noticed by comparing the answers related to both videos that video with Ozzy Osbourne has more positive rate of shareability. 17 respondents claimed that they would share this video very likely, 22 answered "Moderately likely", and 19 responded "Slightly likely". Thus, 58 respondents consider opportunity of sharing, while 46 claimed that they would not forward it. The video about "Game of War" has more modest responses. The number of votes which were given for "Very likely" is eight, 15 is for "Moderately likely", and 30 is for "Slightly likely" which altogether equals to 53, while 50 respondents would not like to share this video at all. Thus, the amount of people who possibly would share this video is almost equal to people who would not.

By the author's opinion the result of this question is not satisfactory, but it is not the catastrophic as well. Overall, the possible forwarding of these videos is prevailing over the total reluctance of doing this. Moreover, the author takes into

account the fact that participation in a survey is sort of the psychological pressure and can be differ from the unconstrained environment where the wish to content sharing reveals much easier.

4.1.12 Did shown videos inspire people to join the game?

Did these videos inspire you to join the game?

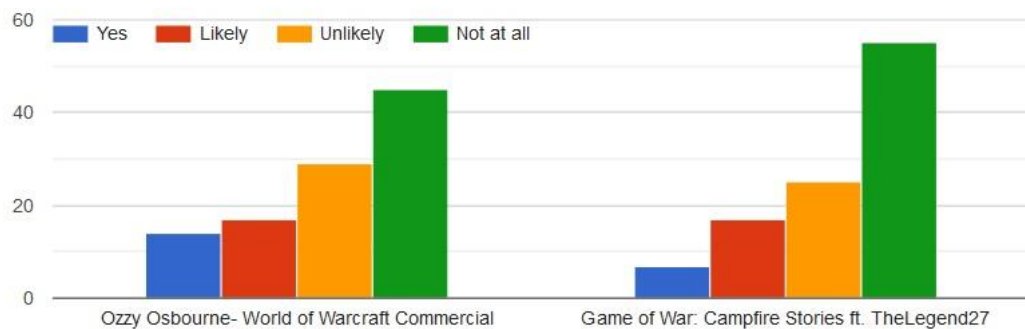


Figure 21. Did shown videos inspire people to join the game? (2018)

The aim of the last question was to ask people if those videos inspired them to try presented games. The author did not expect that videos can be a trigger which make people want to try a game. However, the author was interested to get know how many people at least considered such opportunity. As it was expected, the answer "It did not inspire me at all" has gotten the most amount of answers for both videos. The video with Ozzy has reached 45 such answers while the video about "Game of War" has gained 55. However, the video about "World of Warcraft" has gotten 14 answers "Yes, it inspired me" and 17 "Probably", which equals to 31 positive answer. The video about camp stories has gotten seven and 17 positive answers accordingly.

4.2 Summary of the online survey

The online survey provided the author with statistics which helped to make the conclusions and complemented the findings from the literature review. This section is aimed to summarize the results of the primary research and to prepare for the final conclusion of this research paper. There were several key findings of the primary research, which the author wanted to note. First of all, the survey provided the author with the information about the type of the content which is more likely can be forwarded by users. Those are images (89.7%), videos (74.8%), and news (62.6%). Videos and images are perfect tools for viral content and can be successfully used by companies. News are not as obvious tool in a way of promoting video games, although in some cases hot news can provoke a hot discussion, thus it might be an option. Streams are the other type of content which is related to the video game industry. They showed the poor potential for the viral spreading (12.1%) which makes it not the best channel for such type of marketing.

Second of all, the author found out the main preferences which motivate people to play games and emotions which they are looking for. 67.3% of respondents claimed that they like to follow the storyline of a game and 57% like to explore a virtual world. There are several types of emotions which people are looking for by playing video games. Three of them have gained almost equal number of responses (50 - 57%) which are Game, Narrative and Artefact emotions, while ecological emotions are not in the priority (24.3%). The question number nine proves that emotions and the opportunity of playing in cooperative mode are the key factors which affect people to advise a game to their friends, thus those factors must be taken into account at the development stage. As well as promotion campaign might be focused to point out these advantages.

The author expected that free-to-play games would be the most popular format according to Wilson's theory (2000) which states that free things spread faster. However, the result of the seventh question showed that gamers prefer to purchase full games (76.6%), while F2P games are preferable format for 44.9% of the respondents. This can be explained that gamers are looking for the

interesting plot, characters, and well detailed virtual world at first which is more typical for the full game format.

Finally, comparing the two viral videos allowed the author to make the conclusion what kind of elements provide higher potential of virality for a content. From the one point of view, funny content, which is included in the video with Ozzy Osbourne, has gotten more positive reaction from the respondents and it is more likely to be shared. From the other point of view, the video about "Game of War" is less funny by respondents' opinion, but it tells the story which has launched a major meme that has led to an enormous number of views (168 million compare to 5 million at the video with Ozzy). Thus, despite of the results of the survey which stated that video with Ozzy Osbourne has higher potential to be shared, the discussion provoked by "Campfire Stories" and "TheLegend27" provided much higher rate of virality to the video of "Game of War".

The author makes the conclusion that viral videos are not effective in a way of converting viewers into players, since the last question provided with the information that these videos are not the inspirational factor for the respondents to join the game. From the other hand, they are effective in a way of increasing the brand awareness, since such videos have a high potential for spreading.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The last section of this thesis paper is aimed to combine findings of the primary and the secondary research, to answer on the three main research questions which were stated in the chapter 1.3 "Aim of the research" and to make the final conclusion. Those three questions were:

1. What makes people share a content with their network?
2. Are the popular games viral by their nature or do they require separate marketing activity? What makes people advise video games to their network?
3. Is it correct to state that viral marketing is an effective way of promoting video games?

5.1 What makes people share the content with their network?

According to the Wilson's six element theory (2000) viruses require a favorable environment for spreading, in viral marketing it means the right channels and methods. Moreover, a content has to consist of something which would encourage people to share. (Wilson, 2000.) There are six key factors which make people share a content with their network, based on the STEPPS theory of Berger (2013) they are social currency, triggers, emotions, public, practical value and stories. Any content which became viral consists of some of these elements more or less. (Berger 2013 p.31-33.) Another important factor is seeding, since it is the place from where a virus starts its path (Hinz, & Skiera & Barrot & Becker 2012, 4). It can be stated that images (89.7%), videos (74.8%), news (62.6%) and music (60.7%) are the most popular formats of the content which people prefer to share with their network, based on the primary research conducted by the author. The content forwarding became easier and faster in the era of the digital technologies. There are several advices for companies which plan to conduct a viral campaign. Advices are based on the information provided in the secondary and the primary research and summarized in this chapter. A company has to create a content in a way which follows to the STEPPS theory, since described factors encourage people to forward a content further. A company has to create a content in a format

of images, videos, news or music, since they are the most shareable types of content. And finally, a company has to provide an environment for their virus i.e. to choose the correct seeding strategy and channels for further forwarding.

5.2 Are the popular games viral by their nature?

There were several games which became viral as it seems by its nature. "Angry birds" is the example in this case (Kendall 2010). However, success and popularity require a complex marketing activity which supports the viral nature of the game in most cases. For example, "HQ trivia" that became extremely popular in the past two years is the simple game which consists of the typical viral content elements, such as practical value, social currency, public, and emotions (Berger 2013, 31-33). However, there are different marketing approaches implemented behind these aspects. The examples of them are Social Media Marketing, invited celebrities, favorable environment for spreading (Appstore and Play Market) and bonus system for the invited friends. Thus, "HQ Trivia" has reached the success with help of the combination of its nature and marketing activities which supported it. (Romano 2018.) The author makes the conclusion that factor of emotions is especially important in a way of promoting video games, since emotions, as one of the key parts of STEPPS's theory, are the major motivator to content forwarding (Berger 2013, 32). This conclusion is based on the fact that games themselves are the major source of emotions that gamer gets during playing. This assumption has been proven by the primary research which has determined that emotions (76.6%) and cooperative mode (62.3%) are the key factors which motivate people to advise a game to their network. There is no sense to focus on a certain type of emotions due to the fact that any game provides a various number of them. There is no the dominant type of emotion which has bigger influence on gamers, based on the survey. Three out of four presented types have gained almost equal number of votes. However, ecological emotions have the least priority for gamers (24.3%). To summarize this section, despite of the viral nature of a product, it requires other marketing activities to increase its chances for the success. A viral marketing campaign has to be focused on the emphasizing the advantages of a game in addition to the advices described in

the previous section. Emotions and cooperative mode are the most effective advantages in the sense of virality, based on the primary research.

5.3 Is viral marketing effective way of promoting video games?

The examples of successful viral marketing campaigns conducted in the video game industry allow to state that is an effective way of promotion. One of these examples is Pokémon GO which became a major hit in 2016. And it has reached its success in many ways because of the viral marketing approaches. (Peckham 2016.) The viral videos, which were shown to the respondents as a part of the primary research, have a success on the YouTube (five and 168 million views). In addition to this, the respondents found those videos funny or at least interesting. The question "Did these videos inspired you to join the game?" has gotten mostly negative answers for both videos, despite of the videos' virality and positive responses about the content. This result allowed the author to make the conclusion that viral marketing alone is not that powerful tool, especially in a way of the turning receivers of the information into active players. From the other hand, it is the effective tool for increasing the awareness of a brand and the tool which boosts the discussion about the product. As it was stated in the previous section, a marketing campaign has to be focused on the emphasizing the advantages of a game and delivers this message to the potential players. The viral marketing is the good tool in this sense, because it allows to spread a marketing message fast and to a large audience. At the same time, a viral content itself is not a powerful trigger which can turn potential players into active ones.

5.4 Conclusion

The author has conducted the primary and the secondary research aiming to answer the three main research questions and to evaluate the effectiveness of the viral marketing as a means of promoting video games. The author answered on the stated questions, based on the data which were gathered through the researches. The key finding of the thesis paper is that viral marketing in the video game industry is a powerful tool, but as a part of the complex marketing system. That is the tool which is able to deliver a marketing message effectively and to increase the noise about the product exponentially. It is important to note that it has to be supported by other marketing activities and high quality of the product, otherwise the noise around the product will die down as fast as it has been grown.

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Original question sheet. Questions 1-2

Viral Marketing as a means of promoting video games

A bachelor's thesis survey. Estimated time is 3-5 minutes

Please specify your age

- under 18
- 18-24
- 25-30
- 31-40
- 40 or above

Please specify your gender

- Male
- Female
- Other

Appendix 2

Original question sheet. Questions 3-4

What kind of content do you like to share with your friends? (You can choose more than 1 option)

- News
- Blogs
- Tweets
- Videos
- Images (Memes, photos etc.)
- Streams
- Music
- Movies
- Other: _____

How often do you play video games?

- Every day
- Several times a week
- Very rarely
- I don't play video games at all
- Other: _____

Appendix 3**Original question sheet. Questions 5-6**

What game platform do you prefer?

- PC (Personal computer)
- Mobile devices (Phones/tablets)
- Consoles (PS4/XBOX ONE)
- Nintendo Switch
- Old generation consoles
- Other: _____

What type of monetization do you prefer in video games?

- I like free-to-play model (Free access to the game with opportunity of in-game purchases)
- I like pay-to-play model (Paid access to the game, but there is no opportunity to purchase in-game items for real money)
- I like to buy full games (e.g GTA5, Battlefield 1, Fifa 19 etc.)
- I like to play trial versions
- Other: _____

Appendix 4

Original question sheet. Question 7

Please specify your preferences (You can choose more than 1 option)

- I like to be in the center of action. Explosions, visuals and fast gameplay are my choice.
- I like to compete with other players for higher ranks
- I like to be a part of the team and play against computer opponents with my teammates.
- I like games, which require complex strategic planning
- I like to challenge myself and choose the hardest difficulty
- I like to complete games for 100% (e.g find all collectible items, complete all side quests etc.)
- I like to experiment in games (e.g testing game for realism and checking "What happens if...")
- Storyline and characters are very important for me
- I like exploring virtual world
- Other: _____

Appendix 5**Original question sheet. Questions 8-9****What emotions motivate you to play ?**

- Emotions related to game performance (Emotions of winning/losing /satisfaction of completed task)
- Emotions of being worried about characters fate and twists of storyline
- Emotions related to general perception of the game. (Visual effects, attention to small details etc.)
- Emotions, which appears in reality. (Real fear of monsters or stress of being spotted)
- Other: _____

In which cases do you advise a game to your friend?

- When I like it and want to share emotions of the game with my friend
- When I want to get bonuses for invited friend
- When I want to play with my friend together
- When I want to compete against my friend and compare results
- Other: _____

Appendix 6

Original question sheet. Videos

Please watch two videos and answer following questions

Ozzy Osbourne- World of Warcraft Commercial



Game of War: Campfire Stories ft. TheLegend27



Appendix 7

Original Question sheet. Questions 10-12

What do you think about these videos?

	It is funny	It tells interesting story	It describes image of the product	It is controversial	It is not interesting for me at all
Ozzy Osbourne-World of Warcraft Commercial	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Game of War: Campfire Stories ft. TheLegend27	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How likely would you share these videos with friends?

	Very likely	Moderately likely	Slightly likely	Not likely at all
Ozzy Osbourne-World of Warcraft Commercial	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Game of War: Campfire Stories ft. TheLegend27	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Did these videos inspire you to join the game?

	Yes	Likely	Unlikely	Not at all
Ozzy Osbourne-World of Warcraft Commercial	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Game of War: Campfire Stories ft. TheLegend27	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>