

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences  
Faculty of Business Administration Lappeenranta  
Degree Programme in International Business  
Specialisation in Marketing

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## **How video game conferences shape the gaming industry and influence consumer behaviour**

Thesis 2019

## **Abstract**

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How video game conferences shape the gaming industry and influence consumer behaviour. 71 pages, 2 appendices.

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The objective of the study was to explain the relevance of video game conferences and to examine components of presentations and their effects on consumer behaviour. Video game events are an important stage when buyer's attitudes are formed or can be changed under diverse impacts. Therefore, operating in the sector companies and potential newcomers need to understand factors that influence the decision-making processes.

The structure of the theoretical part includes the analysis of marketing event concept, communication model and psychological theories. In the study, qualitative and deductive research methods were utilized. The information for the studies was received and extracted from diversified academic sources such as books, articles, studies and scientific journals. The empirical part employed qualitative research method as well. The interview with Feargus Urquhart, the CEO of Obsidian Entertainment was conducted via Skype on 7 November 2019. The interview reaffirmed or, in some cases, disproved the findings from the literature from the professional point of view. The findings obtained from Feargus Urquhart are inserted into the theoretical part of the paper to compare theoretical knowledge to professional viewpoint. Besides, the interview is discussed in a separate chapter in order to assemble the findings together.

The results of the study constitute a compilation of various facets that affect purchasers' minds within video game conferences framework. Good communication process, colour perception, soundtracks and psychological notions like attitude change, emotions and memory can have a significant influence on one's decision-making processes. However, a more profound study in term of psychology, sound effects and colour perception is proposed.

Keywords: consumer behaviour, affect, video game industry, video game conferences, communication, marketing event, psychology, trailers

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Appendices  
Appendix 1  
Appendix 2

Interview Questions  
Logos and soundtracks

## Concepts and abbreviations

AAA games	Triple-A titles, games with high developing and marketing budgets
Battle royale mode	Mode where contestants fight until one person or one squad survives and wins
Beta testing	Test of an almost ready product by gamers in order to find as many bugs as possible before releasing a game
Bug	Errors in a game or in a game code
Crunch	Continuous and resource-intensive development and improvement of a game to release a game or trailer in time
Demo/ demo version	Short playable walkthrough of a game
Face of a game	Salesman/ representative of a game
Game feature	Specific mechanics, setting, design decision, etc.
Gamer	Person who plays games in various genres as a hobby or sometimes professionally (e.g. e-sport, streams, etc.)
Gold master	Completed game that is ready to be distributed
Indie game	Video game developed by an independent studio or by an individual
Let's player	Person who plays a game and records the walkthroughs by online streaming or by uploading the video to platforms like YouTube or Twitch
Lore	History of world, weapons, settings of a game
Meme	Humorous image in the Internet
NPC	Non-Playable Character
RPG	Role-Playing Game, a game genre
Setting	World design and lore of a game
Streamer	Person who plays games and broadcast the walkthrough online

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The studied topic is stated as “How video game conferences shape the gaming industry and influence consumer behaviour”. The video game industry has been existing for quite a long period of time, namely since 1972, primary on arcade machines and simple game consoles. After the video game crash in 1983, the sector started to grow rapidly with the emergence of new affordable devices for gaming, e.g. new generation game consoles and personal computers (Chikhani 2015).

Nowadays, games provide a wide spectrum of available leisure types: expensive projects in various genres, online multiplayer games, virtual reality games and cybersport games with millions of fans and dollars of prize pool all over the world (Vince 2018). The youth more often prefers to spend time enjoying games rather than travelling, reading or many other common activities (Fuse 2019). Moreover, there are numerous examples on the Internet demonstrating that also older people are getting more highly involved into gaming, for example, GrndPaGaming channel on Twitch (a platform for online streaming of video games), which attracts many admirers from all over the world.

To prove the reliability of the industry, several numbers are introduced: the size of the industry amounted nearly 135-137 billion dollars in 2018, according to GameIndustry.biz (Batchelor 2018) and Statista (Statista 2018). Daily, there are from 9 to 16 million active (logged in) users in Steam - currently the largest video game distributor on PCs (Valve Corporation 2019). The number of involved people constantly keeps increasing (Statista 2017a; Statista 2017b).

Video game conferences have been a vast part of the industry for a while since 1990's. Their establishment is thoroughly considered in a Video game conferences chapter. According to several sources, over 65 thousand people personally attended E3 (one of the largest events within the industry) in 2018 and as well as in 2019 (E3 Expo 2018; Makuch 2019). However, a wider reach of the exhibition is ensured by various media journals and websites coverage, streamers and

other influencers, that broadcast about the novelties and projects continuously during the congress and some time afterwards.

Despite the video game industry and its offspring, meaning video game conferences, are nowadays recognized sectors in the modern life, these topics do not receive sufficient emphasis in academic literature. Several publications from other students concerning the issues were found in databases and some books with from a historical outlook and from the industry establishment viewpoint were written. Nonetheless, the academic research on video game events was not implemented at all.

## **1.2 Research objective**

As it was mentioned above, the industry continues to enlarge, thus, more new entrants and already existing game developing or publishing companies require current and actual knowledge and information concerning the theme. The objective of the study is to understand how video game conferences contribute to the growth of the industry and how buying behaviour of public is or can be influenced within the events framework.

This paper aims to study diverse scientific concepts and to gather insights that would be valuable to developer's, publisher's and marketing teams for the upcoming video game conferences and perhaps for other promotional channels. After the perusal of the paper, industry professionals could learn new ideas and adopt them for benefit in the future. Moreover, existing experiences will be compared to the theoretical knowledge in order to illustrate a good example and to highlight cases that would require some adjustments for bettering their performance. By comparing one's own actions and approaches to studied scientific theories, companies could identify their strengths and improve their weaknesses for further position improvement and competitiveness reinforcement.

## **1.3 Research questions**

The two main research questions are:

1. How do video game conferences shape the gaming industry?

## 2. How is consumer behaviour of public influenced within conferences framework?

To provide a more detailed answer to the topic, several sub-questions will be examined:

- Why are video game conferences significant to the gaming industry?
- What components do presentations consist of, e.g. trailer elements (soundtrack, visual effects, colours, and so forth), verbal and nonverbal communication, celebrity involvement etc.?
- What could make potential consumers purchase a product and what are the effects of presentations on perception of the product and decision-making processes?

These points will delineate an essential milestone when the buyers' behaviour is formed or impacted and they will distinguish potential and existing outcomes which are caused by the impact (mainly trailers). The first sub-question will describe how video game conferences have been developing with years and how they have become one of the most major promotional units in the industry (Plante 2015; Urquhart 2019). Additionally, it will review the motives behind attending conferences in three core target groups: gamers, businesses and the media. This information will be especially helpful for those readers of the thesis who have no or very restrained knowledge about the gaming industry. Thus, this question will ensure that all the readers will have roughly the same basis for the further perusal of the topic. The second and the third sub-questions will jointly answer on what and how is being promoted and presented at conferences, i.e. what factors influence people's minds and purchasing behaviour. All the sub-questions complement each other and ensure a holistic image of the work.

### **1.4 Delimitations of the study**

The scope of the thesis lies in identifying emergence and formation of video game industry and video game conferences. Then, motivation for attending events, actual needs of today consumers and relevance of events are discussed. The paper then analyses components of presentations such as trailers, representatives,

communication styles, colours, soundtracks and so on. Subsequently, the after-effects of these elements on brands image and awareness, consumers' perception and attitudes towards a product are explored. Multiple auxiliary concepts, notions and ideas are examined to connect real-life examples with the theoretical knowledge and findings from the interview.

Since the thesis aims to provide the most reliable and latest information, the primary focus will be on E3 2019, one of the largest conferences in 2019. The choice was made based on the importance, history, and reach of the exhibition. This means that events that do not arouse the same level of discussion (e.g. Indie game conferences for independently developed by individuals or small companies games with low production and, therefore, marketing budgets) and other crucial to the industry congresses will not be reviewed and analysed (Computer Hope 2017).

The genre of a game has no significant influence on communication processes and colour perception, that is why every project is appropriate for the analysis in the fourth chapter of the paper. On the other hand, game type still has considerable effect on decision-making and attitude changing processes from the psychological perspective, as well as some of the component's implementation. For instance, the style of a project may impact the utilized soundtrack, positioning of a title, trailer's duration and so on. Although general conclusion cannot be drawn due to overly personal value of the notion, different typologies and approaches to them are discussed. These issues are studied in the fourth and fifth chapters of the work.

Cultural differences in purchasing patterns are not reviewed in the study, i.e. consumer behaviour in different cultures and countries are not considered. The estimation is that people around the globe have roughly the same motivations and psychological needs in term of industry perspective. Markets with no or limited access for observing conferences or with no desire for these activities are not analysed either.

Video game conferences include a wide range of activities such as presentations, showcases with demo versions, panel sessions, etc. (E3 Expo n.d.a). The objective of the thesis is limited mainly to presentations (public performing and trailers) that are available to a larger number of people due to the fact of online streams on multiple platforms. To experience playing demo versions, converse with developers and listen to professional talks, personal presence at the exhibition is required. This is a limitation for the aforementioned types of activities to get much greater attention beyond conference venues.

Further, no legal and internal aspects are reviewed in the paper. This is applicable to situations when a publisher helps developers to promote a project and design advertising materials. Martin O'Donnell (a former audio director of Bungie) jointly with Paul McCartney (a musician from The Beatles) composed a suite for Bungie's (a studio) *Destiny* (a video game). The soundtrack was supposed to be featured in the E3 2013 trailer. However, Activision (*Destiny's* publisher) substituted it with another music piece what caused later some dispute and arguments between the composer, the developer and the publisher parties. (Fahey 2015, Schreier 2017.)

Every team has to decide for itself what should be put into the trailer based on their vision, resources, etc. Only recommendations from a consumer's point of view and based on the theoretical knowledge are given in the thesis.

## 1.5 Theoretical concepts

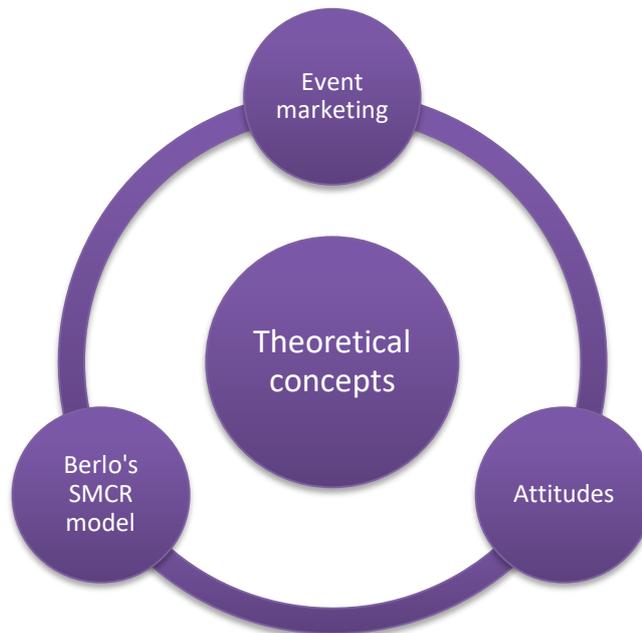


Figure 1. Theoretical concepts

The main theories and models that constitute the thesis pillars are:

- Event marketing— real-time events that imply personal communication between a company (whether it is a host, a sponsor or a participant) with its target audience or prospective consumers. This type of marketing extends to brand awareness, brand loyalty, customer involvement and so on. (Instapage n.d.; E3 Expo n.d.b.)
- Berlo’s SMCR model of communication— a communication model developed by David Berlo in 1960 (Janse 2018). It is the most suitable theory of communication for this study. The model describes how the interaction happens, what elements it consists of and how to build dialogues or monologues in an appropriate manner.
- Attitudes — mentally-based concepts, feelings, beliefs and behaviour that have influence on purchasers’ minds (Fazio & Olson 2003). *Emotion are usually the result of specific events, and the events that cause similar emotions vary across cultures* (de Mooij 2011, p. 181).

Besides, several suitable key concepts like brand awareness, Johari window model, PREP, PCS, AIDA model, face of a game, personal perception and others are utilized. These key concepts portray all the main general aspects of this topic and will help to examine the theme from various prospects. By studying and expounding these concepts, a more comprehensive answer to the main research question can be given.

## **1.6 Research methods**

The research method has a qualitative approach, which implies that the subjective judgement on attitudes, behaviour and beliefs is applicable. Thereby, a study is *a function of researcher's insights and impressions*. (Kothari 2004, p. 5.) The choice of the approach is justified due to the lack of previous research. Moreover, the phenomenon's nature induces to interpret some concepts in a subjective manner on the basis of one's experience and background.

In order to connect the theory to the real-life experience, the empirical part represents an interview with a professional in the industry. Interviews are one of the commonly utilized methods for acquiring qualitative data (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006). The conversation with Obsidian Entertainment studio head Feargus Urquhart was proceeded on 7th November 2019 in Skype. E-mail message was sent to the studio's official mailbox with an inquiry for the interview in September. The interview took about 53 minutes. It was recorded with the usage of an application, which is specially designed for recording purposes. This allowed the author to fully concentrate on respondent's answers and maintain the interaction (Kothari 2004, p. 100; Whiting 2008, p. 36). Besides, telephone (online) interviews are faster and easier since the need for traveling is eliminated (Kothari 2004, p. 100). Another benefit is that questions can be explained in more detail, thus reducing the possibility of confusion errors (Kothari 2004, p. 100).

Then, the interview was transcribed. The transcribing contributed to a more accurate analysis and outlining talk's topics, in other words, coding the data. Afterwards, the recorded interview was deleted from any source of storage in regards of confidentiality and privacy (Whiting 2008, p. 39). The permission to distribute

the findings from the interview in the paper was granted by Feargus Urquhart with his prior supervision.

Findings from the interview constitute a theoretical part of the work to demonstrably compare the opinion of the professional with a substantial experience to the studied theoretical concepts. Besides, the compilation and summary of the findings and ideas are provided in chapter 6, where the validity and reliability are supplementary discussed.

### **1.7 Structure of the interview**

The interview was semi-structured since it was the most relevant mean for collecting reliable qualitative data in this case. This typology enables to add questions emerged during the interview process (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006). All the questions were open-ended, thus requiring deployed answers and providing sufficiently space for the response (Media College n.d.). Questions were not sent in advance in order to obtain prompt and unprepared replies.

The questions were compiled based on the obtained theoretical knowledge. The aim of the talk was to gain industry and topic related information from the professional viewpoint. Interviewee's thoughts on defined themes were supposed either to validate the studied theories or to disprove them (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006). In addition, vocational notions and specific occupational operations were meant to be explained by the respondent.

The first part of the interview was dedicated to consumer-oriented video game conferences. The range was set to identify and outline events' indicators like importance, attractiveness, stimulus, etc. The second section focused on trailer creation within the industry scope. Then, the communication was discussed. Various ideas and assumptions were considered to thoroughly examine the issue.

### **1.8 Structure of the study**

The first part of the paper briefly introduces the origination of the video game industry and the history of video game conferences. Terminology, arcade machines, the 1983 video game crash, event multiplicity and E3's development are described. The second segment explores theoretical aspects of conferences.

Therein, congress's managerial notions like seasonality, positioning, 2-customer rule and so forth are examined. Moreover, the chapter reveals psychological motivation of gamers and businesses for attending such events. The third section deals with trailers including soundtracks and colour perception. The fourth part contains the research on communication processes like Berlo's SMCR and Johari window models, nonverbal communication, swearing, celebrities, face of a game concept, as well as psychological propositions and effects on potential purchaser's mind and perception. Each notion is treated in own subchapter in the paper. The last components reflect Feargus Urquhart's ideas expressed during the interview and they end the thesis by drawing conclusions from empirical and theoretical findings and by proposing further study on the topic.

## **2 Video game and video game conferences' history**

### **2.1 Video games**

*Video game is a game in which the player controls moving pictures on a screen by pressing buttons. (Cambridge dictionary, n.d.a.)*

*Computer game is a game that is played on a computer, in which the pictures that appear on the screen are controlled by pressing keys or moving a joystick. (Cambridge dictionary, n.d.b.)*

The video game industry has been existing for rather a long period of time primary on arcade machines and simple game consoles (Chikhani 2015). It is considered that the history of gaming began back in 1972 when released by Atari game Pong became successful and profitable (Kocurek 2015, p. 30). Thereafter, the industry survived through its ups like Pac-Man (1980) and downs like E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial (1982). However, the sector faced drastic changes in 1983, when the saturation of various game machines and relatively low-quality games caused the video game crash (Oxford 2012). This event gave an impetus to the development of new gaming platforms such as new generation consoles and personal computers. Both of them occupied the formed niche and moved gamers from the public places to their homes. Thereby, a new approach to gaming has emerged. Figure 2 reflects the shift that happened between 1980 and 1990 years. Although the accuracy of the data may be questionable, the general trend is demonstrated.

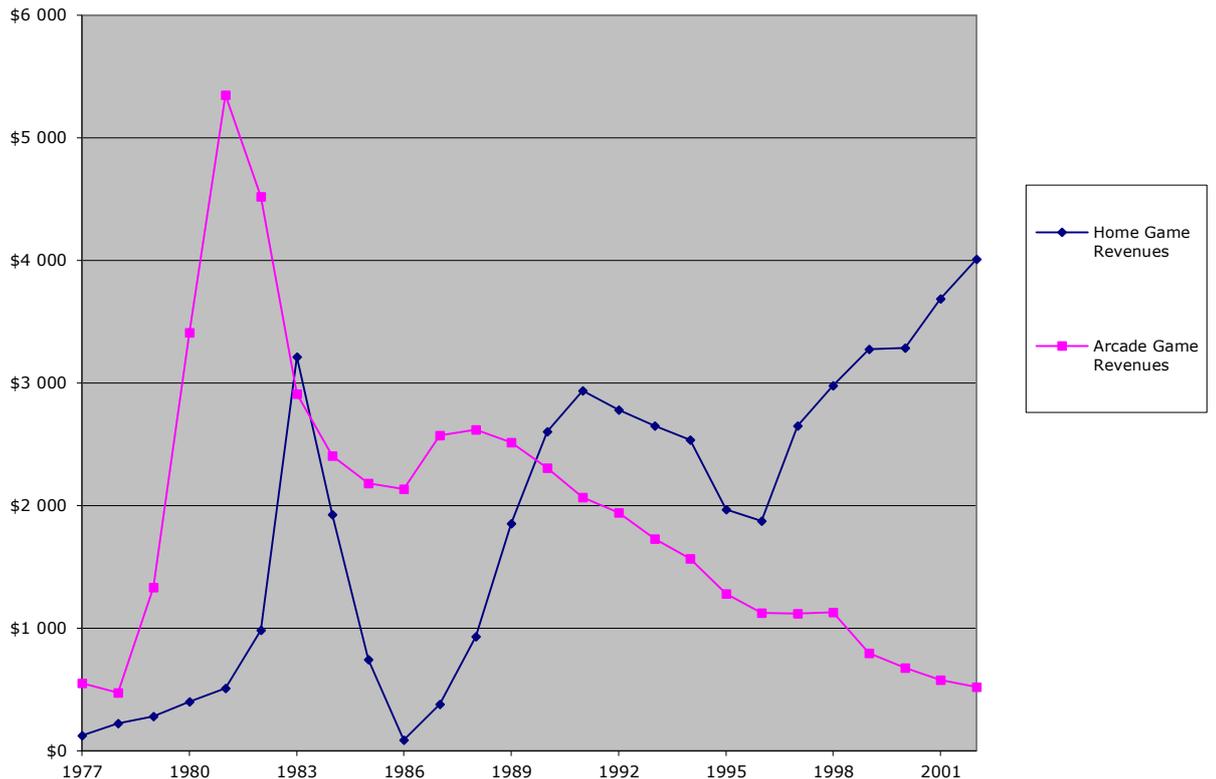


Figure 2. Industry breakdown: Home game vs. arcade sales, in millions of 1983 dollars (Williams 2005)

From the graph, the 1983 leap in home gaming devices purchases becomes visible. Despite a sharp decline in the following three years, PC along with other devices started to slowly conquer the industry (Chikhani 2015).

The console market has experienced its own troubles and triumphs. The pioneer after the rebirth of the industry was Nintendo Entertainment System, also known as NES released in 1985. It quickly seized the North American region and for a while remained the main tool for gaming. Only four years later, Sega with Sega Mater System managed to compete with the dominant product in the market, thereby begun the so-called First Console War. Then, technological advantage of a platform and exclusive games became the major factors contributing to the competitiveness of a console. Exclusive games refer to the concept that the game will be available for playing only on one specific platform. To this day, this keeps on being one of the most crucial aspects in game developing, promoting and distribution issues. (History 2019.)

With the next generation of consoles, two new competing powers have emerged, namely Sony's PlayStation 2 (PS2) and Microsoft's Xbox. Eventually, they became the biggest players in the segment and their rivalry continues to these days. The next successors (i.e. PS3, Xbox 360, followed by PS4 and Xbox One) were released with a small time span what assisted to the competition. Just recently in 2017, Nintendo tried to re-enter the market with a bigger "weapon" Nintendo Switch. At the time of writing this thesis, the latest generation of consoles has been just announced (PlayStation 5) and it is expected to be released in the next year.

## **2.2 Video game conferences**

Conference is an event that typically continues several days, at which there are plenty of talks and meetings about a particular subject. (Cambridge dictionary n.d.c.)

One of the premiere conferences was Consumer Electronics Show held in 1967 (Alfred 2010). Although it did not contain any kind of games, it became one of the sector's ancestors featuring multiple technology devices like TVs and portable radios. The very first electronic congress was Consumer Electronics Show that has been operating in the sphere since 1967. However, during the first year of operation, mainly radios and TVs were introduced at the show (Alfred 2010). Many other entrants in the video game events industry have appeared in the past couple decades. The majority of them keeps operating also today. Among the most famous and well-known, there are Blizzcon (since 2005), Game Developers Conference (since 2007), Tokyo Game Show (since 1996) and many others. (Big Fish Games 2014.)

As it was mentioned in the Introduction chapter, the thesis focuses only on E3. The selection was made based on the merits of the event. The reach, the notability, the media component like the press, discussions, etc. of the exhibition were taken into account and have also influenced the choice. Although nowadays it is debated on the importance of E3 Expo, it still remains one of the most notable exhibitions within the industry framework.

E3 originally stood for Electronic Entertainment Expo and it has been held annually since 1996 in Los Angeles. However, due to inability to reach an agreement with Los Angeles Convention Center, the event was held in Atlanta in 1997 and 1998 (Varanini 2009). Usually, this consumer-oriented conference lasts for two days and attracts many attendees related to the industry such as gamers, developers, social influencers, and many others (E3 Expo n.d.a). According to E3's official webpage (E3 Expo 2018) and Gamespot (Makuch 2019), more than 65000 people have personally attended in 2018 and 2019 each year, i.e. that they personally visited the venue. Yet, the reach of the event spreads far beyond this amount of participant as the main broadcasters are found in the Internet. They are numerous press representatives (e.g. Kotaku, Gamespot, GamesRadar, etc.) and streamers who broadcast in various languages on multiple streaming services like Twitch, YouTube and so on. Due to the scatter of message spread channels, it is rather challenging to calculate the entire coverage of the event.

### **3 What is behind an event?**

Event in its nature is a combination of notions "product" and "service". Its objective is to satisfy public's interest and to generate instant effects on people's minds (Reic 2017, p. 6-7). The two major forces governing almost any event are social trends and seasonality of a particular industry (Reic 2017, p. 18). The timing and location underpin the competitiveness of conferences and impart uniqueness to them (Reic 2017, p. 69). In the video game industry, conventions happen during all seasons and all around the world. This diversity brings variegated target customers from many counties and cultures. However, the cultural influence can be neglected since the product range and purchase patterns are quite the same in most countries. Legal and monetary factors remain since, apart from air tickets, there is often a need for country entering permissions like visas, which may affect big and small players on the market. Nonetheless, Reic (2017, p.153) notes that motivational aspect severely influences decision-making processes, therefore financial conditional is not taken into account to the same degree. The 2-plus customer rule identifies that there are two or more kinds of customers that need to be dealt in an inherent way (Reic 2017, p. 88). In the video game conferences framework, there are three origins of attendants: businesses, gamers and the

media. Each of them pursues own goals and objectives that are discussed further in this chapter.

Positioning of the event is a vital aspect that creates an image of an occasion and assists in gaining a larger market share. Existing reputation, reputation of an organizing company, participating businesses contribute to the perception of the event in consumers' minds (Reic 2017, p. 78). Traditionally, E3 managed to unite valuable developers at the same event, thereby transforming project announcements into a so-called festival for gamers. This significantly supports the exhibition's survival in the modern world.

Moreover, the economic seasonality is a strong reason why the most crucial events usually take place in the summer, e.g. E3 and Gamescom. At first, people tend to spend their leisure outdoors like going for a walk, taking trips abroad or to the countryside, visiting cinemas. Besides, the best sale time of the year is the fall flowing into the Christmas period for traditional motives and the spring for fiscal motives. To attract and inform prospect customers about upcoming products, summer is believed to be the best option to do so, although companies expose themselves to higher competitions on the market later on. (Grygorcewicz 2018.)

These ideas are confirmed by Feargus Urquhart. According to him, vacation time, during which people tend to enjoy their hobbies, is a great reason for the seasonality of conferences (Urquhart 2019). Although Urquhart agrees that a correlation with the fiscal motives is present, he hesitates that this was an initial reason for conferences to be held during the summer period (Urquhart 2019). In other words, it can be placed as acquired trends and customs of the industry.

Ivna Reic reflects works *The Experience Economy* by Pine and Gilmore (1999) and *The Dream Society* by Rofl Jensen (2001) where the authors state that consumers have shifted from the relationship marketing towards imagineering and co-creation (Reic 2017, pp. 26-27). Emotions and experience serve as the basis of these economies. Especially with the new generations (millennials and generation z) and with the progress of new technologies such as the Internet, various gaming platforms, VR headsets and so on, these concepts became essential to

successful existence of brands and to necessary communication with their core customers. Escapism or, in other words, means of avoiding the reality by performing activities that take an individual to some fantasies and distant from real world situations; who-am-I markets; desires for adventures rely nowadays on story-telling that would deliver experiences and elicit emotions (Reic 2017, p. 28). By performing these actions, events and hence businesses can affect the main forces of the customer satisfaction (affects, cognition and conation) and thus, create unforgettable memories about conventions and products. This stimulates higher return rates to developers and congresses among attendances. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) said that a flow state underpins the experience by covering several elements (Reic 2017, p.34). The most applicable of them are the loss of time concept, wherein the time is assessed within the event time framework rather than in universal metrics like hours or minutes, and the merge of an individual with the activity and consequently the loss of self-concept (Oppland 2019).

Co-creation is an essential concept for emotion economy, and it can be achieved by firstly establishing dialogue and creating engagement from both sides. In addition, it is important to provide enough information about the product to consumers and ensure that the data is transparent and available to the mass (an important point for cinematic trailers). Then, the assessment of an individual can become more understandable to firms and be treated in a more efficient manner in the future. (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004.)

The question remains: why do people attend video game conferences? The simplest reasons are found in businesses' and media's motives. Both participants strive to sell the product and improve the brand awareness and to gain readership by covering the vociferous releases correspondingly. Some developers believe that video game conferences are a distraction from the game developing processes (Schreier 2017, p. 76). However, large studios realize the importance of the events and marketing promotion of the production. Therefore, we can note as an example Sony's PlayStation Experience, where the Japanese brand is the only party to which the attention is fully drawn. Additionally, Feargus Urquhart shares that mature studios plan the resources required for conferences such as

trailer designing and demos creation in advance, and these preparations can contribute, in its turn, to developing processes by indicating what amount of work has been already done (Urquhart 2019).

Regular gamers' stimuluses are primary affect causes, i.e. emotions and experiences. These factors are the drives of one's behaviour, attitudes towards conferences and involvement ratio. By attending conferences, individuals try to show who they are, what they believe and become a recognized member of a smaller society of gamers (Reic 2017 p. 137). Visitors are tempted to experience escapism, personally witness new projects being announced and even try demo versions (Aaron 2014). Considering E3 featuring a famous American actor Keanu Reeves, seeing artists performing arouses as an additional ground for participating at the conference. However, the greater reason behind is hedonic motives or leisure and fantasy experiences (Reic 2017 p. 137). Besides, these stimuluses exist in the top three sections of Maslow's hierarchy of needs: the need of belonging to a certain group, the need to be recognized and the need to experience new stories and feelings. Phil Spencer, a head of Xbox notes that one of the main Team Xbox's objectives are consumer-oriented video game conferences (Microsoft 2019). He stresses that Microsoft by introducing new projects to public enables experiencing unique emotions for attendants and viewers. The concept is complemented by Feargus' statement that people enjoy games, they enjoy being in the society that shares the same values and beliefs (Urquhart 2019). Additionally, he supposes that visitors may like to be the first ones to discover new projects from industry gurus and to get to talk to them (Urquhart 2019).

### **3.1 Why are video game conferences important?**

As it was described in chapter 2.2, gaming events have been existing in the industry for a decent span of time. Despite having various initial core goals, they all compromise a large stake of the industry.

With the development of the sector, the need of compiling industry novelties has emerged. In addition, it was said that video game conferences legitimize the industry, implying that they create buzz and awareness of the industry, especially for non-related to the sphere people. In general, conventions contribute to the

acknowledgement of the realm. Moreover, conferences' aim often is in assembling together gamers and independent professionals in order to witness, present and discuss game world's novelties. (Urquhart 2019.)

After perusal of *Blood, Sweat and Pixels* (Schreier 2017), it becomes straightforward that large developers and publishers reckon with consumer-oriented conferences. Companies like CD Project Red, Activision, Naughty Dog and many others often see them as a great possibility to let the world know about their new releases. Frequently, developing processes are designed with the calculation of time consumed by getting prepared to present at events.

The industry keeps on enlarging and new generations gladly join it since their early ages. They, however, have own requirements and attitudes to events and products like the desire for experience obtaining and for co-creation. Feargus believes that video game conferences would become more consumer-oriented in the future (Urquhart 2019).

## **4 Trailers**

### **4.1 Presentation purpose and structure**

From their origin and objectives, video clips can be distinguished into several categories (Urquhart 2019). One's purpose is to simply make potential customers familiar to a new project. In general, their duration is about one or two minutes depending on how much of the information a studio wants to share and how much of mysteriousness it wants to create. This type, as a rule, provides hints on the lore and the setting of the game and reveals main characters and conflicts of the story. Another category may last five to twenty minutes in order to demonstrate gameplay and game features (Jenkins 2017). Besides, cinematic trailers are also present, similarly to the movie industry (Jenkins 2017). Although promotional video content of this kind (i.e. cinematic) is perceived as a separate completed movie, it is often argued from the consumer point of view that they do not reflect what the game looks like (Reddit 2017). This thought is upheld by Feargus Urquhart (2019). As mentioned before, co-creation relies on transparent data. Although cinematic content serves well as a feelings and game idea transmitter

(Reddit 2017), it does not show the actual gameplay and it requires supplementary explanatory materials, e.g. gameplay trailers, showcases and so on.

Trailers must be able to transmit feelings from acquiring and using the product; they are supposed to elicit emotions and desire for purchase in prospective buyers (Hooton 2017; Urquhart 2019). These propositions are claimed by a communication and digital studies graduate Anna Rinko (2015; n.d.) when she did her research on psychology of movie promotional materials. The idea is that physical responses like goose bumps entail emotional reaction. Anna Rinko (2015) concludes that the more affective a trailer is, the more memorable it becomes, thereby enhancing odds of further acquisition of the product.

Deborah Swallow (a professional speaker on business issues) and Phillip Khan-Panni (an author of five books on communication) take into consideration buying behaviour in various cultures and countries (Swallow & Khan-Panni 2004). One of their findings is that the USA customers demand more often for emotional values than Germans do. According to Ivna Reic (2017) and Feargus Urquhart (2019), events visitors around the world desire to experience new unheard stories and feel certain senses. Therefore, it is presumed to ignore slight differences in buying patterns and to focus on emotional aspects.

Components of trailers is a challenging topic as it relies on multiple aspects. Game genre, target audience, gameplay features and so forth have a significant impact on the promotional video material creation. Besides, there is a challenging topic of how to make customers be interested in a project without spoiling best moments (Schreier 2017). Another point consists in origin of production: in-house trailers, outsourced or designed with help of distributor (Urquhart 2019). Feargus Urquhart (2019) perceived trailers as a mean to send to the mass the feeling of a project. Studios must decide on their own what should be revealed in promotional video materials according to the game genre's standards.

Nonetheless, in *Make More Sales with Better Presentations: The essential guide for Finns doing business abroad* (Swallow & Khan-Panni 2004), the authors provide a comprehensive presentation structure that includes three steps in it. Figure

3 was created based on ideas retrieved from the book (Swallow & Khan-Panni 2004, p. 94) and it was adopted to the industry standards.

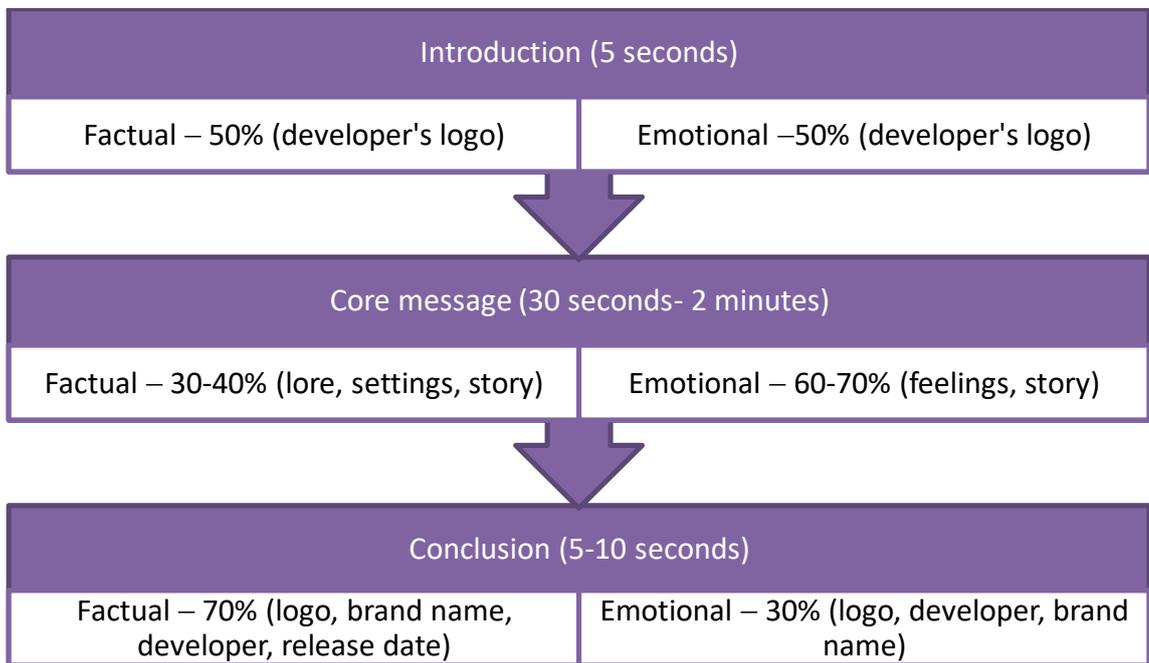


Figure 3. Reveal trailers' structure

As Figure 3 illustrates, revealing trailers, i.e. introducing a project for the first time, generally possess this structure. In the beginning, people receive factual and emotional messages in a rather equal amounts. Relying on previously received knowledge and personal background, viewers may make judgements based only small piece of information such as on a studio's brand logo. Gamers can hence presume what the game may look like and in what genre it is being developed. Additionally, previous merits are recognized and attitudes towards a company are triggered. As a rule, this stage lasts approximately five seconds but may arouse massive hype among the audience and, as a consequence, online. The best case could be The Last of Us Part II announced on PSX 2016 (EMT 2016). After a quick tease about the apocalyptic setting, the crowd guessed that the sequel of the beloved by the community story would be displayed. As soon as Naughty Dog's logo appeared, the hype spread around the hall. It was undoubtedly– the seconds part was about to be demonstrated.

During the next half a minute and up to two minutes, a story, a lore, world's settings and perhaps gameplay are demonstrated. The audience establishes facts

about the title and elaborates its position towards the product, whether it is appealing to viewers or not. The precise process description is shown in Information perception, Attitudes, Attitude change and decision-making processes chapters. Besides, the core message of the trailer is reviewed in Message chapter.

Nonetheless, some recommendations may be proposed according to *Psychology of Movie Trailers* (Rinko 2015). The author highlights the importance of facial close-ups and thereby, the focus on actor's or in-game character's emotions. She believes that these techniques can be very impactful on perceiving of a trailer. This technique is excellently executed by Obsidian Entertainment in The Outer Worlds trailer at E3 2019 (Microsoft 2019). In addition, Anna Rinko (2015) suggest utilizing genre specific features for positioning goals. For instance, action genre games typically include explosions and gunfights. By adding these components into a trailer, a cue for an association with other genre representatives will be encoded. Doom Eternal (a video game) video clip almost entirely consists of scenes of violence, annihilation of demons and guns shooting, which are characteristic features of action games and Doom series in particular (Bethesda 2019). This may be as beneficial if an individual is passionate about this type of products or series, as harmful if a person would strive to subconsciously compare the title to ancestor successful projects in the genre. In that case, the correlation with successful games affects negatively the expectation management and jeopardize prospect acceptance by the public. Another point lies in objects or episode contrasting like it was used in The Outer Worlds trailer (Rinko 2015; Microsoft 2019). The opening scene with an operating ship is substituted instantly subconsciously by some abandoned unusable wreckages. This effect creates a spectrum of emotions due to demonstration of two diametrically opposite entities.

In conclusion scenes, which span is about five-ten seconds, project's title, developer's name, logo and release date are featured. This step establishes facts of who is developing the game, in what colour the logo is implemented and when the product will be available for purchase. Besides facts, people develop also emotional connection towards the object, which later can be utilized in decision-making processes.

## 4.2 Sound effects and soundtracks

Numerous different articles and studies distinguish various objectives of soundtracks and sound effects. The reliability of the sources is arguable, however the represented ideas can be considered from scientific and operational points.

Perhaps, the major purpose of music accompaniment for video game conferences consists in desired emotion evoking and enhancing the engagement ratio (Isaza 2010; Chodosh 2018; Soundstripe 2018; Team Audiosoket 2018). Audible effects support story creation and provision of entertainment experiences (Whalen 2004; Isaza 2010; Pileberg 2015; Soundstripe 2018; Team Audiosoket 2018). Moreover, audio components help people to immerse into the surroundings and allow them to better understand the occurring on screen environments (Isaza 2010; Soundstripe 2018; Team Audiosoket 2018). For example, explosions, flying birds' noises, cars, conversations are helpful to players in terms of orienting in locations. Isaza (2010) argues that music pieces complement feelings of warmth towards visual content and games, thereby making it more appealing. While visuals are displayed as intangible pixels, sound is believed to be the only real sense in games, apart from keyboard or joystick touching (Isaza 2010). Escapism can be achieved by soundtracks, too. Sara Chodosh (2018) and Team Audiosoket (2018) suggest that best featured in games music compositions make people focus on tasks and forget about other distractions. Absence of lyrics allows viewers and players to concentrate on visual perception of demonstrated setting, story and gameplay.

Jon Gillick's and David Bamman's study (2018) concludes that war, western and history genres of movies employ faster tempos of music, whilst sports and adult ones are accompanied by performed in a slower pace compositions. This finding is confirmed by Anna Rinko's research as well (Rinko 2015). Additionally, she debates that the usage of specific and associating with the genre music may contribute to the emergence and development of the desire to watch the movie in that particular genre (Rinko 2015). In fact, action games frequently exploit moving and driving music pieces in promotion like in *Battlefield 1* (a video game) case. Syntactic match when action perfectly coincides music tempo is recognized excellently by spectators from the psychological viewpoint because, in that moment,

a merge between visual and audible perceptions happens (Bufford 2012). Thus, this technique eases the overall perception and the feeling of a trailer (Bufford 2012). A great example is Battlefield 1 where in the beginning scene, soldier's hits perfectly get to the beat and stimulate physical and psychological responses (Battlefield 2016).

Carolyn Bufford (2012) distinguishes another type of matches — music keys. Traditionally in Western cultures, major keys represent positive feelings like happiness, prosperity and bravery, meanwhile minor ones are associated with sorrow and fear. This proposition is proven by the research carried out by Gillick and Bamman (2018). War, western and family films' soundtracks are performed in major tonality and movies in adult, thriller and action frameworks have, as a rule, minor tones.

Bufford (2012) considers hero's themes, too. If a character appears on screen, a certain music piece is being played. This, similarly, is a part of classical conditioning process, described in chapter 5.5. The usage of famous music can contribute to brand's positioning like with Battlefield 1 example (see Appendix 2), where a well-known Seven Nation Army by The White Stripes is used (Battlefield 2016). People tend to associate these compositions to games partly due to classical conditioning. This proposition can also be found in the Team Audiosocket's (2018) article. Anna Rinko (2015) suggests utilizing famous pieces of music from previous, well accepted movies in order to invoke positive context-dependent memories, thereby causing the desire to watch a new film. She may be right from the psychological perspective; however, brands nowadays are in a great need of uniqueness and differentiation from competitors.

### **4.3 Colour perception**

The study on colour perception is examined in the paper in order to identify the psychological issues behind colours. Joseph Bellizzi, Ronald Hasty and Ayn Crowley (1983) state based on findings from other researchers, that colour perception is a highly individual aspect, which is formed under multiple circumstances like personal background, culture, culture's colour attitude (feminine ver-

sus masculine) and so forth. Additionally, they distinguish people into two categories: cool-colours and warm-colour receptive, implying that a person is predisposed to better conceive cold or in opposite, warm hues. This concept, for its part, flows into different responses, as proven by Bjerstedt in 1960 (Bellizzi et al. 1983, p. 24). People prone to warm colours tend to more openly react to stimuli, as well as they require less time for the reaction. Besides, results from numerous researches by Gerard (1957), Wilson (1966), Clynes and Kohn (1968) concluded that red colour effects psychological activation and stimulates brain functions. In contrast, cold hues such as green and blue make a person more relaxed. Cool-colour perceivers are selective in their responses and the noise is less destructive to them. *A preference for blue is thought to indicate well-controlled emotions and behavior* (Bellizzi et al 1983, p. 26).

In a conducted by the authors study, Bellizzi et al. (1983, pp. 27-39) found out that physical motivation may affect the choice despite their colour preferences. During the test, attendees strived to more frequently sit next to warm-coloured walls rather than next to cold-coloured. It may be assumed that abundant usage of red colour in trailers, for instance, Doom Eternal, may provoke viewers to actions such as visiting developer's booth or pre-order the game in case of online conference observing. Yet, a research on these linkages must be conducted.

#### **4.4 Brand and colours in brand's logos**

Brand hierarchy symbolizes company's structure that includes a mother brand and its many subsidiaries (Keller 2013, p. 398). For instance, Microsoft owns several game developing studios like Obsidian Entertainment, Ninja Theory, Mojang and others (Horti & Fenlon 2019). These companies, in their turn, keep on developing diverse games and, as a consequence, create other smaller affiliate brands, for example Obsidian Entertainment- The Outer Worlds (2019) and other titles, Mojang- Minecraft (2009) and other games, Ninja Theory- Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice (2017) and other brands, and so on.

Each single brand requires own distinctive logo and positioning. Additionally, Brian Honigman (2013) persuades to especially account the power of colours in emotions and feelings evoking. The choice of trademark's hue *can help people*

to decide what is important (Ferreira 2019). Mubeen Aslam (2006, p. 23) in his study on colours declares that colour could assist differentiating of the product in the environment and among the competitors. The following Figure 4 shows correlation between brand logo's hues and psychological frequently unrecognized concepts behind colours.



Figure 4. Color Emotion Guide (The Logo Company n.d.)

E3's trademark (see Appendix 2) is executed in red and yellow colours, which may correspond in visitors' minds on unconscious level to the excitement (red hue), the warmth about belonging to the community, fun (Bellizzi et al. 1983, p. 25) and the positivity of being a recognized member of the gamers' society (yellow hue). Moreover, Ferreira (2019) claims that red hue helps to attract attention and it can elicit the strongest feelings towards an object.

Another case is *Death Stranding* (2019, see example 1 in Appendix 2) which utilizes contrasting combination of dark and light tones in its logo. It signals about tension and probable accident plot story. Besides, it instantly draws one's attention towards the written text due to its contrast and absence of distracting backdrop (fatrabbit CREATIVE n.d.). On the second promotional material featuring a looking into the distance protagonist (see example 2 in Appendix 2), the name of the game and other data are placed on a grey background, which represents balance or depression (Bourn 2010; Ferreira 2019).

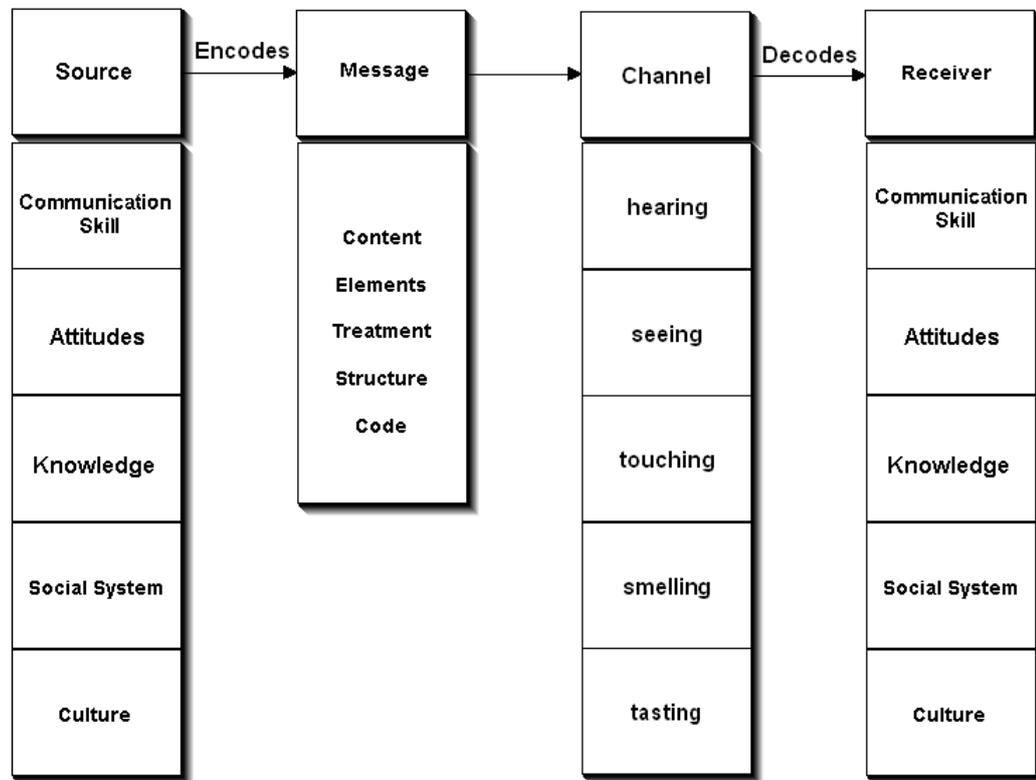
In conclusion, game's brand colour should be mindful when positioning a title and transmitting feelings of a game. It is important to remember the target audience, project's lore and other varied aspects to properly and successfully run the promotional campaign.

Despite choosing proper colours and hues, developer's or games' logos may be strengthened by sound effects exploitation as well. As Miguel Isaza (2010) concludes, the sound of appearing logo does not need to be loud and simple mouse clicking will do its work. Then, classical conditioning initiates psychological processes in buyers' minds, which are described in detail in chapter 5.5.

## 5 Presentations and consumer behaviour

### 5.1 Berlo's model of communication

#### Berlo's Model of Communication



A Source encodes a message for a channel to a receiver who decodes the message:  
S-M-C-R Model.

Figure 5. Berlo's Model of Communication (Businessstopia 2018)

The model includes four components that are a source, a message, a channel, and a receiver. All of them consist of and are influenced by own sub-points which could significantly predetermine how an individual perceives the initially encoded message.

#### 5.1.1 Source

A source or a sender stands for a person who directly broadcasts a message. In the video game conference industry, a studio head, a developer, an invited celebrity or any other responsible individual can perform as the source. By observing Figure 5, it becomes evident that the sender and the receiver are affected by the same factors, thereby they are interdependent to a certain extent. The general

knowledge about the industry is possessed by all of the attendees, meaning there is awareness of a brief history, previous releases, brand names, etc. The knowledge about the product can be excluded from the scheme because only the presenter has the information and insights that are going to be shared during the event. This process is illustrated in more details in chapter 5.2. Additionally, attitudes, meaning how performers position themselves, their confidence level, non-verbal communication and cultural affects are considered further in the paper. Social system is connected to the values and beliefs; that is why personal background cannot be generalized and recommendations concerning this topic cannot be given. Yet, the place and the situation, which are a part of the social system, unite announcers. All of them face the same circumstance of presenting on the stage in front of real people and online audience. The occasion influences speaker's behaviour, which in its turns can interfere nonverbal and verbal communications of one.

Communication skills refer to skills such as reading, pronouncing, presenting, and so forth (Janse 2018). On the one hand, a spokesperson must be able to express his or her thoughts in a clear manner without causing any misunderstanding in order to maintain a smooth conversation. Since all the presenters belong to professional circles, the majority of them faces no difficulties in the communication process. However, there are some exceptions that could be considered as not totally ruining but rather severely complicating the interaction and further perception of a game or a brand. It is undoubted that the ability to speak surely depends on multiple factors like place of birth, first language learnt, time spent on language mastering, area of residence and others. When it comes to presenting, the most important things are to impress and transmit the idea to the receiver. Dinga Bakaba and Sébastien Mitton from Arkane Lyon (a studio), Shinji Mikami from Tangoameworks (a studio) struggle with this issue at E3 2019. Note that their contribution to the industry, professionalism and other skills are not evaluated and the scope is limited only to the way they present from the receivers' point of view. Due to obstructed reception of the speech, the chat in YouTube quickly loses its interest in their performance (Bethesda 2019). The viewers are puzzled with what was being said (i.e. what words and what phrases)

and soon they start to spam “skip” and “next” willing to move to the next presentation. At conferences, it damages the brand twice more: people become promptly disinterested, but even more— in their mind, an obnoxious vision of one’s studio and products settles. This is caused by classical conditioning reviewed in Face of a game concept and celebrities chapter.

### **5.1.2 Message**

Deborah Swallow and Phillip Khan-Panni published their book “Make More Sales with Better Presentations: The essential guide for Finns doing business abroad” in 2004. Although the book may look at first sight as outdated and relatively narrow, it contains good points and ideas that are applicable still to these days and that contain general insights, which are appropriate not only for the northern culture.

In the opening scene of Bethesda’s E3 conference (Bethesda 2019), developers from different studios thank players for watching the conference and thereby, they apply the first pivotal point from the book: companies should focus on gamer’s needs and wants, not on their own excellence or products (Swallow & Khan-Panni 2004). By doing that, a business can gain trust and establish more friendly and lovely relationship with its potential consumers and already existing fans. Despite it is a rather obvious proposition and nearly all presenters fulfil this “obligation”, this somewhat routine task underlies the communications and serves as an opening phrase.

To examine the process of a successful presentation, AIDA-model is introduced. It stands for attention, interest, desire, and action. The speaker should grab initially the attention of the listeners. This is proceeded in the very first seconds when appearing on the stage and its part is so-called first impression: the way a person enters and walks, what clothes he or she wears, whether a person looks friendly and so forth. Over and above, this is perhaps one of the most crucial aspects in personal communication with the public. As Will Rogers said: “*You never get a second chance to make a good first impression*” (Forbes n.d.). Moreover, Deborah Swallow and Phillip Khan-Panni (2004) suggest devising a unique hook phrase to focus public’s minds on a persona and afterward, on a message.

The unusual and in a way strange charisma of Tom Mustaine from Bethesda who presents *Fallout 76* at E3 in 2019 can be drawn as a good example (Bethesda 2019). His odd and to a certain degree nervous laughter perfectly executes the function of grabbing attention. This phenomenon stands out from the rest presenters who precede and follow him. Likewise, another great case is Ikumi Nakamura from Tango Gameworks (a studio) (Bethesda 2019). Her method reveals in gestures, also known as nonverbal communication. In the opening phase, she bows in a Japanese manner and parodies something similar to a famous Mario jump. The ease and the amiability of this speaker highlight Ikumi among the other more restrained representatives. Despite having some troubles with speaking English, she masterfully controls the voice and keeps the audience waiting for the details.

When the first step is carried out, the core message must be sent to the receivers. Its purpose is to make the audience interested in what is going to be shown next, for example, a following information regarding a represented game, a trailer or the next colleague appearing on the stage. The persuasion is built upon three pillars that are motivation, empathy and sequence (Swallow and Khan-Panni 2004, p. 42). Motivation is in a tight coherence with a need; the need to listen to the message. Mainly, the public concerns whether its beliefs, hopes and expectations will be confirmed. The audience's expectancy is in the hopefulness of a new, preferably AAA title being revealed. In contrast, the sequence section argues that people often make purchases because of triggering the emotions, not because of the pressing need of acquisition of a product. This is especially applicable to the industry. Games are an entertaining good, which primal aim is to deliver pleasure to users by evoking a large spectrum of feelings. Even short trailers provide enough insights to potential customers on what the game will be about and which senses it may elicit. For example, a horror genre implies covering fear, anxiety and trembling emotions. Thereby, gamers can identify the product as potentially interesting for themselves, which will lead to the next step of gathering the material: watching other trailers, reading reviews and articles, and so on. Empathy is needed for improving brand reputation and increasing trust towards the company or the selling person. As it was written in the book, people prefer to acquire products from other people rather from the "faceless" corporates

(Swallow & Khan-Panni 2004). Once again, this issue is described in chapter 5.5 The above-mentioned first impression and nonverbal communication carried out in the right kind facilitate to the trust establishment and further to the brand loyalty.

In verbal communication, the desire cannot be easily retrieved from the model as it is bound to the above-explained interest and to the trailers. In cases of Fallout 76 and Elder Scrolls Blades (Bethesda 2019), the presentations are divided into three parts:

1. grabbing the attention and attracting the interest, when the representatives explicate the novelties developed for the games;
2. showing the actual trailers, wherein the desire for acquisition is supposed to be aroused;
3. requesting the action.

The last step of the personal communication is designed to encourage precise actions from the listeners. This can be an offer to watch a trailer like Battlemode for Doom Eternal (Bethesda 2019), or a more common invitation to greet the next presenter. It may be challenging to find a non-clichéd phrase for this purpose. However, if found, it will be beneficial to the overall presentation assessment and it will contribute to the image of a person and a company that he or she represents.

The structure of the message could be constructed according to two approaches described by Deborah Swallow and Phillip Khan-Panni (2004): PREP and PCS. The first one represents positioning, then reasoning, explaining and illustrating examples, and stating the position once again. A great example of this scheme is Todd Howard, a director and executive producer in Bethesda. At E3 2019, he states that the Bethesda gamers' number has reached the highest peak in the previous year (Bethesda 2019). Then, Todd Howard immediately provides the reason for this, which is all of the fans of the game developing company. The claim is supported by Fallout 76 example because of community activity. The evidence contains the same structure of PREP: at first, he mentions that this is a unique for the studio type of game, because it was challenging in the development stage and thus, contained many bugs, absence of typical for the series

NPCs and other problems. Then, Todd Howard explains how the users have contributed to the game evolution. Yet, the final position about the uniqueness of Fallout 76 is missing from the speech. However, this point can be disregarded.

Further, PREP-action framework can be applied. The main difference is in action-required approach. This means that instead of making a statement, an act is requested. To prove it, The Elder Scrolls Blades (a video game) can be considered (Bethesda 2019). Craig Lafferty and Matt Carofano (game developers) ask the audience to download the game for mobile devices. Next, they list a number of updates and new features to motivate the audience to execute the action. Besides, when taking into account the AIDA-model, their call to action is set clearly and they propose various means of testing the product: downloading from the AppStore or GooglePlay, testing in Bethesda's or Nintendo's booths. In the end, they finish the presentation with repeating the persuasion of downloading the game.

A similar method is PCS that stands for admitting a problem, explaining the cause and the solution. This typology is rarely used due to the fact that companies focus on the future prospects rather than on past accomplishments or failures. Nonetheless, it can be beneficial to overall brand reputation. The same case with Todd Howard who acknowledges some troubles of the studio but has softened the negative impact with jokes (Bethesda 2019). Even though PCS approach was not implemented, the crowd enthusiastically welcomed the realization of the studio mistakes (Bethesda 2019). A key for this may be a presentation of company's failures in a humorous manner.

Apart from the main contents, some supplemental recommendations can be envisaged. The message should be formed in own and rather simple, understandable for the mass words (Swallow & Khan-Panni 2004). The usage of memorable phrases and slogans promote the presentation's perception and memorization. Moreover, the intention should be directed towards influencing message spreaders like inveterate gamers and journalists. The entertaining sector on the Internet is able to compete nowadays with the habitual TV and radio. Various streaming platforms gather millions of people who follow their favourite streamer. Besides, content creators, including guides, tips, reviews; and let's players are influential

transmitters with their own loyal fan base. Different approaches are required, however in perspective, influencers can assist the creation of brand's positive image among followers (Smith 2018). Last but not least, it is always more preferable to underpromise and later surpass consumers' expectations. Moreover, this can significantly help the developers in the developing process. As Jason Schreier (2017) reflects thoughts of one developer– overpromising may lead to crunches and delays of the release dates which negatively affects the brand reputation.

From the psychological point of view, one's attitude towards a product can be changed by persuasion through the message. The structure of the message should naturally contain powerful arguments and logic. After decoding, the received information is compared with already possessed knowledge. (Visser & Cooper 2003, p. 211.)

A good case is Fallout 76 that was not very successful at its launch. At E3, representatives introduce multiple benefits like adding NPCs, quests, and typical for the series dialogue tree (Bethesda 2019). The crowd positively reacts since, as it can be assumed, the comparison with the original product proceeded. In other situations, where there is not enough time or previously received knowledge, persuasive arguments may not be seen as fertile (Visser & Cooper 2003, p. 212).

### **5.1.3 Channel**

A channel constitutes the environment and the mean, wherein or with which help the message is delivered to the receiver. Hearing and seeing are the main methods of getting the information from the usual and common for an individual watching online or attending any conference. They tightly interfere with the verbal and nonverbal communications accordingly. Touching, i.e. playing demo versions of the game, is excluded from the thesis due to the scope of the work. Moreover, tasting and smelling are not also applicable as the product is not a physical object and the technology nowadays is not able to provide this experience to users.

Apart from traditional forms, there are also other tools of message spreading in the modern world. The most relevant of them are trailers displayed on large screens at conferences and online streaming platforms like Twitch and YouTube.

According to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Trafton 2014), the study concluded that it takes a brain less than a second to identify and process an image. Every moment we consume countless amount of data, analyse and assimilate it. This brings up a very significant thought that the communication is a prompt process.

#### **5.1.4 Receiver**

As it was already argued, the receiver is under the influence of the same aspect as the initial sender is. Though in addressee's case, these facets are more comprehensive since the framework includes both parties. It is vital for the desirable conversation that the ability of the source to send a clear signal in visual and oral form is enabled, as well as the ability of the listener to obtain and perceive it in a right manner. Again, the communication skill of the recipient depends on the same points that are parsed in chapter 5.1.1. Despite being on opposite sides at the conferences, Berlo's model assumes that the way how the acceptor thinks and what he or she believes should be similar to the sender's beliefs and cognition. It may look difficult, however, the commonalities between each side, namely interest and background in the video game industry, remain.

Every human being possesses his own thinking patterns developed under an unrepeatable set of circumstances. Hence, the person tends to decode the message in own unique manner. The tip could be to encode the idea as simple and entertaining as possible, thus catching the attention of the receivers and minimizing risks of ruining or damaging the communication.

#### **5.1.5 Criticism of the model**

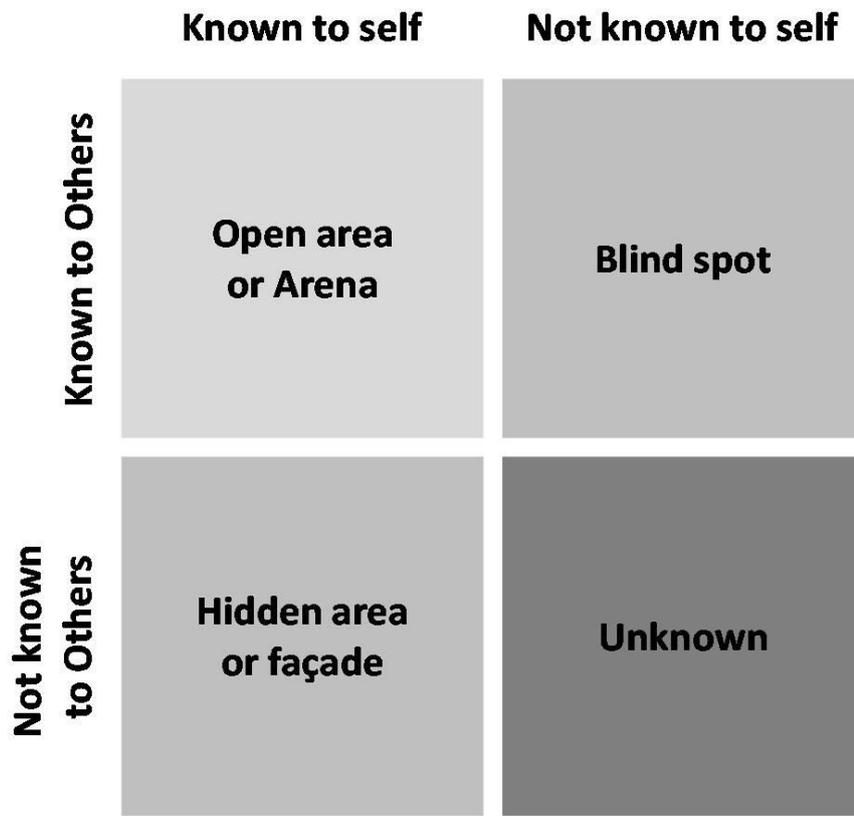
One of the drawbacks of this model is the exception of the noise from the scheme. This concept can be divided into several categories based on the cause or the origin. The most basic is physical noise when the distraction is triggered by fuss and hype, for example when the crowd keeps on screaming or applauding. This is a notable aspect in Bethesda 2019 E3 conference. The audience severely interferes the presentation flow and distracts speakers (Bethesda 2019). In addition, bright lights, loud music and other external environmental objects are allocated to this type. Semantic noise indicates the unnecessary usage of professional

lexis and jargon, which can interfere the perception of the message by the receiver who does not possess the same profound knowledge. Physiological noise refers to inner stimuluses like a headache, a hunger, biases, stereotypes, emotions, and others. (Nordquist 2019.)

Although constant crowd's noise interferes the presentation process, moderate positive reactions more frequently motivate and encourage speakers. The more a person gets to present a project, the more stress resistance he or she becomes. Nevertheless, even acknowledged professionals are human-beings and are influenced by emotions and feelings. Considering the showcases example, the audience constantly changes and new unfamiliar to the presented project individuals arrive to the booth. That leads to the point that every single presentation must be perfect which may seem to be relatively overwhelming. (Urquhart 2019.)

Another negative limitation of Berlo's communication model consists in inability to get feedback from the receiver due to the linear communication process. The resolution is that there is no actual need for the interactional or transactional model when presenting at conferences. Nonetheless, speakers always have a possibility to encourage the audience to share their experience through multiple channels, such as owned and earned channels like Twitter, official webpages, etc. Craig Lafferty and Matt Carofano, for instance, ask several times the audience to share its feedback (Bethesda 2019).

## 5.2 Johari window



# The Johari Window Model

Figure 6. The Johari Window Model (Communication Theory 2013)

Johari window model (Figure 6) shows how the knowledge from different areas is being developed during the communication process. It basically introduces how the awareness transforms into knowing and what elements remain unknown to every party of the communication.

The Open area corresponds to the knowledge possessed by both parties, meaning by the speaker and by the audience. As a rule, it cannot be very large at the beginning and it includes such aspects as a presenter's name, a represented company name, one's previous merits, the history, etc. Presenter's outfit, gait, opening position and gestures (nonverbal communication) are allocated to the same square. Whilst the process of presenting, this area tends to increase and, thus, to reduce the area of unawareness of viewers.

The blind spot refers to the unknown to the presenter facets that the audience and its every unit in particular feel or experience. An individual may have had some issues with a company like a low quality of an antecedent game, firm's poor support system, and so forth. Furthermore, one's personal preferences might also affect mutual communication. A gamer may be aware in which genre a developing studio usually publishes its games (e.g. Rockstar Games (a studio) and action games). If this type of product is beyond subject's interest, there is a huge chance that the message would not be received and will be ignored. The same approach could be applied to one's platform preferences. Considering the console wars and enmity between consoles and PCs, it is hard to predict the attitude of a single entity towards gaming platforms. This could interfere the communication to a certain degree. Broad platforms coverage of an announced project (e.g. title will be released on PC, Xbox, PlayStation, etc.) decreases the possibility of the message neglect.

The hidden area means what the presenter is aware of, but the public does not even realise. To this extent, intimate fears of the speaker, company's uncertainty in the product success and perception of the product by the audience (for instance, if the game is developed in a new for a team genre), crunches that a studio had to face in order to prepare the trailer for the convention are borne in mind. Jason Schreier (2017, p. 122) cited Josh Mosqueira, a game director, when Blizzard Entertainment was about to introduce Diablo III's Reaper of Souls to the world back in 2013: "*You could feel that they [the audience] almost were expecting to be disappointed*". These and other arguments influence the performer's confidence but typically remain unseen for the crowd.

The unknown square is a spot that no one can realize in the communication process. This means for developers and publishers, especially before the actual presentation, it is incomprehensible whether the product will be accepted by consumers, in what amounts will it be sold, how many bugs it will contain in the gold master, what the evaluated by gamers and critics score for the game will be. Even after the announcing and partly receiving users' feedback, this sector still is not completely eliminated unless the actual release of a product.

### 5.3 Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication, also known as the body language, plays a significant role in the conversation process, whether it is linear or interactional one. Although there is no precise confirmation how many percent nonverbal communication occupies, it is a fact that this type of transmission is a crucial one. It is tightly connected to the information receiving channels. While verbal communication relies on a message, a voice pitch and a speech style, nonverbal communication is perceived mainly through eyes, consequently, diverse aspects are taken into account. Among them, there are facial expression, eye contact, posture, gestures, clothing and artefacts, and others. (Thompson 2011, p. 103.)

Eye contact is an important proposition to be considered because it affects the message reception to a large extent. As Swallow and Khan-Panni (2004) suggest, it is better to address to the individuals and keep eye contact with an individual for a short period of time. A decent example is Crystal Dynamics studio head Scot Amos (Square Enix 2019). By looking at a person for two or three seconds, he creates the connection between him and that specific spectator what leads to establishing involvement and trust. Nevertheless, it is crucial to bear in mind online audience that observes the conference on the Internet. Yet, folded in front arms of Scot Amos may signal about the closed posture and about the insecurity of the speaker. The solution could be keeping the arms separated and palms facing out as Tom Mustaine from Bethesda's conference does (Bethesda 2019).

Almost all the presenters utilize conversational gestures that do not mean anything particular, but which accompany the speech. In addition, the most applicable type is motor movements that are repeated automatically without any intent to stress important piece of information (Krauss et al. 2001, pp. 5-6). According to Science of People (n.d.), we employ gestures substantially unconsciously and they could help to get the audience to listen to you. The advice is to keep the hands in a box in front of the presenter, close to the body and use the gesticulation only to point some crucial information in the presentation (Science of People n.d.). Therefore, the webpage recommends using "listing" gestures as Rahni Tucker from Ninja Theory employs (Microsoft 2019). Hand movements of Keanu

Reeves and Tim Schafer (a developer) (Microsoft 2019) when the speakers enter the stage, facilitate the creation of a desirable first impression and the attention gaining. The actor accompanies his speech with assertive gesture, which indicates his involvement into the project and his aspiration to tease the public by sharing some insides. Ultimately, Keanu Reeves masterfully ends the presentation by asking whether the audience wants to find out the release date and by transferring their minds to the screen by pointing towards it (Microsoft 2019).

Clothes and artefacts also demonstrate presenter's attitudes, beliefs, emotions and so forth (LearnVest 2012). When watching E3 2019, it stands out that most of the speakers wear "classic" everyday outfits: usually, it is gloomy colour shirt or jacket and inconspicuous trousers. Dinka Bakaba from Arkane Lyon is a somewhat antipode. His yellow jacket contrasts on a black shirt and jeans and draws the attention by differing from other performers (Bethesda 2019). Almost no one but Crystal Dynamics utilize the clothes as a tool for evoking emotions and juxtaposing a presenter with a game (Square Enix 2019).

Feargus Urquhart points out that clothes choice is determined based on how camera transmits the picture. In addition, conference nature is an impactful ground for the outfit style. Furthermore, referring to game industry classics like Pacman, Fallout, or Need for Speed (popular video games) may adversely affect your brand differentiation as some of the titles are still being produced. A strong correlation between a presenter's company and a printed on a shirt image must be present. Besides, it is only applicable in case a speaker has personal positive attitudes towards an indicated game and wants to pay some respect to a particular series. (Urquhart 2019.)

Neil Thompson (2011) notes that nonverbal communication is culture-based and, therefore, individuals tend to decode the body language the way they were taught before and got used to. Besides, more profound studies on this topic must be implemented.

#### **5.4 Swearing**

Gabrielle Reed (2017) analyses in *When is Cursing Appropriate During a Presentation?* contexts when using obscene expressions could be appropriate. In the

first case, a person has created a specific scenic image with the application of indecent language (Holman 2011; Reed 2017). Another scenario is aimed at stressing a particular piece of information and at impacting public's reception of a speaker (Reed 2017). Immediate attention is drawn towards a presentation and a presenter. Tom Mustaine after introducing battle royale mode swears, thereby he emphasizes the novelty of the product and expresses his joy of launching it (Bethesda 2019). Zach Holman (2011) claims that humans are emotion-driven, and that cussing is one of the most powerful and concise tools for eliciting feelings in an individual.

Jeremy Dean describes a conducted by Scherer and Sagarin in 2006 experiment where three groups of people were asked to listen to the same statement with the only difference in obscene language usage. In the first scenario, indecent word was not used at all. During the second and third, the swearword was introduced either in the beginning or in the end of the sentence. The result was that two groups with exposed profanity turned out to be more influenced by the proposition and meanwhile the orator's credibility was not questioned. Jeremy Deans believes that obscenity in right amounts benefits the speech and the message is perceived as a more personal one. (Dean n.d.a.)

Scott Hanselman (2011) opposes the necessity and appropriateness of profanity usage. Adam Pash (2011) agrees with this declaration to a certain extent. Obscene language may negatively affect a recipient. Although it is required to be older than 16 years for attending E3 personally (E3 Expo n.d.a), children still may observe the conference online. Swearing should be utilized within the contextual and authentic framework, at a right place and in a right manner (Urquhart 2019). Yet, its usage could be avoided entirely (Urquhart 2019). Zach Holman (2011) believes that profanity may lead to losing interest or acceptance by several or multiple people in the audience, however, it considerably supports of the creation tighter connection between a brand or a speaker and their core customers. A presenter must decide whether to implement obscene words into the speech, or not.

## 5.5 Face of a game concept and celebrities

Ivna Reic (2017, p. 224) transmits Rojek's (2001) ideas that the celebrity concept is built upon social striving to humanise desires. Among desires, a craving for a certain, often luxurious lifestyle, a want for possessing some personality or physical traits and others urges could be allocated (Kahle & Riley 2004, p. 105; Reic 2017, p. 224). From psychological perspective, Wilcox and Cameron (2007) have identified various motives for celebrity notion emergence: a desire to worship a hero, a desire of belonging to the society (e.g. fan base), a need for excitement (Reic 2017, p. 224). In the book (Reic 2017, p. 225), three credibility sources, according to Wilcox et al. (2015) are introduced: a notable figure is a professional in the area, has a charismatic personality and/or is sincere about represented product. Keanu Reeves, apart from being a charismatic actor, possesses insights about *Cyberpunk 2077* (a video game) and truly believes in it. Thus, he combines all the three origins of authority and likelihood.

Three categories distinguished by Rojek (2001) are ascribed, achieved or attributed celebrities (Reic 2017, p. 224). Achieved celebrities refer to figures that have accomplished great things or have won plenty rewards. At E3 2016, Snoop Dogg (a rapper) was playing *Battlefield 1* along with other famous people. More youthful-oriented heroes like streamers or Youtubers like Jacksepticeye can be also put into this section. Despite being an acknowledged and gifted actor, Keanu Reeves is meant to be more an attributed celebrity since the media and the Internet worship him constantly. Although the video game industry wields a number of notable individuals, celebrities from other sectors, for instant movies, could beneficially contribute to the development and acknowledgement of the industry.

While a celebrity could increase brand awareness, trust and other aspect of businesses, Wilcox et al. (2015) debate that the amount of product that a star can promote may confuse customers (Reic 2017, p. 225). Besides, Feargus Urquhart (2019) assumes that even in-game assets celebrities are not a primal motive for acquisition and that they be perceived more as a worthy feature. Lynn Kahle and Chris Riley (2004, p. 109) supplement the point in potential risks of celebrities. They debate that there is always chance that the star's perception by public can drastically change what would lead to harming outcomes for the business.

However, as it was claimed by Deborah Swallow and Phillip Khan-Panni (2004)– people prefer to purchase from people. This statement is supported by Feargus Urquhart (2019) who confirms that buyers like the interaction with representatives and typically ask plenty questions during showcases at events. The question is what effects does personal presenting of a game has on people’s minds and memory?

Classical conditioning could add additional advantageous value to the announced title. The concept was firstly discovered by Ivan Pavlov and it represents a mean of behavioural change through associations and stimuluses of diverse origins. (Cherry 2019.)

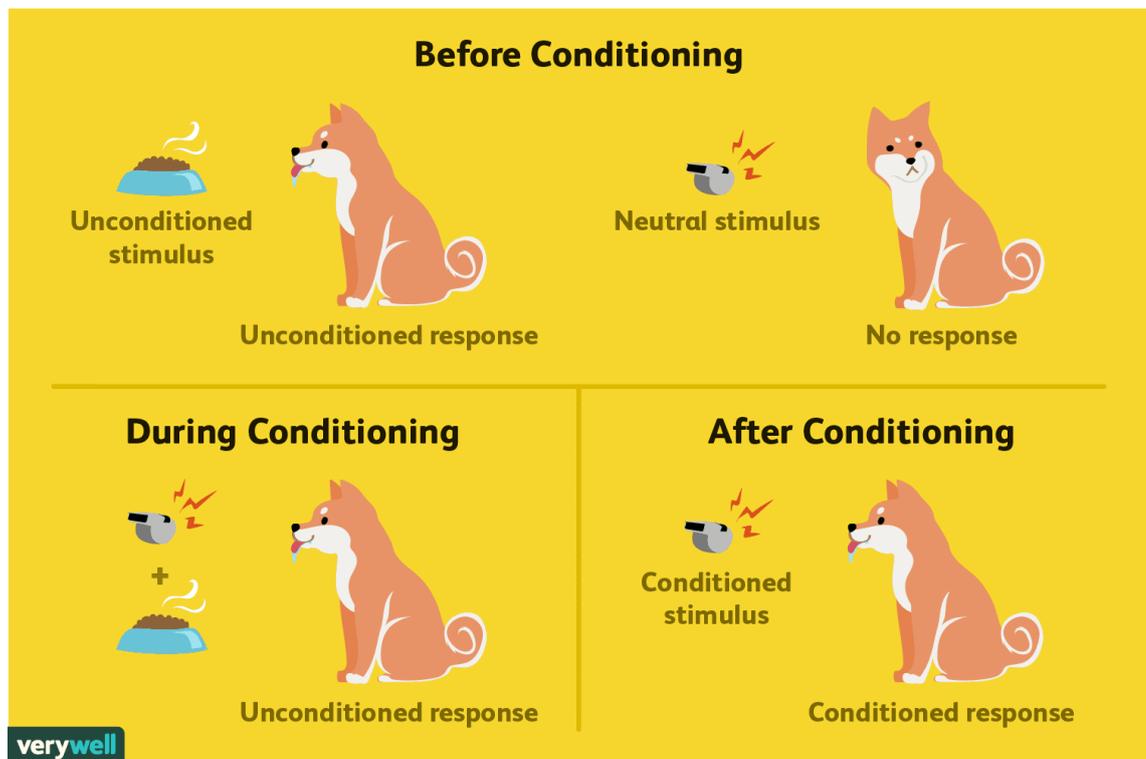


Figure 7. Classical Conditioning (Seong 2019)

In the before conditioning stage, there is an unconditioned response towards unconditioned stimulus (Figure 7). A gamer may admire a person, for example, Keanu Reeves who is beloved on the Internet. This may be caused by various reasons like enjoying movies, memes featuring this persona, etc. Neutral stimulus in that case is Cyberpunk 2077. When introduced to public at E3, Reeves created a hype around the new project (Microsoft 2019). The audience already knew about his achievements and personality, which is caused by mere exposure

and attributed celebrity concept. During conditioning, the object creates linkages between neutral and unconditioned stimulus and develops behavioural patterns (Figure 7). After conditioning is proceeded, the gamer elaborates positive attitudes towards originally neutral stimulus that has shifted to conditioned one. This implies that the individual is more predisposed to like the game because it is now associated with unconditioned stimulus such as Keanu Reeves. By the end of the process, the project will be linked to the star and therefor, to his or her status and image. In other world, a presenter or an actor becomes a “Face of a game”. Yet, this change requires a long period of time, during which an association is being created. This is why there is a need for continuous exhibiting of a person and a project jointly for bettering the connection between these two components. Due to a limited time span, only well-known and recognized celebrity could become a ground for the best outcomes.

In addition, it is vital to select a right person to introduce a project with whom it will be further associated. As it was described in chapter 5.1.1, a person may adversely affect the way how the public perceives that speaker and the represented studio. For instance, a recipient may elaborate negative association based on language skills. An individual may make the link between one’s inability to clearly broadcast the message to the assumption that the spokesman is unable to develop decent games. Nonetheless, a research on this topic must be implemented in order to detect the correlation or its absence.

To conclude, a face of the game can be described as a person who represents the project and whom the title will be associated with after the classical conditioning is proceeded.

In a small research among author’s friends and acquaintances, all the ten participants somewhat related to the industry named Cyberpunk 2077 as one of the associations to Keanu Reeves. The other responses were his movies, memes and a Fortnite skin (a customized in-game look, see Appendix 2). Although a more thorough study has to be conducted regarding this concept, the evidence proofs a presence and significance of classical conditioning. Thus, a face of a game is a vital aspect when it comes to personal presenting or announcing a project.

## 5.6 Information perception

In the work named *Social Inference and Social Memory: The Interplay Between Systems* by Sherman et al. (2003), the separation between individual, group and self perception of the information (impression-set or memory-set), storage and later information applying are reviewed. The authors debate that framing effect types directly influence the mean we consume the data and that framing effect impacts the value that the data obtains (Sherman et al. 2003, p. 70). The most known example is the statement about the glass, which is either half empty, or half full. Sherman et al. distinguish the encoded information as a gain or loss centric; or focusing on gains of performing an action versus losses from not performing the same action (Sherman et al. 2003, p. 70). Basically, people who chronically frame events, i.e. focusing more on benefits rather than on deprivation, tend to better recall events in future (Sherman et al. 2003, p. 70). New added features can serve as a good impression-set perception that strives to have a higher recall ratio. Besides, these new options can trigger in a person a desire for acquisition as he or she would want to avoid losses from not playing the game. For instance, a person may start to wish to play the game as one's favourite celebrity is revealed as an in-game character. Moreover, linguistic facet is a decent mean to help remind some moments from the recently exposed trailer, but proper context should be chosen (Sherman et al. 2003, p. 71). Matt Firor (a developer) who presents *The Elder Scrolls Online: Elsweyr* after the video announcement asks the viewers whether they recognize a return of a very famous hero in the game world (Bethesda 2019). This affect can be stored in the memory and later be utilized when decision-making process will be implemented.

Priming effect is a vital stage of memory-based judgement (Sherman et al. 2003, p. 75). This notion intends to evoke consumer's memories and perhaps emotions or feelings about the product. A return of the in-game character can be better recalled after the world setting is rehearsed shortly before its comeback announcement rather than after an unrelated to the project trailer. Put simply, the rehearsal of the game's story and lore significantly eases the recall of the personage's re-entry to the title. Then, the authors debate that there is a great need in repeated advertisement after the title was introduced to the prospect acquirers,

for example on YouTube, banners or other channels of promotion. Thus, their memory fragments and possibly even emotions would be remembered, what would help in decision making.

## **5.7 Attitudes**

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), attitude towards a particular object can be expressed as *the sum of the expected value of the attributes of the object* in terms of profitable gains (Fazio & Olson 2003, p. 141). Therefore, attitude governs one's beliefs, emotions and/or behaviour (Fazio & Olson 2003, p. 140). A gamer who has a positive attitude towards RPG genre may consider featured in revealed within the conference framework RPG title as the best announcement at the event (belief); he or she may have goosebumps when watching RPG trailers (physical response flowing into emotions and feelings) and/or that individual may visit developer's booth to try the demo of the game (behaviour). Based on works of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and Fazio and Olson (2003, p. 141), attitudes are based on personal beliefs, and after an impact (at video game conferences, this could be trailers, presentations, demos, so forth), attitude could affect the initial beliefs. This means that an individual could change an opinion after convincing message in the trailer, which would help later in decision-making processes.

Moreover, there might be cases of ambivalent state of a person. Ambivalent attitude means that an individual has either both positive and negative position towards a product at the same time, or does not have any attitude at all (Fazio & Olson 2003, p. 144). The first scenario may be more challenging for companies to be dealing with. A gamer, for instance, may like a new project but has a critical approach to a developer. Then, impacting his or her attitude would require more resources. A solution could be persuasive marketing like open beta testing. However, a person may block the communication with an unlovable studio and would not be interested in joining beta testing.

## 5.8 Attitude change and decision-making processes

As it was already mentioned by Feargus, certain type of trailers, especially the revealing ones, are created in order to spread the message and to transmit feelings of playing a game (Urquhart 2019). In their work, Russell Fazio and Michael Olson (2003, pp.139-160) refer to Hull (1951) and Thorndike (1932) and state that positive reaction leads to higher response rate and vice versa. This could contribute to project's affection, studio reputation and higher ratio of event returning of an individual in the future. Another crucial psychological aspect is a mere exposure that can be utilized as a mean of person's attitude change (Visser & Cooper 2003, p. 217). This concept implies frequent revealing and exhibiting of the same product, thus, increasing the chance of shifting one's relationship towards the project into a more positive response. Basically, the more times a person witnesses a project, the higher chances of position shifting towards a more positive attitude there is. This concept could be utilized jointly with classical conditioning in order to redouble benefits from this action.

Jeremy Dean (n.d.b) reflects in his article ideas described by Nicole Mayer and Zakary Tormala in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* (2010). Two types of cognition are distinguished: cognitively and affectively think approaches. The first one represents people who typically consider and utilize words *in terms of thoughts*, i.e. "I think", "this is useful/ useless", "this is profitable". The second category operates feeling-grounded vocabulary like "I feel", "this is pleasant/ disagreeable". The persuasive message that is supposed to change or trigger their attitudes should be designed in accordance with the person's typology. (Dean n.d.b.)

The question arises: how to identify whether a person is a "thinker" or a "feeler"? In case of showcases to journalists, a studio representative may know the media ambassadors and adjust to the type of their personalities. Dean (n.d.b) proposes that women tend to be emotion-driven, while men rely more on facts. Anna Rinko (2015) likewise reinforces this statement of women scoring higher in emotion and engagement responses than men underpinning this with her study about the psychology of movie trailers. However, it was already explained that men attend conferences and often play games due to desire for experiencing stories and eliciting

emotions. That is why a feeling-based approach is recommended to be implemented. As an example, Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order can be reviewed (Microsoft 2019). The trailer provokes viewers to become a Jedi, what is many people's childhoods dream since the Lucas' universe has raised many generations (BBC 2016). The digital promotional content encourages the audience to imagine feelings of being one of the most worshiped heroes within Star Wars environment. Further, the main protagonist vociferously proclaims: "*Hope is not yet lost*" (Microsoft 2019). This statement significantly contributes to emotions evoking, further positive game perception and decision-making.

*Information accessible in memory has greater influence on inferences and judgments* (Sherman et al. 2003, p. 80). Fazio and Olson (2003, p. 148) debate as well that the more accessible attitudes are, the prompter decision-making processes happen. A person that has watched last year's conference or has skimmed through own game library strives to quicker connect references and make decisions during trailer watching. If announced setting and lore remind an individual of a good likable project, the chance of quick decision increases. The rehearsal of attitudes affects the quality of adopted decisions (Fazio & Olson 2003, p. 148). *Accessible attitudes have the tendency to color one's perceptions and decrease the likelihood of noticing changes in the objects* (Fazio & Olson 2003, p. 149.)

However, the perception still depends on the surroundings, in which the information is received. Sherman et al. (2003) discern two manners of obtaining and utilizing the information: online and memory-based. The first mode is identified as a prompt individually assessment and judgement of the acquired data (Sherman et al. 2003, p. 74). This means that the decision is made in a quick manner without subsequent memory recall. In contrast, group perception affects the memory with further triggering of memory-based judgement. Yet, the stronger group is united like intimacy level (e.g. families, friends) or task-oriented level (colleagues, teams) groups, the more chance of individual type perception there is. Although attendees cannot be fully allocated to the intimacy group, they may be put in between of those two categories and share the reception combines from two

means. Automatically, online viewers are meant to obtain information as individuals. Therewith, the self perception type can be roughly put along with individual one. (Sherman et al. 2003, p. 74.)

Although attitudes, in particular assessable ones, often impact decision-making, it may not be always the case. The social situations make high self-monitors behave or build relationship towards a product in a certain way (Fazio & Olson 2003, p. 150). If it is common to negatively perceive a particular brand or a certain game genre for any reasons, high self-monitors would make a judgement based on social environment's positions rather than on his or her beliefs. Besides, Ajzen's perceived behavioural control (1991) may interfere one's behaviour and behaviour intentions (Fazio & Olson 2003, p. 151). In case a person is limited in monetary aspect or has no one to play co-operative games with, he or she is less likely to purchase this type of games later.

## **6 Interview with Feargus Urquhart**

The findings from the interview are woven into the theoretical framework for the comparison of scientific knowledge to industry professional's insights. This chapter's objective is to compile the respondent's answers.

### **6.1 Obsidian Entertainment**

Obsidian Entertainment presented its latest, at the time of this thesis writing, game *The Outer Worlds* at E3 2019. The developer has been operating since 2003, but some of the former Black Isle Studios' employees including Feargus Urquhart possess much larger experience. The studio's project list appears to be impressive from the gamer point of view: *Pillars of Eternity*, *Armored Warfare*, *Fallout: New Vegas*, *Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic II: The Sith Lords*, *South Park: Stick of Truth* and other titles (Obsidian Entertainment n.d.). Additionally, *The Outer Worlds* was released on 25<sup>th</sup> of October and scored well, namely 82 as critics' review and it got 7.6 out of 10 in users' opinion (Metacritic n.d.).

## **6.2 Interview process**

The interview was conducted with Obsidian Entertainment's studio head Feargus Urquhart in Skype on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019. The company was contacted in September via e-mail. Questions were designed according to studied theoretical concepts, so that the notions would be confirmed or disproved from the professional point of view. Appendix 1 provides a rough outlook on discussed topics. With the permission from Feargus Urquhart, a special application was utilized in order to record the interview for later analysis. After the transcribing the data, the interview record was erased from any source of storage. The interview lasted approximately 53 minutes.

## **6.3 Video game conferences outlook**

Feargus Urquhart claims that conferences are meant to bring together developers and new releases within single event framework, thus, creating a festive atmosphere for gamers and industry professionals. Vacation time and the end of the school year are one of the main reasons explaining the seasonality of the realm. Although he agrees that fiscal motives are also believed to be seasonal factor's drivers, he doubts that they were considered to be the core whilst the establishment of the sector. Furthermore, video game events legitimize in a certain way the field and help to create awareness of the issue for not belonging to this sphere of economy people. Feargus Urquhart assumes that the congresses like E3 and Gamescom will become even more consumer-oriented in the future.

As major motives for attending conferences, Feargus Urquhart notes the desires of uniting with the community that shares one's values, discovering new titles and stories and conversing with industry professionals.

## **6.4 Trailers outlook**

Feargus Urquhart explains that trailers, when being created, have different origins. For example, a promotional content can be distinguished as developed in-house, by a publisher or with a help of a specializing in marketing company. Disregard its origin, trailers contribute to developing processes by identifying what

has been already executed in the project and ensuring a unified vision for the team.

Trailers can be divided into several categories concerning their aims: revealing, cinematic or demonstrating gameplay and story in more details. Generally, the purpose of the video clips is to transmit the feeling of a game and show what experiences gamers can receive whilst playing it.

## **6.5 Communication outlook**

In Feargus' opinion, crowd's yells in adequate amounts motivate speakers. Besides, it was stated by the studio head that the more a person gets to present, the more professional in presenting he or she becomes. Yet when considering showcases in front of constantly changing journalists, every presentation is vital, and it must be performed qualitatively every single time. Each representative is a human-being, thereby is susceptible to emotions and can feel stressed about introducing demos and trailers to the audience.

Clothes choice is typically justified by the manner how a camera transmits picture, as well as by event's origin— whether it is a consumer-oriented conference, a congress for professionals, etc. Additionally, referring to industry's classics like Pac-Man should be done from the heart and it should be thoroughly considered as referenced titles or companies may still be operating on the market. Swearing can be applicable in the right situation and within suitable context. However, Feargus Urquhart thinks that the profanity could be avoided completely.

Even as in-game characters, celebrities, according to the studio head, are not related to key motives for game acquisition. Moreover, stars' widespread usage in commercial purposes decreases their trustworthiness.

## **6.6 Interview reliability and validity**

Some other findings are not included due to the thesis structure and confidential reasons. Although Feargus Urquhart is an acknowledged industry professional, the stated ideas represent only his and Obsidian Entertainment's viewpoint. Moreover, interviewee's opinion may remain concealed on specific topics due to personal basis and one's beliefs may change over the time. The possibility to

record and transcribe the interview has contributed to the more deepened understanding of words, thereby assuring that no thought was missed due to possible translation errors.

For a more comprehensive analysis of the theme, more interviews with industry professionals like developers, studio heads, journalists are needed and recommended.

## **7 Further research**

Due to a limited framework of the paper justified by bachelor's degree of the study, further research on topic is needed and highly recommended. Since the author is specializing in marketing, a more profound examination of psychological, soundtracks and colour perception notions is advised. Besides, utilization of peer-reviewed literature is required for obtaining reliable and trustworthy knowledge concerning the outline topics. For the sake of completeness, qualitative research with other industry professionals and journalists is required. Moreover, a quantitative research from the consumer point of view must be implemented in order to review the issues from various viewpoints. A correlation between a face of a game and its perception must be found out with framing effect usage and vice versa. In addition, offline event activities like showcases and panel sessions should be included. Furthermore, legal aspects, marketing communication, viral marketing and sponsorship should be investigated as well.

Considering much larger concepts, consumer behaviour and its impact should be investigated, especially in terms of game genre. Other events like Gamescom, markets with no or limited access to the Internet and, as a consequence, to online observance of video game conferences like E3 and Gamescom must be carried out.

## **8 Discussion**

The paper's purpose was to study the topic from various perspectives and to answer two questions: how do video game industry shape the gaming industry and how consumer behaviour is influenced within conferences framework? Although

further research is required and highly recommended for a more comprehensive picture, multiple findings and insights from the thesis are introduced to provide the relevant knowledge for game developing companies, publishers and marketing teams. The data was collected from numerous literature sources and by conducting the interview with Obsidian Entertainment studio head Feargus Urquhart.

The answer to the first issue was given by Feargus Urquhart (2019) and by Jason Schreier (2017). Video game conferences help to create awareness of the industry and bring three parties together, namely businesses, gamers and the media. In addition, the motivation behind attending such events, as well as event marketing concept were described by Feargus Urquhart (2019), Ivna Reic (2017) and other supplementary authors. Consumers' needs have shifted in the last decades and nowadays a primary reason for visiting or observing consumer-oriented conferences by players is the desire to experience new stories and the desire to feel emotions, also known as hedonic motivation. In addition to auxiliary points such as panel sessions, demo showcases, celebrity witnessing, the need to be an acknowledged member of the society is present are drivers of one's behaviour. The media correspondingly seeks to increase its audience coverage by reporting about industry novelties and by offering exclusive material available only for journalists like special showcases. Although this issues about demos was not included into the paper's structure, demo versions are still a significant motive for attending the event. Their purpose, in contrast to cinematic and revealing trailers, is to demonstrate the actual gameplay of the title, thus, adjusting prospect customers' expectations to developed product's real attributes (Segal n.d.). Developers see opportunities in enhancing brand awareness and later possible sales growth by impacting customer's attitudes and shifting them into positive ones towards their products.

The second question reveals how the consumer behaviours can be changed during these events. Initially, a strong persuasive message must be encoded in trailers and, if applicable, in personal communication. The message is supposed to reflect feelings of acquiring and playing the game and to transmit game's core ideas. It must elicit emotions and a desire to experience title's story. Swearing can be utilized in order to stress vital pieces of information and instantly grab

attention of the audience. However, it is necessary to remember that there should be an appropriate place and situation for profanity usage. In trailers, soundtracks and colours play a significant role in terms how people develop attitudes towards products. Despite a unified way to successfully presenting cannot be allocated, different categories of perception and their approaches are considered. Cool-colour recipients tend to control emotions and be selective in the response to stimuli. In contrast, warm-colour perceivers are open to stimuli and make decisions faster. This type of people is also predisposed to physical activity when exposed to warn colours. This means that there is a chance of higher ratio towards attending developer's booth or information search for online viewers after trailer viewing. Additionally, colours are a powerful tool in branding as they unconsciously evoke emotions and transmit the feeling of a game. They help to distinguish a product among competitors and help people to make decisions.

Personal communication underlies the reception of a game by the public. A face of a game (e.g. studio head, celebrity and so on) is an important aspect that when treated properly, greatly contributes to the image of a project. Continuous revealing of the same representative along with the title creates linkages in purchasers' minds and make them associate that product to the best qualities of the representing person. Besides, nonverbal communication must be taken into account. Clothes choice, positioning, gestures and other facets have an impact on the acceptance of a speaker by viewers. From the obtained results, one right manner for presenting and nonverbal communication cannot be distinguished as companies and faces must determine on their own what is the appropriate approach to every single event. Some may deem it is improper to swear or to wear a vivid outfit on stage, while the others have the opposite vision on these aspects.

Attitude is measured *the sum of expected value of attributes of the object* (Fazio & Olson 2003, p. 141). Attitudes govern but not always one's beliefs, emotions and/or behaviour. Positive reactions increase chances of higher response rates and recalling of the event in future. Mere exposure, i.e. continuous rehearsal exhibiting, accompanied by classical conditioning likewise increase chances of product affection by the mass. Ambivalent state is supposed to be shifted by more

substantial investments of efforts like persuasion, offering beta testing, etc. Especially biased ambivalent state, implying that a person likes and dislikes the product at the same time, requires these types of contribution.

Thoroughly designed framing effect assists judgements processes as people focus often on positive aspects like new features or characters. They would seek to avoid losses from not acquiring or playing the product, e.g. avoiding spoilers, inability to discuss with friends, etc. Linguistic tools can serve better recalling of events what later supports in decision-making. Persuasive language in terms of feelings should be utilized as it was concluded that emotions-based approach is vital in the industry scope. Priming effect is helpful in memory recalling, too. Accessible information in memories stimulate prompt decisions and increase their quality. Online information perception represents quick decision-making and fixing the attitudes with low likelihood of memory recall.

Speaking about the reliability and validity of the research in general, it is necessary to remember a qualitative research method. Thus, no statistical procedures are implemented, which significantly hinders the repetition of the study with the same results. However, the reproduction of the paper is possible based on described context-specific settings, e.g. limitations, examined concepts, the research path, the literature and the interview with Feargus Urquhart. To ensure unbiased attitude towards the findings, ideas from multiple authors in various sources such as articles, journals and books were extracted. The conclusion is drawn in accordance with obtained from different origins data, i.e. literature and interview. A reliability and validity of Internet sources is questionable, therefore a more professional and careful approach to literature is required in further studies. Besides, the generalization of the results is not applicable due to variety of studied concepts and difference in companies' approaches towards the same issue. (Cypress B. 2017; Shuttleworth n.d.)

## **9 Conclusion**

The thesis conducted a basic research of the video game conferences industry and studied multiple aspects of the sector. The main findings concern presentation components and their affects on purchasers' minds. One of the main results

is that there is no unified and correct manner of how to reveal a project with the desired outcomes and that businesses need to adjust the examined theory to their vision, positioning and needs. People in their nature are very unique and each of them possesses an individual buying behaviour and mentality. However, the work also provides some insights on general and applicable to the mass concepts like colour perception, soundtracks, personal and nonverbal communications and so forth. In general, several requirements to properly influence buyers' decisions are required, e.g. the awareness of one's personality, needs and motives, the understanding the importance of personal communication, showcases and psychological notions.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 Interview Questions

#### Part 1: Consumer-oriented video game conferences

1. What is your attitude towards consumer-oriented video game conferences?
2. Are conferences a distraction from developing conferences?
3. Do video game conferences contribute to the gaming industry? If yes, could you explain how?
4. Why do most significant events typically take place during the summer period?
5. Are there any key conferences that your company tries to attend and focuses on?
6. Why do gamers attend these conferences, in your opinion?
7. What is the future of video game conferences?

#### Part 2: Trailers

1. Could you explain what resources are allocated towards trailer creation?
2. What are the challenges when creating of a trailer?
3. Does a competition factor affect your decisions?
4. Your trailer of The Outer Worlds opened Microsoft's E3 press conferences in 2019. Did you know in advance that you were going to be the first one to present? How does it affect the business and awareness of the game?
5. Are there any limitations in respect of trailer duration?

#### Part 3: Communication

1. What is the best way to communicate with the audience? Is it owned channels, panel sessions at conferences, etc.?
2. How does personal communication, i.e. directly presenting on stage influence the public, e.g. decision-making, awareness and so on?
3. If there was an opportunity to personally present The Outer Worlds, would you want to do so?
4. What facets contribute to a good presentation?
5. What feelings do you experience when presenting?
6. What is your attitude towards swearing?
7. Are there any cases when the public was paid to react in a certain way and to create hype for the game?
8. Does it motivate you or, in contrast, disturbs from presenting when the crowd excitedly welcomes your speech?
9. What is the role of celebrities regarding to conferences and the video game industry?
10. Do you consider inviting celebrities to your future projects?

## Appendix 2 Logos & soundtracks



A screenshot of a YouTube comment. On the left is a circular profile picture of a person with dark hair. To the right of the profile picture, the text reads: "\Hack 1 week ago". Below this, the comment text says: "It's 2019 and Battlefield 1 is still better than Battlefield 5." Underneath the comment text are icons for a thumbs up, the number "209", a thumbs down icon, and the word "REPLY". At the bottom of the comment box is a blue link that says "View 20 replies" with a small downward-pointing triangle to its left.

\Hack 1 week ago  
It's 2019 and Battlefield 1 is still better than Battlefield 5.  
209 REPLY  
View 20 replies

### Case 1

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYFJwXtsU4>



A screenshot of two YouTube comments. The first comment is from user "Big\_DADDY\_Bert" with a profile picture that says "Big\_Daddy\_Bert". The text of the comment is "Showed this to EA". Below the text are icons for a thumbs up, the number "1", a thumbs down icon, and the word "REPLY". Below this comment is a second comment from user "crystal blackburn" with a profile picture containing the letter "C". The text of the second comment is "I showed this to my play ground". Below this text are icons for a thumbs up, the number "2.6K", a thumbs down icon, and the word "REPLY". At the bottom of the second comment box is a blue link that says "View 29 replies" with a small downward-pointing triangle to its left.

Big\_DADDY\_Bert 1 day ago  
Showed this to EA  
1 REPLY  
crystal blackburn 1 month ago  
I showed this to my play ground  
2.6K REPLY  
View 29 replies

### Case 2

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYFJwXtsU4>



MeLikeBigBoom ✓ 3 years ago

The song at Call of Duty's funeral

👍 15K 🗨️ REPLY

▼ [View 375 replies](#)

Case 3

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0J2QdDbelmY>



E3 2020 (E3 Expo)

Available at: <https://www.e3expo.com/>



Example 1. Death Stranding (PlayStation)

Available at: <https://www.playstation.com/en-us/games/death-stranding-ps4/>



Example 2. Death Stranding (PlayStation)

Available at: <https://www.playstation.com/en-us/games/death-stranding-ps4/>



Keanu Reeves's Fortnite skin

Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/gaming/keanu-reeves-fortnite-john-wick-skin-epic-games-a8954966.html>