

Opinnäytetyö (AMK)

Liiketalouden koulutusohjelma

2021

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HOW TO GET YOUR GAME PUBLISHED

– Case Study: myTrueSound - Kilta

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KUINKA SAADA VIDEOPELI JULKAISTUKSI

- Case Study: myTrueSound - Kilta

Tämä opinnäytetyö lähti liikkeelle toimeksiantajan tarpeesta löytää itselleen pelin julkaisija. Toimeksiantajan omat resurssit eivät riittäneet tapahtumien ja mahdollisuuksien tehokkaaseen kartoitukseen. Lisätavoitteena oli rakentaa toimintakonsepti, jota voitaisiin hyödyntää tulevaisuuden pelinkehitysprojekteissa.

Opinnäytetyön teoriaosuus on rakennettu sinisen meren strategian sekä markkinointimix-teoriakokonaisuuksien ympärille. Teorian lähteenä on käytetty markkinointistrategioihin liittyvää kirjallisuutta, sekä ammattilaisten kirjoittamia internet-julkaisuja. Historia- ja teoriaosuudet on koottu erityisesti toimeksiantajan toimialan eli pelien kehittäjien tarpeita ajatellen.

Varsinainen tapaustutkimus toteutettiin yhteistyössä toimeksiantoyrityksen kanssa. Tapaustutkimuksessa osallistuttiin toimeksiantoyrityksen kanssa eri verkostoitumistapahtumiin, joissa tavattiin eri julkaisija ja rahoitustahoja. Näiden tapaamisten kautta oli tarkoitus saada jonkinlainen ratkaisu joko rahoituksen tai julkaisijan löytämiseksi. Tähän opinnäytetyöhön on koottu näiden tapaamisten yhteenvetoja, miten asiat etenivät, sekä mitä olisi voitu tehdä toisin, jotta mahdolliseen sopimukseen oltaisiin päästy.

Tapaustutkimuksen päätteeksi toimeksiantaja päätyi jatkamaan ilman julkaisijaa tai ulkopuolista rahoittajaa. Tehty tutkimustyö on kuitenkin tarpeellinen tulevien projektien kannalta. Tutkimus auttoi löytämään muutamia epäkohtia, joita korjaamalla tulevat julkaisijaetsinnät pystytään suorittamaan tehokkaammin ja paremmalla menestyksellä. Myös toimintakonseptin ensimmäinen raakaversio saatiin tehtyä.

ASIASANAT:

videopelit, julkaisutoiminta, tapaustutkimus, tuotteet, hinta

BACHELOR'S THESIS | ABSTRACT

TURKU UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Bachelor of Business Administration

2021 | 41 pages, 4 pages in appendices

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This thesis was set in motion by the client's need to find a publisher for their game project. The client's own resources were not sufficient for an effective mapping of events and opportunities. An additional goal was to build an operational concept that could be utilized in future game development projects.

The theoretical part of the thesis is built around the blue sea strategy and marketing mix theory entities. The sources of the theory are literature related to marketing strategies as well as internet publications made by professionals. The history and theory parts of the work have been compiled especially for the needs of the client's industry, meaning game developers.

The actual case study was conducted in collaboration with the client company. During the case study the client company participated in various networking events where different publishers and funding bodies were met. The purpose of these meetings was to find funding or to find a publisher for the game project. This thesis has compiled the summaries of these meetings, how things went, and what could have been done differently to reach a possible agreement.

At the end of the case study the client ended up continuing without a publisher or external funder. However, the research work done is necessary for future projects. The research helped to find a few inconsistencies that, by correcting, future publisher searches can be performed more efficiently and with better success. The first raw version of the operating concept was also completed.

KEYWORDS:

video games, publishing, case study, product, price

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1 INTRODUCTION

Modern gaming industry is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Although video game industry has large companies that have set ways on how to operate in creating and publishing games, there is a large portion of the industry, which works independently and doesn't have these aforementioned ways on how to operate.

The main aim of this thesis is to provide some insight on the commercial side of things to developers that may be struggling on how to move forward with their own project, and give some examples on how a specific Finnish independent developer operated with their project. These steps could be used as a framework on how to potentially get a publisher for your own game project.

This thesis is going to examine games, game publishing, and through a case study, tell the steps on how to get your game published through a video game publisher company, or alternatively by yourself.

This thesis will go into some of the commercial theories and frame of references that are essential for understanding on how to compete with different companies and their products. This could also help developers realize their projects own strengths. This in turn could save some of the resources and time that would have otherwise given minimal returns.

Personally as the thesis writer, I have been part of the gaming industry as a consumer and as an avid gamer, for over 20 years. I have always been interested on how games are developed and how the companies behind them work. Later on I started to get interested on how the revenue and over all finances work behind the scenes during the development cycle of a game. I am eager to learn how the process of game publishing actually is done and understand what kind of things go through a developer team during the process.

2 HISTORY

The earliest video game, *Tennis for Two* was created 1958, and is considered the first game created for entertainment. Before this, programs that could be considered games, were purely created for proof of concept, not necessarily for entertainment. (Rechsteiner. 2020.)

Video game industry started to form around the early 1970s. Companies like Atari were founded around 1972, and started to develop games for their own system. Globally, one of the first commercial successes was *Pong*, which took *Tennis for Two* and turned it into a score based game, where players had to keep the moving pixel inside the game screen, in order to get higher score. (Rechsteiner. 2020.)

1980s brought forward some of the more notable game consoles, that are considered the first iterations of consumer game consoles on a larger scale. Consoles like Nintendo Entertainment System console, or NES for short and Commodore 64 home computer were the first big systems that started to pioneer this new industry as a consumer entertainment console. (Rechsteiner. 2020.)

Through out these earlier decades, games were considered something that the game console companies made, in order to sell their consoles. There wasn't almost any third party development for a certain system, until the 1990s.

Game industry entered a more modern era, during the 1990s. In 1994, Sony launched the first generation Playstation – which took leaps forward in technical and graphical aspects of games, and started to show the potential of future games. Some of the more controversial questions also arouse during this time, with the introduction of violence and genres like first person shooters or FPS for short, starting to appear on the market. (Rechsteiner. 2020.)

1990s also introduced the idea of independent developers, developing games for a certain system. In 1995, Microsoft introduced Windows 95, which served as a starting point for PC game developers. Companies such Ensemble studios, started to create games on the system, not as an inhouse project, but as a third party studio. Ensemble studios would continue to create a game series, called Age of Empires. This game company was acquired by Microsoft in 2001. This could also be considered one of the earlier examples of publisher companies acquiring and buying developer studios, in order to bolster their

game catalogs, which in turn is meant to attract consumers to that system. (Rechsteiner. 2020.)

Microsoft introduced the more modern personal computer system (PC) in 1985, which evolved over the years to the current Windows 10 operating system. This operating system would be considered something that was developing side by side with gaming consoles, due to it being also used for work related functions and more constructive works. This also means that game developers and publishers, would consider gaming consoles and PCs as a separate market, which competed with each other, but not as purely as game console A versus game console B. Over the years, game consoles also evolved to a more flexible position, as an entertainment system. Systems like Xbox and Playstation, work as a DVD player, Blu-ray player and streaming platform for users to use. (Rechsteiner. 2020.)

Nowadays in the modern era, gaming industry has seen a rise in volume when it comes to games being published and consumed. Over the years, the portion of digitalized games has been on the rise, and hardly any PC games are published as a physical product, as CD or blu-ray. This in turn lowers the production costs of a game, as removing the physical copy from the equation lowers the workload. Transferring data is also cheaper than manufacturing physical copies of games.

3 FRAME OF REFERENCE

3.1 Marketing mix 4P

Marketing mix or better known 4P, consists of 4 different means of competition. These are: *product, price, place and promotion*. This theory has evolved over the years into 5P, which adds *people* into the mix. The final and most fleshed out version of this strategy is 7P, which adds *processes* and *physical evidence* into the mix. These different areas are utilized in order to gain some kind of advantage on the market that you're competing in. (Puranen. 2018.)

All the Ps and their explanations:

1. Product – How good is your product or service when comparing to other competitors?
2. Price – Is your product cheaper than others? Does your product compete in premium or economic level?
3. Place – Where is your product being sold, for example in the internet, on a remote location without any close residences or on the most busy street in your country. How quickly you ship your product is also a factor.
4. Promotion – What kind of quality does your marketing have, how well does it perform when comparing to competitors. Does your ads generate conversations around it, is it rememberable.
5. People – What kind of skill level do your employees have. Are they experts of the industry, or just starting out without any prior training.
6. Processes – How optimal the processes within your company are? Are they more efficient or provide better results than your competitors.
7. Physical evidence – What kind of design and outlook does your business have? Is the internal design and layout of your business optimal and goodlooking to the customer. Can be applied also to internet websites if you're dealing through an online shop. Ease of use is also a factor. (Digimarkkinointi. 2012.)

Each of the versions of the marketing mix have different advantages for different companies that use them. An example would be between 4P and 5P. For a smaller company, it is easiest to use 4P marketing mix, as it has the least moving parts that need to be

considered, and adding the *people* part into the mix, isn't as essential as it would be for a bigger company, which has more smaller teams within it, which may have differentiating skill levels between themselves. Using 7P as a smaller company wouldn't be ideal either, as you may be just starting and your *processes* may still need to develop in order to maximise efficiency and competition potential. *Physical evidence* -part isn't useful either, as it would need resources that the small company doesn't have. (Digimarkkinointi.fi 2012.)

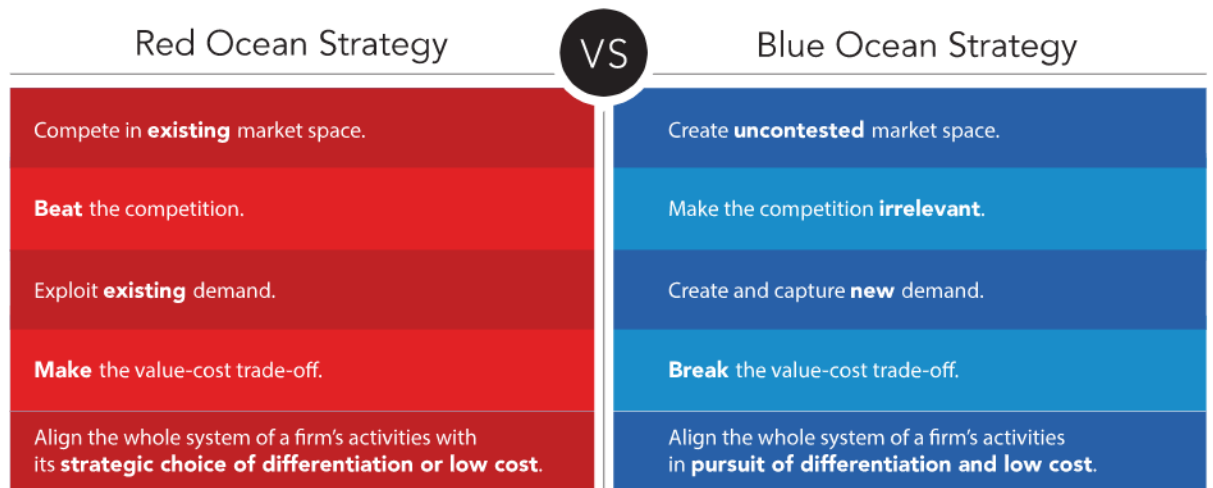
This thesis will utilize only the 4P version of marketing mix. It should be noted that *promotion* of the marketing mix, or better known as marketing, could be expanded into its own thesis due to how large of a topic it is. This thesis will use *promotion* in its framework, but only scratches the possibilities and should by no means be considered comprehensive take on the topic.

3.2 Blue ocean strategy

The other main theory frame for this work is blue ocean strategy. This strategy's main idea is that there should be untouched market portions, which haven't been discovered or touched before. The name blue ocean strategy, serves as an image to present the theory more concretely, when you understand the fundamentals of the strategy.

Blue Ocean strategy: A strategy where the aim is to create an uncontested market space for yourself. The aim is to create and capture a new demand, which can be filled cost effectively due to the lack of competitors on this specific market. This in turn lowers costs, as using resources to compete aren't as needed and as large as in a red ocean. Some of the dangers of this strategy is rightly determining the demand for certain product. The uncontested market you've created, might not be big enough to be profitable. (Chan & Mauborgne 2005, 21-168)

In contrast, **Red Ocean strategy** means competing in an existing market, with already determined price ranges and rules to abide by while developing your product. This strategy may be the safer option, due to the market already being established and understood, but the problem is getting a share in it. The red in the name depicts "the bloody" struggle that you have to go through in order to gain some kind of foothold in the existing market. For a quick reference and comparison between the two strategies, see Picture 1. (Chan & Mauborgne 2005, 64-65)



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Picture 1: Red Ocean Strategy versus Blue Ocean Strategy (Chan & Mauborgne.)

4 THE 4PS OF GAME MARKETING

4.1 Product: Games

Modern video games can be categorized into genres. These genres include but are not limited to; action, adventure, role-playing, simulation, strategy and sports. This list could be a page long all on its own and are comparable with some of the movie and book genres out there. You can see the main genres and their explanations in Table 1. Some of the more notable game subgenres are; First-person-shooters or FPS, real-time-strategy games or RTS and massively multiplayer online role-playing games or MMORPG. Usually, a game falls under multiple genres or subgenres. Take for example Terraria, a game developed and published by Re-Logic. Terraria can be categorized under Sandbox, Survival, Adventure, Action, RPG and 2D, which all are accurate representations of the product. It could be argued by some that Terraria doesn't fill the necessary requirements of certain genres, but that's a different topic entirely. This just shows that categorizing certain games isn't as easy as categorizing movies or books. For a more comprehensive list of game genres, please refer to Appendix 2 at the end of this thesis.

Table 1: Game genres

Game Genres	
Genre	Short explanation
Action	Emphasize physical challenges that require hand-eye coordination and motor skill to overcome
Adventure	Purist genre, usually doesn't have any action elements inside categorys games. Could be described as a "journey with options" games
Action - adventure	Combine action and adventure genres.
Role-playing	Players take control of a character and act as that character, or create a custom character.
Strategy	Player controls various game elements in order to attain win conditions for themselves. Examples; Age of Empires, Starcraft
Simulation	Genre where the games simulate accurately different aspects of different areas, like warfare or farming.
Sports	Simulate real sports. Opponent is controlled by computer or other players.
MMO	Comes from Massively multiplayer online games. Games are usually RPGs, FPS or TBS when combined with MMO.

Games also have differentiating factors called Game Elements, which act as building blocks while creating a game. While building the game, deciding which elements to include, and how they are represented, can help you differentiate your product from competitors. Take for example combat as an element. Your games combat can be real-time, turn-based, two dimensional or three dimensional and the list goes on. You can find a list of these elements on Table 2. A list of these elements with short explanations is also attached as Appendix 3.

Table 2: Game elements

Game Elements	
Dynamics	Achievements
	Avatars
	Badges
	Boss Fights
	Collections
	Combat
	Content unlocking
	Gifting
	Leaderboards
	Levels
	Points
	Quests
	Social graph
	Teams
	Virtual goods
Mechanics	Challenges
	Chance
	Competition/co-operation
	Feedback
	Resource acquisition
	Rewards
	Transactions
	Turns
Components	Constraints
	Emotions
	Narrative
	Progression
	Relationship

Choosing what kind of representation a certain element gets, divides the target demographic that the product is aimed towards. For example, a consumer who enjoys playing high action games with flowy movement, may not be interested in a turn-based game where every move needs to be thought about thoroughly. One option would also to just

leave the combat element out completely, which would require some other element to step-up as the main way of interacting with the world. This thought process goes on when going through the list of elements, what kind of movement is there, what kind of visual appearance does the game have, what kind of lore or overarching story does the game have, art style, is the game three dimensional or two dimensional, is the goal of the game telling a story or is the central focus on for example action or solving puzzles. Or is the goal to deliver a hugely open world full of smaller stories that the consumer can explore on their own at their own pace. These differentiating factors can be seen as a way to find your own blue ocean. Please refer to 3.2 for more information about Blue Ocean Strategy or Appendix 3 for a list and explanations about game elements.

Even if a game is created and the elements aren't necessarily unique, some game gimmick and a flawless execution while developing these elements could create a game which stands above the rest. A good example of this would be *Ghost of Tsushima*, developed by Sucker Punch Productions. Some of the reviews the game got, pointed out that the product didn't necessarily do anything majorly innovative, it was just a complete product that took some of the features other games had, polished them and shipped a working complete experience.

This is one of the more important questions during game development; "what sets our game apart from the rest?". Of course, some of the features that could set a product apart from the rest, are more expensive to develop than others. Again, this all revolves around blue ocean strategy. Finding a niche that isn't filled by the current game industry, or at least building and evolving on existing experiences. Combining different elements with each other could create unique solutions that could act as a selling point. You can check the short explanations in Appendix 3 about game elements, and try to think of an example yourself.

Games and game developers have potential to compete through different aspects in their products. These include but aren't limited to; genre, art style, sound, music, features and innovation within the product. Most of the aspects are self-explanatory but features and innovation are larger and more abstract. What I mean by features for example, if a game-product has some sort of inclusive feature that lets people who aren't directly playing the product, affect the player currently playing the game. This could be achieved via cell-phones and playing on a couch with your friends next to you, or through a live streaming service, such as Twitch. This kind of feature, at least in twitch streaming service, is called

Twitch-integration, which basically gives a Twitch viewer a democratic vote to do something. Innovation holds inside all the pioneering a developer can do to their product, whether that be a completely new feature to the game, compelling story or design of characters.

4.2 Pricing

Nowadays, games are generating larger and larger amounts of wealth. In 2020, while the global pandemic was starting to ramp up, game industry generated \$139.9 billion or 117,8 billion euros. In perspective, that is a 12% increase in earnings while comparing to 2019. Of that amount, mobile games generated \$73.8 billion, PC \$33.1 billion and consoles \$19.7 billion. This could also be something to consider while deciding your games market and device to develop on. (venturebeat.com. 2021.)

Video game pricing has always been a topic at the back of developers mind. How to pin a price on a product that isn't necessarily finished yet, how to price a shorter game or how to price a game that's completely new and fresh idea.

Game pricing falls under several different types of monetization of a product. These types are for example; Buy-to-play, subscription based, microtransactions or MTX for short, and free-to-play with in-game ads or other monetization. There are also various additional ways to gain more income, for example creating a premium version of your game, which includes physical items set to the game world. Another way would be to include in-game purchases, also called microtransactions, in to the game. This could also be done even if the game is singleplayer only, which has been a rising trend on game releases. While making these monetization decisions, you should research some of the backlash that has happened while certain plans have been implemented. In microtransactions case, players have been showing concerns regarding the integrity of singleplayer games that have implemented these plans. Questions like:

“Has the game been made more difficult in order to sell more microtransactions?”

“Why are these even in a singleplayer game?”

are echoed around in various forums and public conversations on social media. Some consumers are also actively boycotting products that sell singleplayer microtransactions. This is partly due to the fact that some bigger publishers have included microtransactions in their products, that give the player more power inside the game. Some consumers see

this as the first step towards selling a game piece by piece, and not as a complete product. (Beamable. 2021.)

While microtransactions in singleplayer games aren't well received, they are a way to monetize a free-to-play(F2P) game and keep your company afloat. Games that are free-to-play, usually have a seasonpass system in place with additional cosmetic microtransactions in place as well. These systems usually only involve the visual cosmetics, and don't interfere with the game balance. (Colagrossi. 2021.)

Luckily for developers there are some industry practices that help in this regard. If a game is developed for a console, it is probably going to go through one of the major publishers behind that game console, for example Microsoft or Sony. Depending, if the developer team is experienced and reputable, they may land themselves a project with a pricetag of 60€. It should be noted that even though production costs have gone down when it comes to hard copies, the copies sold for example on consoles still cost 60€, and are predicted to raise to 70€ by the next generation of consoles.

On the other hand, if the team is smaller and still has to gain some reputation in the industry, console publishers may give them the option to join an indieprogram of their console. This usually means that their game would be put on a subscription based program, kind of like Netflix or Hulu with movies, and be playable through digital form only. This would land their game in 10€ to 20€ range, at least on console.

With PC market, things get more complicated. Due to the market being more open and not as gatekept as consoles, independent publishers of smaller size and even smaller developers can publish games through various distribution services on their own. This gives complete freedom in pricing your own product, which in turn creates a new question: "how to determine your products value?". (Brightman. 2017.)

One theory involves the idea of "cost per hour". This concept is highly subjective to the individual. For example, person A is completely fine paying 60€ for a videogame, even if he only had 30 hours of game time. He finished the games singleplayer, and is content with the experience he had. Person B on the other hand would have preferred a longer story and some replayability. So while person B had also 30 hours of game time in that 60€ game, he doesn't see enough value in the purchase. Person B might even feel a bit of regret for this purchase. (Brodie. 2016.)

This concept goes for videogame developers as well, because a developer can usually gauge how many hours of content their game has, and then determine the pricing accordingly to their own viewpoint. Again, this would mean that a developer who sees 2.5€/hour as value, would still price the game too high, from the viewpoint of a person who sees 1€/hour as value. The pricing also needs to take into consideration the uniqueness of a game. A good story for example could raise the value of a product to a higher level, if it gives the player meaningful enough experience. (Brodie. 2016.)

Games that have replayability as a core mechanic, are more difficult to price. Games with these mechanics are usually underpriced, due to them being for more niche market. For example, *The Binding of Isaac* -game by Edmund McMillen is a roguelike game with content that is widely recycled throughout the gameplay. Rooms are really similar and are only differentiated by the random generation of items, enemies and objects placed inside the room. Currently, the original game goes for 5€ on Steam, which offers large amounts of value to the right customer. Some consumers have over 1000 hours played of this game, which makes the purchase one of the best on the market. (Brodie. 2016.)

One way to price a roguelike, would be to look at the average completion time of playtesters. How long did it take for them to feel that they are done with the game, take the average and price the game through that. Again, some playtesters would be finished after 10 hours, where other would play for 100s of hours and still have something to do. This is the most probable culprit as to why roguelikes are underpriced, other than selling large volumes with small pricetag in order to get a larger gain, which is basics of economics. (Brodie. 2016.)

Underpricing the game in this case isn't necessarily a bad thing, games can gain goodwill on the market by being cheaper and still quality products. This goodwill can save a company in some cases, where the company does a mistake that would otherwise jeopardize the company's longevity and public face. (Brodie. 2016.)

4.3 Promotion: Live streaming platforms

Live streaming is a fairly new way of consuming media. The fundamental idea is that the consumer can watch usually unedited content, while it's happening, whether that would be watching somebody play games, host a show or do something in the outside world.

This newer way to consume media through the experience of someone else, could also be utilized as a channel to market your own game.

This method is a double edged sword, as viewer and the streamer, will get an uncensored and unedited take on your product on its current state. This could also be a very cost effective way to market your game, if your game is appealing enough to a larger streamer. Some games, like Among Us, gained publicity via youtubers and streamers picking the game up, having fun with friends, and indirectly selling the product to millions of consumers. For reference, Among Us was developed by three people, and before influencers picking the game up, had only around 10 or so concurrent players. Currently, after the influencer phenomenon, Among Us has sold 3,2 million copies. Of course, this is a one in a million example, on what could happen, but can still be considered an example. Smaller success stories are also easier to find, and certain games have generated small communities around them, which keep the game projects alive. (Lorenz, T. 2020.)

There are a couple of different services that you can use to stream on. These services usually receive their income through advertisements on their website or in-app, and sometimes even include a service where the viewer can donate to the streamer. When donating the site or app takes a cut from the amount. There may also be a possibility to subscribe to somebody for additional money, which the site takes a cut from.

Here's a list of some of the more popular streaming services; Periscope, Facebook Watch/Gaming, Youtube live/gaming and Twitch. Periscope is a more mainstream way to stream your in-real-life experiences or "IRL Stream" and isn't inside the game streaming circle that I'm going to be referring to in the future. Basically, game streaming revolves around three big names, Facebook, Youtube and Twitch. Of these three, Twitch has 73% of total hours watched, Youtube has 21%, Facebook has 3%. These services also have some smaller contenders, but they are practically non-existent. (StreamElements. 2019.)

Microsoft also had their own live streaming service called Mixer until July 22nd 2020, when the service was officially shut down. The partnered streamers on mixer, were given the option to move to Facebook gaming and receive some benefits from doing so. This was orchestrated by Microsoft and Facebook coming into a multimillion agreement. This raised Facebook's portion on the bigger market, and is believed to be around 11% around the end of 2020. (Warren, T. 2020.)

I should also note that Twitch, while having most of the market share of consumers and streamers, doesn't have an outside source of new viewers flowing naturally into its platform. On the other hand, Youtube and Facebook have established themselves as the number one platform for videos, and number one social media platform, at least in the number of users. This means that both Youtube and Facebook have at least in theory more potential to grow their market share, and are also good options for streamers, who have established a personal brand on these platforms already, especially on Youtube.

An example of utilizing these services correctly and optimally, would be the campaign made by CD Project Red, with their Night City Wire series. This series showed Cyberpunk 2077 features over the span of five videos. Each video was released a month after the previous one, starting from June 2020, all the way till November 2020. After each of these broadcasts, CD Project Red would open a live stream with an influencer, who would act as the audience representative, filtering appropriate questions from the live stream chat to the developers, which would then be answered to the best of their ability. This in turn created conversations around the game before it was released, which helped selling the product and create hype towards it. (Appendix 1. 2020.)

4.4 Promotion: Game Publishers

Game publishers can generally stem from two different backgrounds; publishers who have started in the publishing business directly and those who have been developed from the video game developer side. Companies like Apple or Microsoft, can be seen as game publishers, due to them including some games on their operating systems for example. On the other, companies like Ubisoft, started their corporate journey as a developer, and have since started to publish game projects from outside of their own company. They have even dabbled into the game digital distribution side of things, with their own software, Uplay.

Game publishers tasks involve the business side of gaming field. They are in charge of publishing and marketing game projects that are made by external game developers or in-house teams. This means that publishers also for example conduct market research and design advertisements suitable for the game project at hand. Of course, external game developers may have certain conditions that need to be met with the material, but that's something that's determined by the contract between the publisher and developer. Developers may also be required to provide certain materials like videos of the game in-

order to fulfil marketing campaigns. Publishers may also have a greater say in creative decisions regarding the game project, due to them paying the developers bills, depending on the contract. Of course, creative independence for the developers could also be a clause in a contract, but this usually would mean that there is some kind of evidence of the competence of the developer.

Game marketing differs from traditional media marketing, by utilizing a broader selection of marketing avenues. This is due to how the target audience, usually younger generation consumes media. Traditional marketing avenues, like TV-commercials and printed ads, aren't as effective as marketing campaigns done with big influencers like for example Youtuber PewDiePie or Ninja. Promoting your own product through influencers, through internet, and through more convenient methods, give more results and benefits. Some games are still marketed through traditional and more visible ways, like through TV-commercials and through billboard ads. An example of this would be the release of CD Project Red's Cyberpunk 2077, which had large visibility around the world, even in traditional media around the last quarter of 2020.

Convenience and the possibility to consume media on your own time when you want to, is a rising trend that has been proven by multiple different studies. Which also indirectly indicates the need of adapting by marketing teams and campaigns. Advertising your product on TV, isn't as relevant as advertising on a live streaming platform, because your target audience isn't necessarily sitting in front of a TV. This thesis is centered around the process and execution of publishing a game. Deeper analyze regarding marketing has been excluded from the study.

4.5 Place: Game Digital Distribution services

Game digital distribution services are services which provide consumers a place to purchase digital copies or licences of games and manage them. Services like Steam, Uplay, Origin, Microsoft Store, Playstation Store, Epic Games Store, Good old Games, nowadays known as GOG.com and multiple other stores, are used to gain access legally to a gaming product via a digital purchase. This purchase will allow you to access that specific product while using that service, without additional service fees, although some of these options may require some form of payment depending on the product or service used. So, for example, buying *Halo: The Master Chief Collection* developed by 343 Industries, on Steam will bind that product to your Steam user, which you can access through

Steam's game launcher. You can install the game on any computer you're logged into with that account, and play it at will. This doesn't mean that you could access this product say on Microsoft Store, because the product is registered to you via different service. So while the same product may be found on multiple services, owning it on one service doesn't mean that you own it on every possible launcher and store, where that specific product is sold.

Understanding these distribution services is required, while thinking game development and distribution of said product. The services have varied amount of features that differ between each other. Some have achievement systems that can be integrated with the game you're making, some have streaming services so that you can share your screen with your friend while playing. Economically important is also the amount of a cut the service will take, if your game is sold on that distribution channel. Steam as an example, will take around 30% cut of the price you put on their store. Where as Epic Games Store, a newer distribution service, takes around 12% cut from the price. This means that developers and publishers who are selling their games on Epics store, are getting a larger amount of money per purchase. While these procents have certain specifics behind them that aren't widely disclosed and tend to change from time to time, this helps illustrate the point that there are monetary differences between these services. Steam also asks developers to pay a smaller sum of money, in order to gain access to a steam store page they can use to sell their product. This could be the case in Epic Store and GOG.com, but this information is not disclosed to the public. (Barton. 2018.)

Of course, some of these services also have a certain kind of stigmas attached to them, which may taint for example an independent developers product with that stigma. Epic Games Store as an example, owned by Epic Games, has been buying one year exclusivity deals from certain developers and publishers. This means that Epic is actively trying to divide the PC game market, in order to disrupt the overall positions of different distribution services. Steam for example could be considered to have a monopoly on PC game market, which Epic is disrupting by taking away long awaited products, for a year. This could be seen as predatory by consumers, due to people now needing to move onto a new service, in order to play those games on launch day. Steam has been around for years, which meant that people now had to start a completely new game library on a new service, which even made some people wait that one year, and boycott Epic Games Store. It also didn't help, that Epics game launcher and store, were considered inferior to Steam's program. Overall, Epics program had less features and was also less secure,

when comparing to Steam. Launching a game on Epic Games Store exclusively, also started to have a negative stigma, which was seen as developers and publishers selling out the game for a quick gain, while leaving the consumers and fanbase with worse options. (Gilbert. 2019.)

4.6 Game publishing

Publishing games is a difficult topic for game developers, that don't have a separate department, subsidiary company, or a contact with a game publisher for it. These companies normally fall under the term "indie-developers" which means independent developers. These indie companies are usually smaller in size, and create games without financial or technical support from a bigger publisher, or at the very least, they aren't acquired by these bigger publishers under their own umbrella. These game companies usually develop games that aren't regarded "mainstream" on the current game market, and are aiming their products for a more targeted audience. This is partly due to the game ideas being experimental, which is seen more risky due to no previous examples of success on the market, again looking for that Blue Ocean that is mentioned in chapter 3.2.

Indie developers have a few ways on how to fund or publish their games. These are crowdfunding, self-funding, tying the developed product into a contract with a game publisher, getting outside funding from a third-party company and combinations of these.

Crowdfunding is an interesting option for game publishers, who have the interest and skill to incorporate their fans into the development process. A good example of this is Larian Studios, which developed *Divinity: Original sin*, had 19,541 backers, pledged \$944,282, and *Divinity: Original sin 2*, had 42,713 backers, pledged \$2,032,434, with the help of their fans. Crowdfunding can also be really tricky for developers, because the amount of money asked completely relies on the developers ability to assess, which feature takes what amount of time and resources to create. According to a study by Kickstarter, one of the sites that facilitates these crowdfundings, about 1 in 10 projects actually fail completely, whereas 9 % of the projects fail to deliver rewards. (Kickstarter. *Divinity*.)

Crowdfunding may require some steps depending where you live, and in Finland crowdfunding with the mentality that the consumer doesn't necessarily get anything for their money, is illegal. Basically, because there is a chance that the project fails completely,

crowdfunding or collecting donations for these kinds of projects require a permit. This may be too much for smaller indie companies, which don't have the resources to get the permit, or move to a country that doesn't require a permit.

Getting outside funding from a business angel or an investment company may also be a desirable option for certain developers. Although getting funding for the project is critical for longevity of the company, these agreements and deals may be too costly for certain people. For example, getting an investment of 100,000€ for 10% of the game project at hand, may seem a good option, it isn't necessarily the most optimal choice. Monetary help can get you only so far, and getting publishing help from people who have the know-how may be more valuable to a smaller indie team. You also have to note that getting the initial monetary investment is usually the only thing you will receive in these cases. If the project fails, you still have to somehow get that investment back to the investors.

Game companies that have been developing games for a longer time, may have the option to self-fund their future projects. Some even sell their houses in order to fund their projects, like in the case of No Man's Sky by Hello Games, where Sean Murray ended up doing so in-order to deliver a finished product. Even Murray himself wouldn't advice doing so however. (THTDI Inc. 2019.)

5 CASE KILTA

5.1 myTrueSound

This thesis was made for an indie start-up company called myTrueSound, which is based in Turku Finland. The company started in 2017, with the goal of “--*developing the next generation of audiogames fully accessible to the blind and visually impaired playing community.*” (myTrueSound. myTrueSound). Kilta is myTrueSounds latest attempt to create an engaging game that could also include visually impaired consumers in experiencing the world of gaming. Creating games for the visually impaired, also means that myTrueSound has previously put sound design on a higher priority than the game visuals or graphics. (myTrueSound. myTrueSound.)

AudioWizards, a game project by myTrueSound, had strong emphasize on audio and the sound design of the game. The game is designed so that it's possible to play, without seeing the computer screen. And while the product wasn't a failure, it couldn't be considered a huge success either. With the development of Kilta, developers and designers at myTrueSound wanted to create a game foremost, before integrating accessibility options into the game, so that visually impaired community can also join the narrative.

MyTrueSound currently consists of 14 employees, most who have all started working in the company through Turku University of Applied Sciences' different fields of expertise. These employees were either recruited through different courses, or through thesis works done for myTrueSound. This also means that some of the employees have either stepped to a more passive worker position or are working on their own theses, on different topics like for example accessibility in game, “How to get your game published” and visual design of games. One of the employees is also a freelancer marketer, who started working for myTrueSound around the end of February 2021. This means that myTrueSound doesn't have many permanent employees. While this isn't a traditional way of developing games, it still offers a place for younger students and engineers to hone their skills and accomplishing their desired thesis subjects. The company is small enough that new employees or students working on their theses, can easily join and start working on a part of the project at hand. This means that the company heavily relies on student work on it's projects, which depending on the contract made between the company and student, may go as free work.

Personally, I have worked with myTrueSound as a helper on the marketing side. I also researched potential events and places where myTrueSound could come in contact with different publishers, and have more opportunities to find a publishing partner. I have helped with giving feedback on how different pitches have gone, what could be utilized when thinking of marketing the game efficiently, bringing forward current events and marketing campaigns other companies have done and giving feedback and testing Kilta.

5.2 Developing Kilta

Kilta, by the definition made by myTrueSound, is “*--a single-player auto battler strategy RPG featuring item management, an interesting story supported by a growing cast of unique characters, charming pixel art in a 2.5D environment, and a stunning sound-track.*”(Appendix 2). It should also be mentioned here that Kilta is meant to have accessibility settings for the visually impaired, so that they can also enjoy the game. The game was also meant to pioneer auto battler -genre from the view of deeper and engaging stories. So myTrueSound has centered their product around an auto-battler which has a deeper stories than other games in the genre, as well as options for the visually impaired. These two features can be seen as unique takes and the combination is something that moves away from that Red Ocean, towards a potential Blue Ocean, mentioned in chapter 3.2 and in Picture 1. (myTrueSound. Kilta.)

In Kilta, the player assumes the position of Guild Master, who sends heroes of the guild to complete different tasks and hunts around the world of Kilta. These tasks mainly involve killing tasks, where player is tasked with placing their heroes in the most optimal position to combat the enemy. The game features combat which revolves around a three-by-three grid, that you place your characters on. After the battle starts, enemies and placed heroes attack each other grid with their skills and attacks, until one of the sides doesn't have any remaining characters or monsters. This process is automated, and the player only has a single skill, which they can use in-order to influence the battlefield. Outside combat, player is tasked with equipping their heroes with available items and gear received from tasks given in the guild and choosing the next task, all the while having conversations with the heroes either joining or already in the Guild Masters party. The game also has features like a blacksmith, which acts as a way to recycle unused items that aren't too useful to the current party. There was also talks about a potential item shop that would be located in the guild, which the player could use to sell unused

items and acquire more desirable equipment for the heroes. This shop wouldn't be tied to any kind of microtransactions, at least according to the talks during this thesis.

Kilta development started to ramp up during autumn of 2020, when the team recruited few volunteer game testers to test and play the game. This was done in order to gain some feedback and ideas from interested individuals. The team also recruited three visual designer students as interns, who started working on thesis topics involving graphical designing, and user interfaces. At the end of this thesis around 2021 summer, Kilta is still being developed and patch 0.9 was just released.

5.3 Pricing of Kilta

The process of pricing a product can be really convoluted, or it can be really straight forward. In case of Kilta, this process was fairly straight forward. During one of the weekly meetings, the point of price level was brought up. This was due to the approaching early access launch at the time. It should be noted that myTrueSound is composed of younger generation of coders and employees. Most of the employees use at least some of their free time playing games, and have a general understanding of value or value per hour.

Conversation about the price point of Kilta rapidly changed towards things and questions like: "How many hours of content is there?", "Is there replayability?" and other points mentioned in chapter 4.2. It was noted, that it would take around 10-15 hours to see everything in the current state of the game. This also included multiple playthroughs of the same content. During this time, a playthrough the game would have taken anything between 20-60 minutes, depending on luck and if the player read everything that was provided, or if they just opted to skip any flavor text there was. Although this meant that it would be hard to justify anything over 15 euros price point, the team took into consideration yet to developed game elements like accessibility, and additional content that was planned to hit the store during early access phases. Sales and discounts were taken into consideration, consumers could adopt the game during the first few weeks of early access launch for 10% off. It was also discussed that the price couldn't be arbitrarily changed later, and the only chance to change this price would be during the 1.0 version launch. Graphical quality, sound design, music and story telling were also considered during this time, and although the team making Kilta is small, the produced quality was good. These points lead to the price tag of 10,79€ on Steam. This meant that Kilta would be around 9,71€ during the early sales, and this price was meant only for the early

adopters who stucked with the product. A price point around 10 euros also co-responded to a price chart that the team happened to stumble on while browsing internet during the meeting, which put \$10 to \$15 as “Good Indie” -products.

Table 3: Picture used during the pricing meeting (Tavrox. 2018.)

Price (\$)	Summary	Expected feeling	
0 to 5	Either good & short or just bad	Fun game, play a couple of hours then lost in the library.	Stick fight the game, Refunct, Hook, Mount your friends, Downwell, VVVVVV, Devil Daggers
5 to 10	Game for the weekend / the evening	Small game you can play for a whole Saturday afternoon that will be a nice experience.	Getting Over It, Terraria, Portal, FTL, Kingdom Rush, The Room 1, Mini Metro, Skull Girls
10 to 15	Good Indie	Medium good indie game, you'll absolutely love it or not.	Brothers A tale of Two Sons, Crypt of the necrodancer, Broforce
15 to 20	Awesome Indie	Very good indie game, there's a lot of work put in it and shouldn't be shy comparing to AAA.	Gang beasts, Hob, Hyper light drifter, Cuphead, Full Metal Furries, Dark Souls 1
20 to 40	III	This game is insanely good or can be played during countless hours. Probably a 3d game.	They Are Billions, Civilization V, Stellaris, PUBG, Endless Space 2, Endless Legend, Dark Souls 2
40 to 60	AAA	The graphics are amazing, the grinding insane and probably cost several millions to make.	Civilization VI, Assassin's Creed Origins, Fallout 4 VR, Dragon Ball Fighterz, FIFA 2018, Dark Souls 3

5.4 Distribution and publishing of Kilta

Publishing of Kilta became a topic inside myTrueSound around summer of 2020. Options regarding publishing became increasingly clear, as financial support was critically needed in-order to continue the project and finishing the product. During late summer and autumn of 2020, myTrueSound joined several digital pitch conventions for game developers, where the aim was to mingle and potentially find a publisher for Kilta. Secondary objective was to find a monetary solution, in case a publisher wasn't found. This meant finding an investor company or individual business angel who could invest an amount of funds into the project. These funds could then be used for marketing and publishing fees, and more importantly pay the employees wages.

MyTrueSound took part in around 15 different digital conventions, competitions and events, that had the focus and aim of finding potential supporters for developers. Some of these events ran for multiple days, during which attendees could book meetings with each other. These events took place in digitally facilitated rooms. Developers, investors and publishers could book meetings with each other, usually for around 30 minutes, and

discuss topics relevant for themselves. If the other party didn't read preprovided information about Kilta, myTrueSound usually spent around 10 minutes of that time, pitching their game project to the other party. This 10 minutes is longer than the usual maximum of two minutes or so, due to the need to present complex topics to the investors, and due to the available allocated time. These topics varied from finances to the reason why Kilta was targeted to the specific demographic of visually impaired.

While preparing for these meetings, myTrueSound had the main presenter, the marketing member and myself talk about the most probable questions and topics that would arise. These meetings were held just before the actual meetings with different parties, and usually lasted 30 minutes or less. Usually the topics were: How did the previous meeting go, what could have been emphasized more, what could have been said differently as to seem more professional, what feedback we got from the previous meeting and how to take that into consideration in the next meeting and just purely practising the pitch. We also went through the next meetings potential partner, did some research on what they do, what do they specialize in and what their portfolio consists of.

It should be noted, that Kilta as a game project had already been developed to a certain degree while myTrueSound was taking part in the aforementioned events. There was also a demonstration version of the game, which could be distributed to interested parties. This meant that Kilta was already molded to a certain degree, which meant that companies interested in cooperation, would have harder time changing and molding that project in a potentially different and more desired direction. This is critical point, because it is something that was raised during meetings multiple times. In a simpler example, this meant that companies were looking at a half finished product, instead of an idea that could be given shape or a product that could be custom made. Feedback and pointers received during these events, were also taken into consideration during further development of Kilta. This was one of the first places where myTrueSound could receive feedback about Kilta, although the volume was small in number.

5.4.1 Company A: Story centered publisher

The first company I want to raise from these meeting was a smaller publisher company based in central Europe. This company's portfolio is themed around games with meaningful and impactful stories. This means that additionally to the necessary information

like how realistic the game project is and what kind of market it has, they were highly interested in the story, characters and world of Kilta.

MyTrueSound had a meeting with a representative of this company, during August 2020. The initial meeting was 30 minutes long, during which myTrueSound pitched their game, Kilta. After the pitch, Company A presented some information about their own working ethics and aims in the industry, mainly highlighting their interest in stories. They also went over what they would be offering as a partner, which included public relations(PR), marketing and distribution help and advices. The representative mentioned that they help publish around three to five game projects yearly, although they had gotten some backlog due to the ongoing pandemic at the time. Company A also highlighted their interest in getting involved earlier in the development process, which wasn't required, but still desired. This is understandable, because they were also looking for new and innovative ways of telling a story, which would have given them possibilities in helping shape the storytelling of Kilta. MyTrueSound also deduced from this meeting, that Company A might have had too narrow of a target group audience.

Company A and myTrueSound kept in touch after this event via email, and booked another meeting with the CEO of Company A. This meeting was mainly meant to have further discussion about possible cooperation. During this meeting, the CEO of Company A raised the point of "working with the right people". This was targeted towards the fact that Company A and Kilta weren't necessarily the most optimal partners, which myTrueSound had also vaguely noted in the first meeting. Even with this pointed out, myTrueSound sent Company A a playable demo of Kilta, statistics and the pitch deck used during the meetings, under a non-disclosure agreement or NDA.

After these two meetings, Company A and myTrueSound were talking through emails. MyTrueSound received basic responds from Company A, but further towards the end of the year, it became painfully clear how badly the ongoing pandemic had affected Company A. Emails and request by myTrueSound about possible cooperations were met with either vague answers or no answers at all. In the end, Company A has stopped responding to myTrueSounds messages. MyTrueSound never got any feedback or response to the provided material. This also meant that myTrueSound couldn't rely on Company A for a solution to their financial problems.

5.4.2 Company B: Industry leading publisher

This company is a bigger publisher company, with the main office located in Europe. It also has several branch offices around the world. This also changes the perspective that they view myTrueSound from. Realistically, bigger companies could help companies such as myTrueSound as a test, but they are still interested in some kind of gain from the transaction. In the case of Company B, that gain and interest were pointed towards the accessibility of Kilta, and the technology behind it. Conversation with Company B started around the same time as with Company A.

The meeting with Company B took place during one of the facilitating events of autumn 2020. This initial meeting was 30 minutes long, during which myTrueSound pitched their game for around 10 minutes. During the remaining time, Company B representative presented their Company and shared what they were looking for during this event. Although cooperation with them seemed unlikely, Company B agreed to take a look at the pitch deck and demo provided by myTrueSound. They also noted that the most interesting thing about Kilta -project was accessibility, from their point of view. This could be understood as Company B being potentially interested in somekind of deal with myTrueSound, if they could gain the technology and technical know-how, regarding the accessibility.

After a week, myTrueSound received an email about the impression they had gotten from the provided material. Company B also echoed some of the points that Company A was saying. They complimented and liked the art style, characters and visual personality of the characters. While these aspects of the game seemed to be well received, they noted that they felt somewhat bored during the combat, due to there being no way to interact with the battlefield during the time. They also noted several improvement ideas, like item selling and some kind of levelling systems to the heroes. They also noted things that were already planned to change during the development of Kilta. After which they would have liked to see the accessibility options that were mentioned during the initial pitch of the game. In the end, Company B didn't partner up with myTrueSound.

5.4.3 Company C: Veteran Indie publisher

Company C is an industry veteran, which has remained relatively small compared to bigger game publishers. Although this company has been around 30 years, the team

size isn't around the hundreds, unlike leading publishers. MyTrueSound and Company C had a meeting through one of the facilitation events mentioned in chapter 5.4. The meeting moved forward faster than the previous examples, because the person myTrueSound was meeting, had already seen the preprovided pitchdeck. The meeting started with myTrueSound receiving some initial thoughts and feedback about the project, which led to Company C asking for a demo, pitchdeck and video presenting the game, for their own internal meeting. These were provided to Company C. Company C's representer also told about some of the procedures and criteria about how Kilta could potentially achieve cooperation status with them. This would have required that Kilta piqued the interest of at least two of the eight representatives that were going to join Company C's internal meeting, regarding Kilta. Overall, the initial meeting with Company C was over after 10 minutes, which shows how efficiently these kinds of meeting could go, if all the material that myTrueSound provided for each meeting partner, would have been read by the time the meeting started.

MyTrueSound received a quick reply by the next Monday, after the initial meeting which was held on Thursday. Unfortunately, Company C politely declined partnering with Kilta, motioning that Kilta wasn't lining up with their product focus. Company C's message was framed as positively as possible, mentioning that the project was interesting and that they hadn't made the decision lightly. They also assured that they would be open for future projects and partnerships, as to keep the connection open for the future.

This whole sequence of meetings, communications and closing this talk, were all done very professionally and showed how well some companies handled their business. And although myTrueSound and Kilta are small compared to some of the other indie projects out there, they still received professional treatment and at least genuine-feeling interest towards the project and its wellbeing.

5.4.4 Competition: Bit1

During summer 2020, myTrueSound participated in a networking and competition event, called Bit1. Bit1 is a Finnish Game Award event, where there are two different categories to compete in. Best game, jury's choice, where the following criteria are used to determine the top three projects:

- Attractiveness

- Business model
- Novelty value / uniqueness
- Suitability for the target group
- Technical quality
- User experience
- Wholeness

There is also audiences choice, in case the event is done live. The jury's choice is also mainly weighted on the commercial potential of the project. Bit1 also has a preliminary round, called prebit, which myTrueSound cleared and moved onto the main round. This prebit presentation was very similar to a normal pitch, which took around 10 minutes to present. Additionally, myTrueSound provided a one minute youtube video, showing some of Kiltas main properties and gameplay mechanics.

During the preliminary prebit, myTrueSound received some feedback and praises from the jury. The game project was well fleshed out, when comparing to some of the other contenders. The game was also well thought out and received positive feedback on visuals and audio side of things, as well on the music department. Some of the more neutral or negative feedback, revolved around questions about why isn't Kilta on mobile platforms, or that the game is somewhat boring due to it being an autobattler. These things were also mentioned during the finals.

However, during the Bit1 event, Kilta ended up coming second. The first place was taken by a different game project, which had better and sharper visuals when comparing with Kilta. Of course, the games had a different art style, and didn't compete in the same category, but overall the first place was well earned by this other contender. Kiltas developer team completely understood why they came second, and received the second place with a smile.

5.4.5 Conclusion

In conclusion of the meetings that myTrueSound had with various publishers, investors and representatives, myTrueSound had to move forward without a partner. Although theoretically there isn't a set phase when a game needs to acquire a publisher partner, it becomes irrelevant the more a project moves towards the final launch. Finding a publisher in later development phases, could ease the teams workload when it comes to

marketing and social media for example, but it isn't as crucial as in the early phases, where financial support and help with planning and executing marketing campaigns. Of course, it shouldn't be undermined how important the financial support of a publisher is to a developer, even in the late stages of development.

There were few themes and reasons, which were given when representors replied to myTrueSounds partnership applications. Mainly the reasoning boiled down to three different replies, although they were phrased differently. These were:

1. This game doesn't fit our portfolio.
2. We would have wanted to partner with the project at an earlier/later stage.
3. Our publishing cycle is full.

The first reply type is easy to understand, Kilta doesn't fit the publisher company's catalog of games that have been published earlier or are planned to release in the future. So a company which specialises in publishing shooter games, isn't necessarily too keen to publish a game that is a rhythm or a racing game. Same could be said if the company is specialised in publishing for a certain platform, for example mobile phones. This reply was somewhat expected, due to some meeting appointments being made just for training and networking purposes.

The second reply is something you may not consider while booking meetings or looking for a publisher. What kind of priorities, practices and principles a publisher has, determine how and when they want to be included in the development process. Some publishers would like to be included right from the get go, from the concept stages. On the other hand, some may be interested in a quick publishing job, which happens to align with their own motives. Some of these responses also mentioned that Kilta wasn't necessarily yet fully realized, which led to unengaging gameplay during combat for example. This response could also be interpreted as the third type of response. It is undeniable that some of the publishers would have wanted to affect and influence aspects of Kilta, some would have just wanted to have more time to plan their own businessplan and calendar so that they can allocate appropriate funds and resources towards the right projects.

The third kind of response that myTrueSound usually received either directly during the meetings or during the communication after the meeting, was that the publisher in question already has a full roster or calendar for this year, or quarter. This is again something that may escape younger developers' mind while thinking and rationalizing through possible publishers. MyTrueSound started looking for publisher during the end of quarter

two, towards the start of quarter three of the year. They were also looking to publish Kilta towards the end of the year, which leaves very little time and space for publishers to maneuver around with their planning and executing of marketing campaigns. It is also highly likely, that most of the publishers would already have their plans for this year full, and there wouldn't be any extra resources to allocate towards helping Kilta and myTrueSound. This is especially true due to the ongoing pandemic. This is part of the reason also, why the second reply type mentioned earlier stages of development, which would have left more space and time between the partnership start and release. And this may be one of the most important grains of information that this thesis can offer, realizing the need of financial support earlier, giving more space for publishers and potential help to maneuver and plan for themselves.

In the end, myTrueSound moved forward without a publisher. Development of Kilta continued and entered an early-access stage, where consumers can purchase and play the product already, while it is still in development and subject to change. Determining how and when to start marketing Kilta, what kind of updates are going to happen in the near future, what comes after that, when does the game release fully and how is this all going to happen with the current resources, had to be thought out and planned at least vaguely, in order to form a plan for the next year.

MyTrueSounds weekly procedures didn't change too much from the previous. Weekly meetings to ensure progress and reporting inside the company, adding additional meeting regarding visuals and user-interfaces. Not having a publisher meant that there would be more work regarding marketing, marketing campaigns and communicating with the fanbase. Early-access meant a more rapid development, where bugs and crashes had to be ironed out as they appeared. Luckily, as of the making of this thesis, myTrueSound hasn't run into any large problem with Kilta. The development team has a clear plan towards to final launch of the game, with possible additional features planned if further development is possible.

Although myTrueSound didn't get a contract with a publisher, having a bad publisher could have been much much worse than the current situation, as in the case of developer Frogwares versus publisher Nacon. In this case, the publisher allegedly pirated and used Frogwares' intellectual property without a permission. This case is still ongoing as of the making of this thesis, which is why I would highly advice looking it up on your own.

5.5 Marketing Kilta

Like mentioned in chapter 5.4.5, Kilta and myTrueSound didn't get a publishing partner. This roughly means that future marketing, marketing planning, public relations and communication, would have to be done internally within the company. For this task, myTrueSound hired a freelancer to help with the workload, around February 2021. The amount of money used on marketing was kept to the bare minimum, as there wasn't any extra funds.

The marketing of Kilta has mainly consisted of social media marketing, marketing via Kiltas steam page, giving game keys to influencers and creating update posts regarding the development of Kilta itself. Kilta also has its own Discord channel, which is open to all interested in the game. This also acts as the straightest way for players to give feedback on the game. Discord is also a great way for people to ask questions regarding technical or future features. This is something the team has been very careful about, as promising or alluding towards something that isn't part of the plan, could backfire in the future. Asking for a release date on for example accessibility options on the game, are also received hesitantly, as giving a year or a month or an accurate date, would raise the stress and workload of the team.

The subject matters used on these social media posts and updates, consisted mainly on general topics. Topics such as:

- Introduction of an individual team member
- The state of the game
- various works in progress, such as music pieces or concept arts for future locations and characters
- roadmaps for future updates and features

Some of the earliest updates on social media consisted of teaser videos of the game.

Most targeted marketing and outward communication towards a single consumer group, were of course aimed towards the visually impaired community that had formed during earlier game projects. MyTrueSound wanted to keep this community in the development loop, and advertised for example their discord channel for Kilta towards these people. Most of the current discord members on Kiltas discord server, are from the visually impaired community.

6 GOOD LUCK KILTA

The aim of this thesis was to find a financier or publisher for myTrueSounds game Kilta, with an additional goal of creating a framework that could be used in future game development projects. These goals were set in order to save workinghours when planning such searches in the future. These goals were only half achieved, as myTrueSound is moving forward without a publisher. This decision is the result of multiple different events, and can't be pinned on any single worker or event.

The theory of this thesis acts as an entry level information package for developers, which could be utilized when planning future game projects and what different elements are developed with them. As such, it also gives developers without any kind of commercial training some pointers of which to think about when planning their projects commercial side.

In the end of this case study, myTrueSound is still developing their game project Kilta. The game is being developed in a timely manner, although financial situation within the company is the same as it was at the start of this study during summer 2020. They haven't come into an agreement with any publisher or funder and have ceased active search for such businesspartners. Although active search has for now been stopped, this doesn't mean that such opportunities wouldn't rise and utilized in the future.

This thesis also acts as the first raw version of a framework that could be used for future game development projects, when looking for funding or publisher. Through this, the additional goal of this thesis is at least somewhat achieved.

There isn't a whole lot that could have been done differently, in order to achieve a possible cooperation with a publisher. 2020 was a hard time for every industry, and even if working from home is possible in development and publishing industries, it isn't optimal. Companies were making clear decisions when it came to additional investments, due to which it was harder to get people onboard with the game project. If anything, this thesis should have been started around late 2019 or very early 2020, as it would have given some leeway for publishers to manouver, as mentioned before. Potentially this thesis should have been started even earlier than that, maybe even around the concept era, so that planning could have been done correctly. At least now it is ready for the next project.

Although the development and publishing of Kilta hasn't been exactly smooth, it is on its way to be one of the many examples of self developed and published game projects. Patch 0.9 was just released around 2021 summer, and 1.0 is realistic goal that will be released. I wish the team the best of luck, and hope to see new game projects from the team in the the future.

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Appendix 1: Nighth City Wire

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Appendix 2: Game Genres

Game Genres			
Action	Emphasize physical challenges that require hand-eye coordination and motor skill to overcome	Platform games	Primarily centered around jumping and climbing in order to progress. Example; Super Mario Bros (1985)
		Shooter games	Player interacts with the game world through a ranged weapon. Example; FPS, Call of Duty
		Fighting games	1v1 or small number against small number of opponents Example; Street Fighter, Mortal combat
		Beat 'em up games	Small number of players against wave based enemies, larger amount. Example; Dynasty Warriors
		Stealth games	Main progression tool is utilizing stealth, although straight confrontation is still possible. Examples; Thief, Metal Gear Solid
		Survival games	Center around various needs that the player character has. Such as shelter, hunger and thirst. Example; Valheim, Banished
		Battle Royale games	Blend of Survival, exploration, scavenging and action. Players usually have to scavenge the playable area in order to find resources. Examples; PUBG, Fortnite
		Rhythm games	Player has to do a function on rhythm. Examples; Guitar hero, Osu!, Dance Dance Revolution
Adventure	Purist genre, usually doesn't have any action elements inside category's games. Could be described as a "journey with options" games	Text adventures	As the name implies, games purely done in text with minor visual elements. Can have choices that affect ending. One of the oldest game genres. Examples; Zork
		Graphic adventures	Also called Point and click adventure, has visual presentation and can be commanded through mouse clicks. Examples; The Secret of Monkey Island -series
		Visual novels	Originates from Japan, has Anime style graphics usually. Could be regarded as an evolution of Text adventure, with more visuals. Examples; Clannad
		Interactive movies	Movies that had the same concept as <i>Choose your own adventure</i> - books. Player has the option to make a difference, through choices inside the movie. Examples; Cliff Hanger
		Real-time 3D adventures	Traditional adventure game with freedom of motion. Examples; Shenmue
Action - adventure	Combine action and adventure genres.	Survival Horror	Category which aims to frighten the player. Usually gives some kind of in reason to try to move forward, f.ex. A monster that chases you. Examples; Resident Evil
		Metroidvania	Games where the player gets new items and abilities that help them access previously locked and inaccessible areas. Examples; Dead Cells, Dark Souls
Role-playing	Players take control of a character and act as that character, or create a custom character.	Action RPG	Combat is realtime, contrast to the normal RPG turn-based or menu-based combat. Examples; Path of Exile, Deus Ex
		MMORPG	Massively multiplayer online role-playing games, usually has hundreds of people interacting with each other. Examples; World Of Warcraft, Tera
		Roguelikes	Name originates from 1980 game Rogue, involves dungeon crawling with high degree of randomness. Usually involves an overarching meta game with a certain loop gameplay. Metagame here means that every loop you play the game, gives you some sort of progression, even if the gaming loop starts with same resources (for example new unlockables and such) Examples; Binding of Isaac, Loop Hero
		Tactical RPG	Player controls a finite amount of characters, which move on a grid based movement system. Examples; Divinity Original Sin, Baldur's Gate saga
		Sandbox RPG	Allows the player more open approach compared to the linear story based RPGs. Players can explore the game environment without having the need to progress questlines. Examples; The Elder Scrolls, Fallout.
		First-person party-based RPG	Also known as Dungeon RPG, grid based environment seen through a single First person viewpoint. Examples; Legend of Grimrock
		JRPG	Japanese RPGs, tend to have more linear stories and a set cast of characters. Grinding for experience is also one of the characteristics of this genre. Examples; Final Fantasy saga
		Monster Tamer	Games where the player recruits different types of monsters to fight alongside with them, or for them. Examples; Pokémon, Temtem

Game genres			
Strategy	Player controls various game elements in order to attain win conditions for themselves. Examples; Age of Empires, Starcraft	4X game	comes from eXplore, eXpand, eXploit and eXterminate. Can be real-time or turn-based. Typically set in a historic setting. Examples; Civilization, Empire earth
		Artillery game	Usually turn based games, where players characters are usually tanks, which are used to destroy rivaling players via arching missiles or other ordnance. Examples; Worms, Pocket Tanks
		Auto battler (auto chess)	Player only manages where his characters are, and when they are upgraded via different methods. These characters destroy the enemy without any interference from the players. Examples; Dota Underlords, Teamfight Tactics
		Multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA)	Each player controls one character during a match. Players work as a team in order to destroy opponents main structure. Usually involves multiple lanes that are used by players in order to push towards opponents base. Examples; League Of Legends, Dota 2
		Real-time strategy (RTS)	Players make decisions based on constantly changing environment and reacting to opponents tactics by changing their own gameplan. Examples; Age of Empires series, Starcraft 2
		Real-time tactics (RTT)	Same concept as in RTS, but players control larger unitsizes and the combat is more warfare like. Examples; Total War series
		Tower defence	Players need to defend an objective against waves of computer controlled units, usually with towers or other defensive mechanics. Examples; Bloons TD, Dungeon Defenders
		Turn-based strategy (TBS)	Player(s) take turns against each other and the computer, during which they make decisions regarding their own area and how to move towards their objective. Examples; Civilization, Heroes of Might and Magic.
		Turn-based tactics (TBT)	Players use their own units with limited movement and function options, which are used in order to eliminate enemies or accomplishing a task. Examples; XCOM
		Wargame	Games involving military strategies and tactics. Examples; Company of Heroes, King Arthur
		Grand strategy wargame	Same as Wargame, but on a national level. Examples; Crusader Kings, Hearts of Iron
Simulation	Genre where the games simulate accurately different aspects of different areas, like warfare or farming.	Contruction and management simulation	Player construct for example modern cities. Examples; Simcity, Cities Skylines
		Life simulation	Player play as a virtual character with simulated life. Examples; Sims
		Vehicle simulation	Consists of flight simulation, train simulation and various other vehicle simulations. Examples; Assetto Corsa, Eurotruck simulator
Sports	Simulate real sports. Opponent is controlled by computer or other players.	Racing	Players compete by racing with different vehicles Examples; Forza, Need for speed
		Sports game	Ice hockey, football and other sports. Examples; FIFA, NHL
		Competitive	The game rules and concepts are made up and are not the traditional kind. Examples; League of Legends, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive
		Sports-based fighting	Traditional fighting environment. Examples; UFC, WWE 2K
MMO	Comes from Massively multiplayer online games. Games are usually RPGs, FPS or TBS when combined with MMO.		
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Appendix 3: Game Elements

Game Elements			
	Explanation		Explanation
Dynamics	Progress inside the game	Achievements	Set milestones the player can achieve
		Avatars	Something the player uses to represent themselves in the game
		Badges	Help engage with the player, visible reward
		Boss Fights	Bigger fights with fleshed out boss mechanics
		Collections	Things the player collects during the gameplay
		Combat	how the player interacts violently with game world
		Content unlocking	Features and items are tied to game achievements and progress
		Gifting	Allowing players to gift items within the game
		Leaderboards	Leaderboards that show who is the best in the game, according to set parameters within the game
		Levels	Players can progress through these levels and potentially unlock new mechanics and features through higher levels
		Points	Collecting these point through various actions helps determine for example leaderboards
		Quests	Things the player completes in order to progress in the game
		Social graph	Represent what kind of relations there are between entities within the game
		Teams	Factions or teams within the game and how they interact with each other
		Virtual goods	Non-physical good that can be traded with real money
Mechanics	"Verbs" of the game	Challenges	Objectives and obstacles
		Chance	A sense of uncertainty
		Competition/co-operation	The interactive design of a game
		Feedback	Real time progress report
		Resource acquisition	Ability to acquire tools to progress in the game
		Rewards	Benefits for some kind of achievement in the game
		Transactions	Exchanging with other players
		Turns	Sequences of activity
Components	"grammar" or the hidden structure that makes games coherent and draws the big picture	Constraints	Limitations in the game
		Emotions	The emotions that the game attempts to harness
		Narrative	The structure that pulls together the pieces of the game into coherent storyline
		Progression	A sense of having something to achieve - giving the game clear objectives
		Relationship	The interactivity and social dynamics that are important to the the game experience.