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MARKETING PLAN FOR PROMOTING A MOBILE GAME

Case: Freshbox Games

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this bachelor's thesis was to create a marketing plan for the startup company Freshbox Games. Freshbox Games is a mobile game developer that focuses on developing female genre mobile games for adult females.

Marketing today is an integral part of any business, especially for those who operate in a highly competitive environment, such as the mobile game industry. The author of this thesis has developed a structured marketing plan for one of the Freshbox Games offerings, the Trendy Stylist mobile game, to improve the app and brand visibility in cyberspace.

The author chooses the SOSTAC methodology for the marketing plan framework, given its comprehensive approach. Each step of the SOSTAC methodology will be covered in this paper, such as situation analysis, outlined objectives, decided strategy, concrete tactics, actions, and measures of control of the project. The final chapter includes conclusions and discussions of the entire research process and recommendations for further research.

The study was conducted from September 2021 to December 2021. The theoretical studies include data from the marketing and mobile games industry using books, academic books, and relevant electronic sources. The author used a qualitative research method, and the primary data were obtained through interviews with professionals in the mobile games industry. Secondary data were collected from reliable print and electronic sources.

This research will help a case company and other small mobile gaming companies understand effective marketing tactics and strategies that require minimal financial resources to strengthen the positioning of apps and brands in cyberspace environment through SEO, SMO, ASO, social media, and other tactics covered in this paper.

Keywords: Marketing, Mobile Games, Mobile Game Industry, SOSTAC, SEO, SMO, ASO, Social Media

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	6
2	BACKGROUND	8
2.1	Case company	8
2.2	Marketing and digital marketing	9
2.3	SOSTAC methodology	11
3	RESEARCH PROCESS AND DATA	13
3.1	Collection methods	13
3.2	Data analysis	14
4	SITUATION ANALYSIS	16
4.1	Microenvironment	16
4.1.1	Company	16
4.1.2	Collaborators	20
4.1.3	Customers	22
4.1.4	Competitors	23
4.1.5	Climate	27
4.2	Macroenvironment	31
4.2.1	PEST analysis	31
4.3	SWOT analysis	33
4.4	Summary of the chapter	37
5	OBJECTIVES & STRATEGY	38
5.1	Market segment	38
5.1.1	Customer base	39
5.1.2	Segmentation	41
5.2	SMART Objectives	42
5.3	Strategy	44
5.3.1	STP model	45
5.3.2	Integrated marketing communications	45
5.4	Acquisition	46
5.5	Engagement	47
5.6	Summary of the chapter	48
6	TACTICS	49

6.1	Marketing mix.....	49
6.2	Marketing tactics	52
6.2.1	SMO and SEO	52
6.2.2	ASO	53
6.2.3	Online and social media marketing.....	53
6.2.4	Consumer-generated content	54
6.2.5	CPM and CPC	55
6.2.6	Cross-platform promotion	55
6.2.7	Mobile game publishers.....	56
6.2.8	Affiliate marketing	56
6.3	Summary of the chapter.....	57
7	ACTION AND CONTROL.....	58
7.1	Actions	58
7.2	Control	61
7.3	Summary of the chapter.....	61
8	CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION.....	63
8.1	Conclusion	63
8.2	Recommendations	66
8.3	Discussions.....	66
	REFERENCES	68
	APPENDICES.....	76

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the importance of digital marketing has skyrocketed in almost all industries. Undoubtedly, the world has changed, and we are moving deeper into digitalization. 2020 pandemic demonstrated that even governments suggested avoiding social interactions and recommended shopping, studying, and working from home, therefore cultivating further digitalization.

However, while the raging pandemic has wiped out many businesses in several sectors, the opposite has been for the gaming industry. One of the most pass leisure activities is mobile games. The accessibility and convenience of engine development platforms where mobile games are created allow anyone to try their luck on building games. Therefore, since a mobile game can be made by anyone who acquires concrete technical skills, what matters is the idea of the game, good graphics, rich content, and, most importantly - *marketing*.

The purpose and aim of the study

Since the mobile games market is desirable for developers at all levels, smartphone owners and mobile game users are constantly growing every year. As well as thousands of mobile apps are released every day. Therefore, it is *marketing* that determines whether the game will be heard or die in obscurity. All this indicates the importance of marketing planning regardless of the size of the company.

Therefore, this raises the question of how small startups can compete with wealthy mobile gaming companies that spend thousands or millions on their marketing campaigns?

Consequently, the research question: How can a startup promote its mobile game to its target audience?

This thesis *purpose* is to create a marketing plan for a small mobile game company Freshbox Games, and its mobile game Trendy Stylist. Freshbox Games, like most startups, has limited financial resources. Therefore, this thesis aims to find the most effective methods with the least financial resources required to maximize marketing results and optimize the apps and brand's visibility in cyberspace.

Research method

The theoretical part of this thesis consists of an analysis of various types of literature designed for marketing, digital marketing, mobile games, and the mobile games industry, correspondingly linking them to the practical research part, where the theories will be applied to actual marketing activities.

The empirical part of this thesis consists of qualitative research, that is, interviews gathered from industry professionals. The empirical research will attempt to show the actual situation in the mobile game industry. A qualitative method was selected for this study to gather primary data and to gain in-depth knowledge from industry professionals as it is a better complement to research than a quantitative method, such as survey research.

Structure of the thesis

In the first chapter of the thesis, the reader is introduced to the short explanation of the topic, research question, purpose and aim of the work, research method, and ends with a description of the thesis structure. The second chapter consists of the case company's background, explanation of the marketing, digital marketing, marketing plan, and its importance, followed by an introduction to the SOSTAC methodology. The following third chapter consists of explanation of the research process and gathered data analysis from the research companies. The fourth chapter begins with an analysis of the first step of the SOSTAC methodology, such as analyzing and understanding the current situation in a case company and its internal and external factors affecting the business. The fifth chapter combines the objectives and strategy. The author describes stated objectives and defines the best marketing strategies to reach its outlined objectives. The sixth chapter describes the actual tactics of the marketing mix, which will be implemented to achieve the objectives. The seventh chapter will combine actions and control with actual actions that implement the entire plan with a concrete roadmap and controlled measurements that will be measured in order to achieve goals. And the last eight chapter answers the research question, suggestions for further research, and ends with discussions.

2 BACKGROUND

This chapter provides a brief overview of the case company, marketing, digital marketing, and the framework chosen for the marketing plan, the SOSTAC methodology.

2.1 Case company

Freshbox games is a mobile game studio that was founded in July 2020. Freshbox Games is based in Oulu, Finland, and employs five international individuals with a gaming and ICT industry background. They acquire newly built mobile games and create their mobile games. Currently on their profile are five mobile games, and three of them are specially designed for the female audience.

Now the company's primary focus is on three of their female genre games, such as "Trendy Stylist," "Idle Kitty-Shopkeeper," and "Fashion Boutique." All three games are built upon creating new experiences for female players.

However, since the Trendy Stylist is a fully developed mobile game and at the beginning of January 2022 will be relaunched on the AppStore and Google Play app stores. While the other two female genre games are in the development phase; therefore, the author of this thesis will write a marketing plan for the Trendy Stylist game. However, all the marketing activities explained in this paper can be used as a framework for other mobile games.

Contribution of the author to the company

The author of this thesis joined the company as an intern in the autumn of 2020. After completing the internship, she remained with the company as part-time marketing staff, in parallel with her studies at the Oulu University of Applied Science. Her primary responsibilities included monitoring social media accounts, content creation, promotional materials, and other marketing tasks.

All the detailed information presented in this paper about a company was collected and based on work experience and access to the Freshbox Games database and communication with company members.

The author of this thesis uses the term *startup* for the Freshbox Game's company because it best describes its current position. The term startup refers to a company at the start of its business. Startups are usually created by enterprisers who see market demand and think they can provide a suitable offering. Startups typically start with high costs and limited profits, so they look to various investment sources for support. (Grant 2021, date of retrieval 19.11.2021.)

2.2 Marketing and digital marketing

To emphasize the importance of marketing, all incorporated actions, such as market and client research, aim to significantly increase client value, which will increase ROI (return on investment) and profitability ratios. The foundation for successful marketing efforts is based on the knowledge that can be used to develop justified business strategies, raise ROI, drive more prosperous innovations, improve brands, improve your advertising effectiveness, and cement online marketing strives. (Fojt 2005, 3.)

Digitalization has turned marketing at its kernel; now, we are mainly dealing with consumers of cyberspace. Where consumers can instantly find information about a company, service, or product on the Internet. Digitalization, with its global reach and emerging consumer power, creates enormous uncertainty in marketing planning. (Wind, Mahajan et al. 2001, 3-4.) Previously, consumers were guided by their preferences, usually in the case of a seller's advertising campaign. Nowadays, when consumers make purchasing decisions, they pay more attention to their living climate. People are looking for advice and reviews about products or services both online and offline. Casual brand talk is now more trustworthy than targeted ad campaigns. Furthermore, the overall brand image is currently being shaped by the consumer communities and not by advertising. (Kotler, Kartajaya, Setiawan. 2017, 6-7.) Therefore, noticeably vertical power structure with the exclusive and individual approach is thinning out, and a more horizontal approach with inclusive and social force is coming into the power (Kotler et al. 2017, 6). Consumer communities now dictate the trends and producers must follow, not anymore, the other way around. This demonstrates how digitalization, with its instant connection ability, puts the power in the hands of consumers. Therefore, for businesses is pivotal to understand their customers in cyberspace and manage the business situation with the help of digital marketing and its provided tools.

So, what is digital marketing?

Despite the fact that digital marketing was born due to technological development and internet accessibility, it has nothing to do with the technology itself. Digital marketing is all about people who use this technology. (Ryan 2017, 4.)

Digital marketing includes all types of marketing activities through electronic devices, such as computers, mobile phones, or tablets connected to the Internet to reach a customer. Businesses use digital channels, such as search engines, social media, email, and others to communicate with current and potential customers. (Barone 2020, date of retrieval 13.10.2021.)

Why digital marketing?

With digital marketing, companies have limitless opportunities to understand better their customers, such as verifying the success of a digital marketing campaign by analyzing campaign outcomes, tracking their site visitors and behavior patterns, utilizing search engines by using relevant keywords, and many more. The main categories of digital marketing communications are websites, search advertisements, display ads, and emails. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 638.) Digital marketing gives companies more opportunities to communicate directly with their customers and leverage the cyberspace environment for the good of the company.

Therefore, it is crucial for companies to keep their marketing activities under control and understand their target market. Otherwise, if it is not considered, it can damage the business and lead to the loss of financial resources and reputation. Successful marketing requires a marketing plan. According to Kotler and Keller (2016, 59), a marketing plan is vital for managing and coordinating marketing strives. It defines the overall situation in the company, determines the target market and value proposition based on market research. Correspondingly, it selects the best strategies followed by marketing tactics that will be implemented to reach its identified target audience and the company's stated goals.

The author of this thesis selects the SOSTAC methodology as the basis for the marketing plan for the Trendy Stylist mobile game. Since the SOSTAC structure includes all relevant questions that need to be researched and analyzed to comprehend them. So, to say, taking a path through studying the company's current situation, determining where the company wants to be in terms of

its goals, defining what marketing actions need to be taken to achieve the goals, and monitoring the implemented activities and results obtained.

2.3 SOSTAC methodology

The SOSTAC methodology was developed by PR Smith in 1990. The SOSTAC model provides a company with a well-thought-out framework that defines a comprehensive approach to assessing the internal and external environment impacts that might affect its marketing plans. The acronym SOSTAC stands for Situation analysis, Objectives, Strategy, Tactics, Actions, and Control. (Strong 2014, 161.)

The author of this thesis has chosen the SOSTAC methodology (Figure 2.1) as the marketing plan framework for this work, given its thoughtful structure of the components of the planning model, especially considering the cyberspace environment.



Figure 2.1 The SOSTAC methodology (adopted from Van Engelen 2019, 158)

The author will go through each stage of the SOSTAC model and answer the following key questions:

Situation analysis – what is the current situation of the company in terms of the micro and macro environment?

Objectives – defines where the company wants to be?

Strategy – a plan for how the company will get there?

Tactics – what exactly must be done to get there?

Action – what is the final plan?

Control – how is the company performing?

3 RESEARCH PROCESS AND DATA

The thesis writing process began in September 2021, when theoretical information was collected about the marketing and mobile gaming industry. Part of the sources for theoretical research was sourced from the internet to obtain up-to-date information. The mobile gaming industry is fast-growing and ever-changing. For this reason, some of the information in the educational materials may not be relevant in the modern world. Therefore, resources for the theoretical research include books, journals, articles, marketing blogs, and public statistics.

To complement the theoretical data, the empirical research aimed to obtain additional information and opinions from industry professionals about the best marketing practices for mobile games to complement the answer to the main research question. The research was conducted through face-to-face interviews on the Zoom online platform with a duration of no longer than 30 minutes to respect their valuable time.

The first subsection explains the data collection methods and concludes with an analysis of the collected data.

3.1 Collection methods

This study consists of qualitative research. Qualitative research is focused on the study of a humanistic approach and is a subjective assessment. Generalization usually occurs in quantitative studies. The qualitative method is used to understand people's views, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions and generates data that is not numbers. (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad 2010, 7.)

There are two types of data, such as primary data and secondary data. The primary data is generated by the person conducting the study, and the secondary data has already been gathered and compiled for other purposes. (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad 2010, 86.) The author of this thesis uses both data sources, such as primary data collected from the interviews and observation. And secondary data is obtained from internet searches for various reports.

The author has developed semi-structured interview questions to collect primary data. The interviews aimed to obtain first-hand information from the industry professionals and their marketing practices. All interview questions were related to marketing. However, the author allowed the interviewees to express their opinions and suggestions during the interview.

To collect data from the interviews, the author sought help from people involved in the mobile gaming industry and searched websites for appropriate email addresses to contact mobile game companies. Having compiled a list of mobile gaming companies, the author contacted them by email (see Appendix 1).

3.2 Data analysis

The interview was conducted once for each company in November 2021. The research companies involved in this study are one Finnish company, Riimu Games, and Purple Tree Studio from Argentina. The author interviewed Timo Kähtävä from Riimu Games and Pablo Cerrutti from Purple Tree Studio and asked five open interview questions. The interview questions can be found in the appendices of this thesis (Appendix 2).

The first question aimed to find out research companies' attitudes towards marketing. The interview results show that both research companies realize the importance of marketing in the mobile gaming industry. Both companies plan their internal marketing activities. However, the Riimu Games primarily focus on games that global publishers would publish and do marketing and UA campaigns for them. In comparison, Purple Tree endeavors to plan for the right marketing strategies and run investigations before they release their games to the market. They also recognize that well-planned marketing strategies are just as important as the game itself and always listen to their gamer's feedback and suggestions.

The second question related to the most-used marketing channels used by the research companies. Both research companies sell themselves on the app stores, as well as on their websites. Both companies utilize online promotional channels as seeing them most effective, such as Reddit and Facebook are used for both. The Reddit platform has seen growing importance among gaming communities. Reddit is an online platform that allows communities to network, where people come together and interact with each other by sharing news and content or commenting (Reddit 2021, date of retrieval 20.11.2021). In addition, Purple Tree makes use of e-

sports events and YouTube influencers. Nevertheless, for Riimu Games, the top marketing channel is the mobile game conferences to find the right publisher for their games.

The third question is related to the company's challenges when launching a new game. The main focus of Riimu Games is to find the right publishers so they can focus on game development without worrying about marketing. At the same time, Purple Tree admits that the gaming market is complex and highly competitive. Therefore, retaining existing players and finding new ones can be difficult and expensive. For this reason, Purple Tree is also working with publishers to reduce marketing investment by them for user acquisition and other marketing-related investments.

Partnering with global publishers has been one of the most prominent proposals for smaller startup companies in order to introduce the game to a broader market and handle part of marketing for them.

The fourth question aimed to understand whether there is a need for a different marketing approach for a female audience. Riimu Games' Timo believes that people are more than just gender, and quality offerings appeal to both sexes. However, he notes that some gender differences and preferences should be considered when trading games. Also, Pablo from Purple Tree studio thinks that every genre requires different marketing tactics and approaches. Hence, whether games are aimed at men, women, or children, marketers need to find the channels and ways that a specific audience prefers.

And the final fifth question aimed at finding the most effective marketing methods that startups could benefit from the most. Timo from Riimu Games highlights the importance of networking in the mobile gaming community to seek advice from their industry counterparts. Meanwhile, Pablo from Purple Tree suggested partnering with global mobile game publishers. Therefore, startups can focus on their core activities and rely on publisher marketing. However, reminded not to forget about internal marketing or leave the marketing activities at the last moment before launching a game. But utilize free marketing tools, such as social media, to build fan pages and engage with players before the game launches.

4 SITUATION ANALYSIS

This chapter explains the first step of the SOSTAC methodology, a situation analysis, which aims to provide an overview of the current situation in the company and the industry in which it operates. This is done in order to understand the pros and cons of the company, highlight the positives and identify weaknesses.

There are internal and external factors that are affecting the business, which are also called microenvironment and macroenvironment. The microenvironment is all the internal business activities by all the members associated with the company to serve its customers, such as the company, suppliers, competitors, intermediaries, partners, the public, and customers. In contrast, the macroenvironment investigates a more expansive social scope which consists of 6 different forces that can impact the microenvironment, such as demographic, economic, political, ecological, cultural, and technological aspects. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 95–98.)

To understand the company's microenvironment, the author of this thesis will utilize the five C's model to analyze the company's internal factors. This is followed by a macroenvironment examination with the help of PEST analysis and sum up findings in the SWOT analysis.

4.1 Microenvironment

To evaluate the microenvironment, the author will utilize the five C's marketing model, a framework for a situation analysis that helps marketers assess the company's current situation relative to the field in which the business operates. Five C's model consists of five terms, and it typically includes the company, customers, competitors, collaborators, and climate. (Alson 2021, date of retrieval 5.11.2021.)

4.1.1 Company

The Five C's model starts by assessing how well the company is prepared and meets the requirements of the company's audience (Alson 2021, date of retrieval 5.11.2021). According to Kotler and Keller (2016, 76), in today's world, it is vital to build good relationships with all

stakeholders at the micro-level of the company, such as employees, customers, partners, suppliers, and so on. The company should not exclude a single member of the microenvironment. Therefore, satisfied employees put more effort and interest in the quality of the product or service, thereby creating happy customers who remain loyal to the company, spread good words, and recommend the product or service to others, thus increasing profits and market share to the satisfaction of other stakeholders.

In the summer of 2020, three passionate gamers with years of experience in the mobile game industry decided to combine their ideas, skills and try their luck at creating their own mobile games and founded Freshbox Games. Freshbox Games is a startup that develops mobile games as well as acquires newly built games.

Why acquire mobile games if can build their own?

Often game enthusiasts build exciting and engaging games, however for whatever reason cannot carry on with the game, for instance, due to the lack of technical expertise, finances, or other issues. Then it is time for Freshbox Games, with its professional development and business skills accumulated over several years working for smaller and larger mobile game companies and utilizing their knowledge to improve an existing game and thus give a game a second life.

Freshbox Games is currently focusing on creating and improving mobile games specifically designed for the female audience.

Freshbox Games insights

During the work process at the Freshbox Games, one of the founders always emphasized that the mobile game business is very much hit-driven. There is never a certainty that the games that game companies are developing will be a hit. Before it becomes a hit, the success of any game studio is based on its team that works together, learns together, and becomes increasingly more efficient on testing new game ideas and making decisions about which game ideas should be developed further and which should be stopped.

In terms of the quality of human resources – Freshbox Games employs two full-stack developers with years of experience creating mobile games on various development platforms. A

businessperson with many years of managerial experience in the mobile games field, thanks to which essential contacts have been established with industry professionals. As well as an experienced game designer with many years of experience in game development. Plus, a part-time marketing member.

Research and Development - Based on observations during practice at Freshbox Games, R&D projects are carried out by releasing the first version and launching the game in a specific area, for instance, Brazil, to test Freshbox Games' vision. Based on the soft launch test results, then they plan to continue developing the game during their second R&D project. And after the second R&D project, take the games to global distribution.

In terms of finances, Freshbox Games has two investors who cover server costs, website costs, and other expenditures, where in return, owning a portion of a company.

Like most startups, Freshbox Games is no different and, one of the current drawbacks is the lack of sufficient financial resources for various marketing and business events.

Mission, vision, and values

To be successful, the company must identify its mission, vision, and values. With the mission statement, the company defines its prime aim in a simple sentence that explains what they offer to their customers and the goal. (Kaplan, Norton & Barrows 2008, 1-2.) Nevertheless, besides the company's overall mission statement, they should also identify individual product or service missions (Kotler & Keller 2016, 71). A vision is a statement of where the company sees itself in the medium to long term (3-10 years) and how it wants others to perceive them. The vision announcement must be a) quantified success indicator, such as top or leading, b) definition of niche, and c) time defined. (Kaplan, Norton & Barrows 2008, 3.) Whereas *values* state the company's core values in terms of organizational culture, desired behaviors patterns, and so on (Kaplan, Norton & Barrows 2008, 2).

Freshbox Games is a mobile game startup company that has put emphasis on creating free-to-play (F2P) lifestyle games for the female audience. With its mission to capture first the female audience. Currently on their portfolio are three female genre games, two beta versions, and one fully developed game Trendy Stylist.

According to a joint study by Newzoo and Google Play, women make up 49% of the United States mobile gaming population, and 64% of women compared to 38% of men prefer mobile platforms over other gaming platforms. However, most female players do not think mobile games are made for them. (McDonald 2017, date of retrieval 5.10.2021.)

Freshbox Games' vision is to become one of the leading company in creating new experiences for female players within five years. This vision may sound loud at first, but there are currently very few mobile game studios focused on making new experiences for female gamers and leaving the possibilities open to everyone.

The core values of the company are teamwork, transparency, and high quality. These values are reflected in day-to-day operations, such as teamwork, where all the voices are heard to ensure maximum results are accomplished. Transparency, where internal and external communication is clear and transparent, favors a free and respectful exchange of information. As well as providing high-quality gameplay and customer support.

Business model

Gaming online has seen continuous growth, since its accessibility to the internet, even for people who live in distant areas. Users can sign up for online services over a satellite connection and get as high-speed internet as people in the city hubs. PCs, consoles, handhelds, and mobile platforms can be easily linked to the internet and give the players instant connection to other gamers across the globe. (Mitchell 2012, 234.)

Therefore, to attract as many users around the world as possible, Freshbox Games' business model for mobile games is F2P, which stands for free to play. Mobile games can be easily downloaded for free from app stores, and developers monetize the game through in-app purchases, rewarded video ads, and branded content. As fashion combines very well with games as a business model of services, new fashion collections appear every month, and numerous fashion events are held worldwide.

Online games are put into three basic categories – Massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs), Social games or Portals (Mitchell 2012, 234), Trendy Stylist game falls under (MMOGs) category.

Characteristics of the MMOG type of game – brings together a large number of gamers from all across the globe through the internet connection into a virtual world. MMOG type of games are highly social and provide an instant and consistent environment where gamers can simultaneously interact. MMO games can be played on multiple platforms, such as computers, tablets, and mobile phones. (Mitchell 2012, 234-235.)

The most common MMOG business model is that the original game is free to download and can be playable for free until a certain level or given time (Mitchell 2012, 235). However, Trendy Stylist's business model combines MMOG and Social game's most common business models, such as the game being free to download and play.

The Trendy Stylist can be played on a tablet or mobile device. Monetization occurs through virtual items such as in-game purchases – buying skins or clothes, makeup, accessories, level skipping, and so on, which players can purchase while playing the game. Selling add-ons, for instance, a bundle with exclusive and valuable items for an advantageous price. Video ads are played after a gamer has reached a certain level in the game, or optional reward ads after whom a gamer can earn extra in-game currency to purchase in-game items. And banner ads can be displayed in the game permanently or occasionally pop up. (cf. Mitchell 2012, 235-236.)

4.1.2 Collaborators

Collaborators in the five C's model refer to the parties involved in the supply chain to run a business. For a marketer is essential to understand how their supply chain works to make effective adjustments if necessary. (Alson 2021, date of retrieval 5.11.2021.) According to Kotler and Keller (2016, 34), marketing consists of a task environment, which forms the micro level, and a broad environment, which forms the macro level. A task environment refers to the parties involved in producing, distributing, and promoting a product or service made by a company. These are the company's suppliers, distributors, dealers, and others who contribute to bringing the company's final product to market. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 34.)

Freshbox Games have different partners for different services offered, and the partners are as follows:

Google Play and the Apple Store

The most common mobile gaming platforms used to distribute mobile games worldwide are Google Play and the Apple Store, as they make up the majority of mobile app users. Android is a mobile operating system developed by Google (Chen 2021, date of retrieval 14.10.21) and iOS is a mobile operating system designed by Apple for iPhone, iPad, and other Apple mobile devices (Kenton 2021, date of retrieval 14.10.2021). Google Play terms and conditions for developers are onetime fees of 25 USD, with revenue split of 70% developer and 30% collects Google Play (Google play, date of retrieval 5.11.2021). Whereas Apple Store charges an annual fee of 99 USD, as well as a revenue split, 70% to the developer and 30% collects Apple Store (Apple Store, date of retrieval 5.11.2021).

Unity and React Native

Most of the games in the Freshbox Games portfolio are built on the Unity platform. Unity is a real-time 3D development platform for creating 2D and 3D applications, including games. Unity supports mobile, desktop, consoles, TV, VR, AR, and the web. Unity starts free of charge and is available for both Windows and MacOS. (Unity 2021, date of retrieval 5.11.2021.)

Only Trendy Stylist game is currently built on React Native, a UI software framework created by Facebook, Inc. It is used to develop mobile and web apps for Android, iOS, or other platforms. (React Native 2021, date of retrieval 5.11.2021.) However, given the specifics of the Trendy Stylist game, an online game with a real-time voting system, the server cost on React Native is higher than expected. For this reason, Freshbox Games is currently working on porting the game to the Unity platform to keep server costs down. The project is scheduled for completion in December 2021, and the game will resume in January 2022.

AdMob

Freshbox Games' monetization partner currently is AdMob. AdMob is Google's advertising platform for advertising and monetizing mobile apps. AdMob offerings allow app developers to advertise their apps with in-app ads and monetize their apps by allowing in-app ads. (AdMob 2021, date of retrieval 5.11.2021.) Freshbox Games utilizes native, rewarded, and banner ads that AdMob provides for the Trendy Stylist game.

4.1.3 Customers

Customers' term of the Five C's model focuses on determining the customers' requirements and what kind of customers a company is trying to satisfy (Alson 2021, date of retrieval 5.11.2021).

Market growth in the mobile gaming industry is getting stronger every year since it started lesser than 30 years ago when the first mobile game hit the market and hasn't stopped since then. Mobile devices have changed the global gaming landscape. This form of device, which is easy to carry and accessible to more and more people around the world, has given billions of people access to portable entertainment. The market value of content for mobile games, according to Statista research, was about 104 billion USD in 2020, and the latest forecasts suggest that this figure will exceed 121 billion by 2022, as mobile device penetration and smartphone use continues to reach new heights. (Clement, date of retrieval 15.09.2021.)

Mobile gaming is a fast-growing industry, but the majority of mobile games are made for men. Very few mobile gaming companies are focused on creating new experiences for female players. Recognizing the market demand, Freshbox Games put emphasis and focus on creating realistic, personalized mobile games for a female audience. Freshbox Games' value proposition is targeted at women between the ages of 18 and 35.

Value proposition refers to what kind of value a company provides to its customers, customer issues that a particular product/service solves, and where it is outperforming the rivals (Van Engelen 2019, 162). This will unfold in the following subchapter 4.3 when analyzing competitors.

Based on Flurry's study, women spend more time, money and are more loyal to their games than men. The study found (Figure 4.1) that women spend 35% more time on games than men, as well as women make 31% more in-app purchases on the Flurry platform than men. In addition, women are much more likely to return to their games after installing the app, and the day seven retention rate is 42% higher than the male audience. (Khalaf 2014, date of retrieval 5.11.2021.)

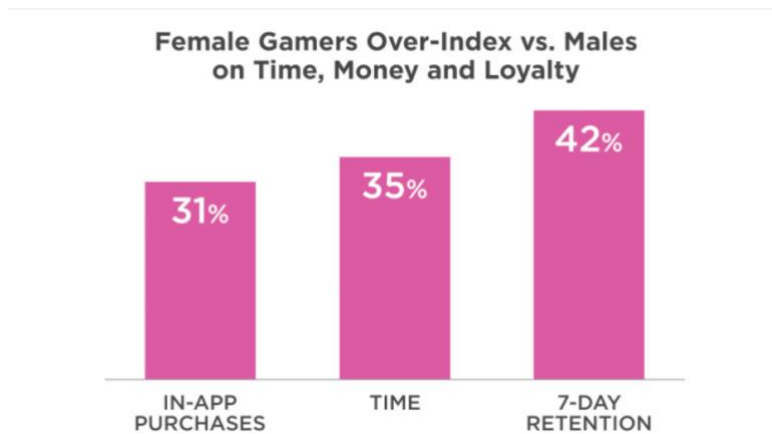


Figure 4.1 Female gamers over-index versus males on time, money, and loyalty (retrieved from the study by Flurry 2014)

These findings indicate the need to properly serve female mobile game consumers by providing specially designed games for women. In Chapter 5, the author will identify the segment and the ideal customer for the Trendy Stylist game.

4.1.4 Competitors

All companies come across a broad diapason of rivals. Competitor analysis is essential for understanding consumer purchasing decisions and competitor strategies. Studying the performance of a company's competitors can help a company improve its performance and marketing tactics. (Ramachandra, Chandrashekara, Shivakumar 2009, 47.)

Analyzing competitors

When the main rivals and their objectives are recognized, marketers must answer the following questions: Who are they? How do they compete against you? How do you compete against them? (Kotler & Keller 2016, 300.)

After exploring the female genre offerings provided in the app stores such as Google Play and AppStore, and based on the data obtained, the author of this thesis believes that the closest competitors of Trendy Stylist game are Covet Fashion and Kim Kardashian: Hollywood. Correspondingly, the author of this thesis will examine the three questions, such as who they are, how they compete against Trendy Stylist, and how Trendy Stylist competes against them.

Who is *Covet Fashion* Game?

Covet Fashion mobile game was created by Crowdstar Inc (Wikipedia 2021, date of retrieval 4.10.2021). It's a casual F2P shopping and dress-up game (App Store 2021, date of retrieval 4.10.2021). The gameplay is that the players purchase and select clothes and accessories from a range of offerings from their in-game stores (Covet Fashion 2021, date of retrieval 4.10.2021). The game has been downloaded by millions of mobile gamers worldwide in app stores and, according to the author of this thesis, is the closest competitor to the Trendy Stylist game.

How does Covet Fashion compete against Trendy Stylist?

They partner with numerous well-known, for example, Calvin Klein and unknown fashion brands. Investing a lot of financial resources in marketing activities and marketing communications and actively using paid, owned, and earned media. Well-established gaming community on various social media platforms. For example, on Instagram, they have 251 000 and on Facebook 829 000 followers. Covet Fashion search engines are optimized on web browsers and app stores. Their target audience is adult females with an eye for the latest fashion styles and trends.

How does Trendy Stylist compete against Covet Fashion?

Trendy Stylist has more realistic looks regarding the product design and gameplay process. Players can create their avatar by choosing skin color, ethnicity, hair color and style, and makeup unlike, Covet Fashion, where all avatars are supermodel looking and not as many choices to choose from to build your avatar. Figure 4.2 below is a screenshot of the Trendy Stylist game, and Figure 4.3 is a screenshot of Covet Fashion game taken during the gameplay for comparison.



Figure 4.2 Trendy Stylist screenshot.



Figure 4.3 Covet Fashion screenshot

Trendy Stylist game offers engaging game challenges, where everyone can test their taste in style and see if others approve it. Currently, Trendy Stylist mainly utilizes free media on social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook. And B2B social media on LinkedIn, Reddit, and Twitter.

When looking at user reviews of app stores such as Google Play and AppStore, the most common complaint about Covet Fashion was that in-app purchases are costly, and there are no other ways to earn in-game currency. In contrast, Trendy Stylist provides to watch rewarded ads to make extra in-game currency in order to acquire in-game items.

Who is Kim Kardashian: Hollywood?

Kim Kardashian: Hollywood game was created by Glue for teens (Google Play 2021, date of retrieval 4.10.2021). Kim Kardashian: Hollywood is a casual F2P role-playing mobile game that has been active on the app stores since 2014. The gamer's goal is to increase its fame during the game, from the bottom E-list to the top A-list. At the forefront of the game is the American social media star Kim Kardashian, in which her hero appears regularly. (Wikipedia 2021, date of retrieval 4.10.2021.)

How do they compete against Trendy Stylist?

Utilizes a celebrity at the forefront in order to attract millions of star's admirers. Well, established and financed marketing activities and marketing communications and paid and free media. Very well-established gaming community on various social media platforms. For example, on Instagram, they have 449 000 and on Facebook 1,6 Million followers. Also, Kim Kardashian: Hollywood search engines are optimized on web browsers and app stores.

How does Trendy Stylist compete against Kim Kardashian: Hollywood?

The below Figure 4.4 presents a screenshot of the Trendy Stylist game, and Figure 4.5 illustrates a screenshot of the Kim Kardashian: Hollywood game taken during the gameplay for comparison.



Figure 4.4 Trendy Stylist screenshot



Figure 4.5 Kim Kardashian: Hollywood screenshot

Despite the fact, the Trendy Stylist target audience is adult females aged 18-35. Also, the game could be popular among teens. According to the Statista research department, Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms globally (Statista 2021, date of retrieval 5.10.2021).

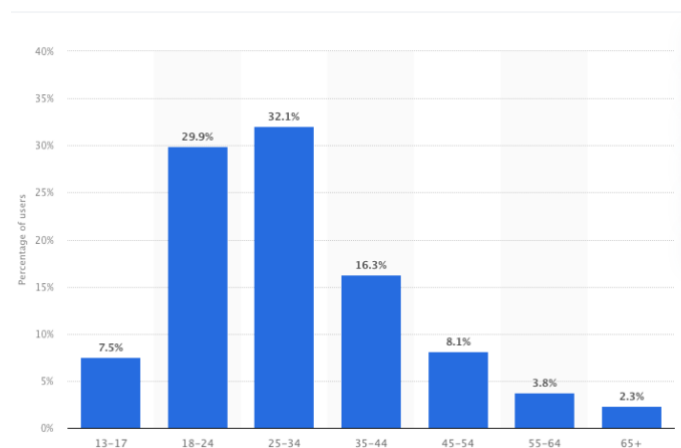


Figure 4.6 Distribution of Instagram users worldwide as of July 2021, by age group (retrieved from Statista platform 2021)

Figure 4.6 shows the distribution of Instagram consumers by age group.

And the Trendy Stylist is just like Instagram made into a game with realistic 2D art. In comparison, Kardashians Hollywood is cartoony looking.

Inference of rivals

Going through the offerings on the app stores, the author has noticed that most mobile fashion games have outdated looks and design, as well as most dress-up games, are targeted at children and are very cartoony. Also, there is no real game with the dress-up at the core and realistic clothing.

The main disadvantage opposed to Trendy Stylist rivals is the lack of sufficient financial resources, which affects marketing communications and overall business activities. However, the advantages are that the Trendy Stylist game can offer to the market a realistic-looking fashion game with the dress-up at the core (Figure 4.7).

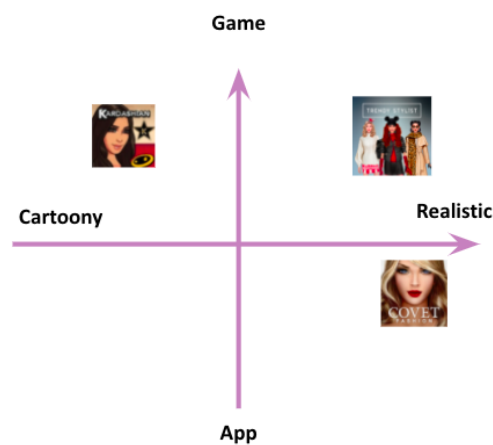


Figure 4.7 shows the Trendy Stylist position oppose competitors

4.1.5 Climate

The last part of the five C's marketing model is climate analysis (Alson 2021, date of retrieval 5.11.2021). The author of this thesis chooses to assess the competitive climate in the mobile game industry and, for this matter, will utilize Porter's five forces model to evaluate the current market situation.

According to Warner (2010, 42), Porter's five forces model is the most well-known and commonly used analysis to evaluate how attractive the market is, the level of competition within a particular industry, and its impact on a company's profitability. It refers to five main forces demonstrated in

Figure 4.8: barriers to entry, buyers' power, rivalry, substitute power, and supplier power in the industry.

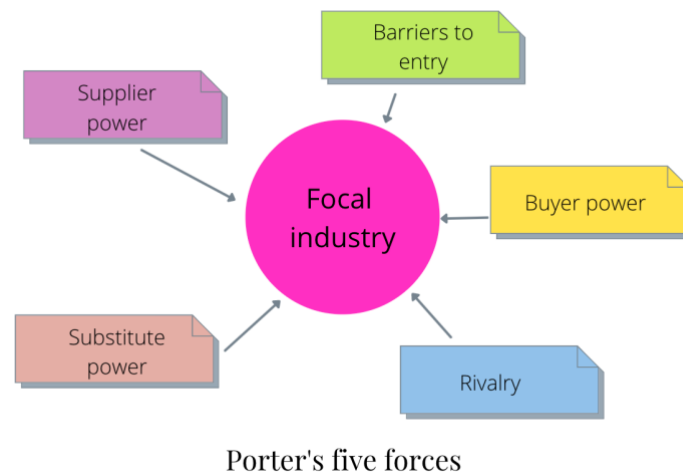


Figure 4.8 Porter's five forces (adopted from Warner 2010, 43)

Barriers to entry

Barriers to entry refer to industry conditions that warn potential market participants to take into consideration factors such as technical economies, commercial economies, financial economies, marketing economies, managerial economies, and assess if the company can adequately cover all aspects plus make a profit (Warner 2010, 44-46).

The mobile gaming industry is currently one of the most popular industries and attracts many interested people ready to take a piece of this rich pie. As a result, the barriers to entry into the mobile gaming industry are relatively low, and therefore the level of competition is high. However, marketing and distribution channels require significant resources. Where prominent players in the market have the volume and networking that younger players lack, this creates some entry barriers.

Regarding marketing and managerial economies.

Founders have successfully run businesses in the Nordic region and worked for others globally. They have an international background in product and project management and bringing services into use, which will be an asset to Freshbox Games solutions being developed. Furthermore, accumulated partner negotiations skills will be essential in building partnerships with international partners. In addition, a part-time employee handles In-house marketing tasks.

In terms of financial economies.

Financing is always a barrier for any startup tech company. Freshbox games are seeking out investment from investors as well as looking into possibilities to apply for government fundings.

Buyer's power

Buyer's power indicates the significance of buyer's power to influence pricing strategies and other business operations (Warner 2010, 68-69).

Bargaining power for consumers is very high. The app stores are overwhelmed with a plethora of various types of mobile games, and if the gamer is not satisfied with your game, they are only one click away from rivals' games. According to Tenbush (2020, date of retrieval 14.10.2021), free-to-play (F2P) apps are the most popular among gamers. Therefore, paid apps are not that attractive to players. *So, to say, why pay if I can get a similar app for free.*

That is the main reason why Freshbox Games focuses on building free-to-play mobile games in order to reach a higher number of users and monetize its games through in-app purchases and video ads, and branded content.

Supplier power

Supplier power refers to supplier power to change prices or rules and therefore significantly affect the business and its operations (Warner 2010, 62-64).

Suppliers in the mobile game industry are the app store platforms, such as Google Play and AppStore, from which the mobile games can be accessed. If a developer wants to launch the game on such platforms, they must pay the fees and follow the rules they provide.

However, more prominent players like Epic Games recently filed a lawsuit against Apple over a 30% commission that Apple charges developers. As a result, according to Austin Carr from Bloomberg magazine, there have been some significant changes in industry standards as developers began to fight giant corporations, such as Apple and Google, to reduce or eliminate the

huge fees they charge to developers and other antitrust violations. (Carr 2021, date of retrieval 14.10.2021.)

Yet, despite the few changes, supplier power remains high due to the lack of relevant alternatives in the industry.

Substitute power

Substitute power refers to alternative products or services that can put a company's offering at risk and, therefore, lose some of its client bases (Warner 2010, 71-72).

The substitute power is moderate or low. Other entertainment programs, such as other social media apps, may more likely affect the amount of time a player plays mobile games.

Rivalry

Rivalry conditions refer to competitive advantages and disadvantages regarding the industry's overall situation (Warner 2010, 72-74).

The mobile games market is highly competitive, and barriers to entry are relatively low, making it easier for new entrants to enter the mobile game market.

Developers compete for players. Factors that impact the competition levels are the quality of game content, user experience, brand awareness, and access to distribution channels.

Based on AppsFlyer's analysis, mobile game advertisement spending was 22 billion USD in 2019. As a result, global game developers are looking to fund even more finances in user acquisition by 2022 and are expected to reach 48.5 billion USD. (Frid 2020, date of retrieval 15.10.2021.) This shows to what extent the rivalry intensity is high. All developers fight for user attention and spend thousands and millions on marketing campaigns.

4.2 Macroenvironment

To assess the impact of the macroenvironment on a business, the author will use PEST analysis, a strategic method that a company can utilize to evaluate and understand the external factors of the macro-environment that can affect business operations. Acronym PEST stands for Political, Economic, Social, Technological factors. (Rastogi & Trivedi 2016, 385.)

4.2.1 PEST analysis

Political factors oversee the areas and the extent to which the government can influence the economy or a specific industry, such as policy and changes in legislation, level of democracy, and other factors (Rastogi & Trivedi 2016, 385).

The political environment in Finland is stable. Regarding the long-term political risk index, Finland ranks 7th least risky country out of 194 states. Therefore, it is safe for a business to plan long-term planning. (Business Finland, date of retrieval 7.10.2021.) The corruption levels are considerably low (Business Finland, date of retrieval 7.10.2021), which means equal rights and possibilities for everyone.

Finland is a member of the European Union and does not have an independent trade policy but has a standard EU trade policy and tariffs. Also, Finland has been part of the WTO (World Trade Organization) since its inception in 1995. It allows governments to negotiate better trade agreements with the member states. (WTO 2021, date of retrieval 7.10.2021.)

Analysis of *economic factors*, such as government spending, economic growth, inflation, recession, and so on, directly impacts the company and its performance in the future (Rastogi & Trivedi 2016, 385).

According to experts Pönkä and Sariola (Bank of Finland 2020, date retrieval 7.10.2021) prediction, pandemic crisis for Finland will not be as harmful as the global financial crisis, and recuperation is anticipated quicker. Thus, it will temporarily slow down economic growth. However, the crisis hit the hospitality industry hardest also in Finland, which might leave long-lasting footprints, such as long-term unemployment, low levels of investment, and other consequences (Bank of Finland 2020, date of retrieval 7.10.2021).

Demand for the transition from a commodity economy to a service economy: the share of services in the economy is continually growing compared to the share of manufacturing goods, and Finland is adapting to it well (Vesikansa 2008, date of retrieval 7.10.2021). As well Finland offers many appealing funding and support opportunities for startups. Investments in startups have been growing solidly for the last few years. Such as in 2020, Business Finland ensured startups with funding of 142 million euros (Business Finland 2021, date of retrieval 7.10.2021).

The *sociological factor* considers all the events that have a social impact on the market and society in a particular industry as well as global trends, such as demographics, cultural attitudes, lifestyle trends, age distribution, and other factors (Rastogi & Trivedi 2016, 385).

According to Bosman (2019, date of retrieval 8.10.2021), almost half of the mobile gamers are females. According to Freer (2019, date of retrieval 8.10.2021), 64% of females prefer to play games on the mobile platform over the other platforms. However, a gamer is still associated with a male figure, and still, the majority of games are created for male gamers.

Nevertheless, there are some movements, such as the Women in Games conference, to address the issues and make their voices heard from across the globe.

Social media importance in the society

There are 4.48 billion active social media users worldwide this year, up from 3.69 billion in 2020. Just six years ago, in 2015, 2.07 billion people used social media channels, which is 115.59% lesser than today (Dean 2021, date of retrieval 7.10.21). Therefore, we can see the growing importance of social media. According to Kastenholz from Forbes magazine, 98% of generation Z own smartphones and average, spend 4 hours per day on apps (Kastenholz 2021, date of retrieval 18.10.2021).

The Centre for International Governance Innovation survey in 2018 demonstrated that over 50% of internet consumers are concerned about digital privacy and the growing power of social media platforms (CIGI 2018, date of retrieval 12.10.2021).

Attitudes towards leisure

Mobile games have become more and more popular globally due to their accessibility, affordability, and instant access to leisure (Yüce, Büyükakgöl, Katirci, & Gökce Yüce 2018, 196). According to Statista analysis, isolation increased video game usage, and gaming has emerged as one of the most popular activities among Gen Z and Millennials globally during the pandemic of covid-19 (Clement 2021, date of retrieval 7.10.2021).

Technological factors consider the technological innovations and developments in the industry and their impact on the business, as well as broader global applications, trends, and technological changes (Rastogi & Trivedi 2016, 385).

According to the Statista research department, there were 4.28 billion mobile internet users in 2020, which means that more than 90% of the world's internet population uses mobile devices to access the internet for various reasons. This is due to mobile devices becoming more affordable and accessible to most people in developing countries, which constitute a significant portion of the world's population. (Statista 2021, date of retrieval 7.10.2021.) This technological advantage is that most of the world's population has access to mobile technology. Even people from distant areas can access the same applications on mobile devices as people from urban areas, with the only requirement for an Internet connection.

5G Technology – is the 5th generation technology and standard for mobile broadband networks. By 2025 it is forecasted to have over 1.7 billion 5G subscribers globally (Wikipedia 2021, date of retrieval 8.10.2021). 5G mobile network for mobile gaming means that it is 20 times faster than 4G mobile network, and therefore one can download up to 10 apps for the same amount of time while 4G delivers only half of an app. It will also lower the latency issues from 20 milliseconds with 4G to 5 milliseconds with 5G, which means high-fidelity in mobile gaming. (Ericsson 2021, date of retrieval 8.10.2021.) According to Global Mobile Market Report, by the end of 2021, 16% or over 700 million smartphones will be 5G-ready (Newzoo 2021, date of retrieval 8.10.2021).

4.3 SWOT analysis

The acronym SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats and is a comprehensive analysis of the micro and macro environment. External factors such as opportunities and threats beyond the company's control are considered, as well as internal factors

(controllable by the company) such as the strengths and weaknesses of the company. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 71.)

Strength

Strength is the part of the microenvironment that determines positive aspects of a business in terms of human resources, brand reputation, core products, core competencies, and so on, which can be understood by analyzing the company and its database (Jooste et al., 2012, 619-622).

In terms of human resources and core competencies - Freshbox Games has an experienced team with years of experience in the gaming and ICT industry. Two full-stack developers with over seven years of experience creating and publishing games. Business side person with over ten years of experience in ICT and game industry, with many contacts with industry leaders and global publishers. As well as a part-time marketer and game designer.

Positioning – the goal is to create new experiences for female genre games. Therefore, Freshbox Games has carved a solid niche in an underserved market.

Organizational structure - developing Intellectual Property (IP), in other words, the development of mobile games or acquiring IPs from game developers. Plus, years of experience in the mobile games industry allow Freshbox Games to adapt and improve its organizational structure and understand the challenges of competitors.

Business Environment - Freshbox Games operates in an environment where many regulations and government requirements apply; however, the startups are supported by the organizations such as Business Finland and others.

Weaknesses

Weaknesses are the other part of the microenvironment that brings out negative aspects or what business is currently lacking, such as financial resources, human resources, brand equity, and so on. They can be understood through analyzing the company and its database. (Jooste et al., 2012, 619-622.)

Currently lacking sufficient financial resources for paid marketing activities.

In terms of human resources, Freshbox Games lacks an additional full-time marketing specialist to handle broader marketing tasks such as public relations, paid, owned, earned media, and others. As if certain areas of marketing are neglected, bad public relations and customer dissatisfaction can arise.

Project Management - Freshbox Games internal product development is done in-house and outsourced. Founders have been working for free to manage the company's operations and development.

Opportunities

Opportunities are part of the macroenvironment and determine where businesses can benefit from the current situation, such as improved economic conditions, mature competitors, new emerging markets, and others (Jooste et al., 2012, 619).

The continually growing mobile gaming market size has increased over the past decade. The influx of mobile device accessibility and affordability has also contributed to developing consumer preferences, tastes, and needs; for example, a new experience for female mobile game users is in demand.

5G technology will improve the latency issues and accuracy of mobile games.

The growth of social media can help Freshbox Games reduce the cost of entering new markets and reaching customers with significantly lower marketing budgets.

Due to globalization, digital marketing and social media have significantly decreased market entry and marketing risks in the international market.

Threats

Threats are the other part of the macroenvironment and determine what can prevent the business from succeeding, such as changes in the political situation, strong competition, sophisticated consumers, new entrants (Jooste et al., 2012, 619).

New entrant threats. Due to reducing costs and increasing efficiencies of social media usage, Freshbox Games can leverage the low cost of reaching customers, so can the local and international competitors.

Infrastructure for 5G technology may not be adopted by some developing countries, which account for a large number of mobile game users and therefore won't receive as high-quality gameplay as gamers from adopted 5G technology areas.

Operations in the international market come with risks of changes in the economic situation or government regulations. COVID-19 demonstrated that sudden changes, such as closed borders, lockdowns, unavailability to travel, and others might arise.

Changes in consumer behavior. Such as increasing protectionism on how consumer data has been stored and used by a company. As well as high consumer involvement in business operations in terms of the company's socially responsible attitude and how it handles its customer service, social involvement, and others.

Figure 4.9 below is a recapitulation of Freshbox Games' SWOT analysis that points out the main strength, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats.



Figure 4.9 the SWOT analysis for Freshbox Games

4.4 Summary of the chapter

To answer the question - what is the current situation of the company in terms of the micro and macro environment?

Freshbox Games can leverage its strengths to create a market niche and position itself as a producer of building new experiences designed for female audiences. To better compete with the competition, Freshbox Games can strive to reduce and eliminate weaknesses, such as finding suitable funding options to mitigate its financial situation. Next, taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the situation in the industry, such as the usage of mobile games is booming nowadays, with 80% of the world's population owning a mobile phone, and in particular, there is a need for specially designed mobile games for the female audience. Finally, monitor trends and innovations and develop rules and strategies to lessen macroenvironment threats that may affect the business.

5 OBJECTIVES & STRATEGY

In this chapter, the author will define the primary goal of the Trendy Stylist game and additional objectives in order to achieve the main goal, as well as determine the strategy by which these defined objectives will be achieved. In the SOSTAC model, objectives and strategy are two separate parts. However, the author of this thesis will combine activities in steps 2 (Objectives) and 3 (Strategy) in one chapter in order to complement each other. Where firstly, the segment to whom the marketing communications will be provided is identified, followed by identified objectives and strategies.

The objective must be a thoughtful statement of where the company or particular project sees itself in conjunction with its target market and sales goals, as this will give a sense of direction. Therefore, the objective must be S-M-A-R-T which is Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Time defined. (Strong 2014, 162-163.) The strategy applies to actions the company will make to reach its primary objective by outlining how the company will operate to get where it wants to be (Van Engelen 2019, 161-162).

To establish primary objectives, marketers must first thoroughly understand the segment and select the target market they will focus on to achieve their desired sales goals. As such, the author will consider the importance of understanding the market segment, analyzing the current customer base, and identifying the ideal target audience for a Trendy Stylist game before defining objectives.

5.1 Market segment

Market segment refers to a specific market or consumers a business will serve (Kotler & Keller 2016, 63). It is crucial to define the target market to whom the company will deliver its marketing activities and messages; otherwise, misunderstood target market can lead to a waste of financial resources (Kotler & Keller 2016, 557).

5.1.1 Customer base

Freshbox Games has granted the author of this thesis permission to access and display internal information from its social media accounts. The author will analyze the current customer base using social media metrics provided by Instagram and Facebook analytics.

The Trendy Stylist game has its pages on the Instagram platform with 2300 followers and Facebook with 1120 followers.

The below Figure 5.1 metric indicates the age range which follows Trendy Stylist on Instagram where 32.7% accounts 18–24-year-olds followed by 31.2%, 25–35-year-olds, whereas Figure 5.2 indicates Facebook's top age group, that is 25–35-year-olds that accounts for 27%, followed by 18–24-year-olds with 19.9%, and 35–44-year-olds with 17%.

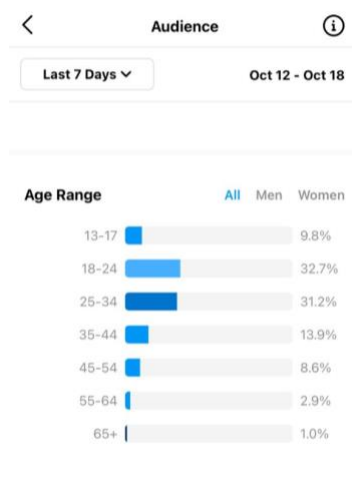


Figure 5.1 Instagram

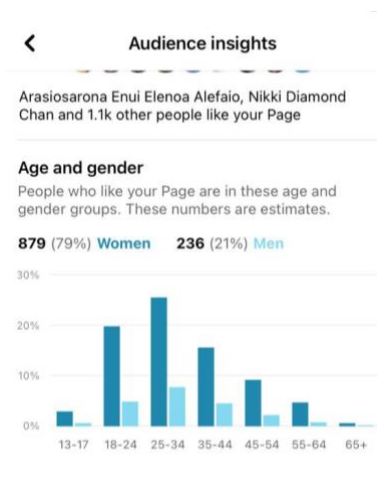


Figure 5.2 Facebook

Figure 5.1 demonstrates Instagram age range and Figure 5.2 Facebook age and gender range from the Trendy Stylist pages

Next, Figure 5.3 metrics indicates gender distribution on Instagram, which is dominated by women with 89%, as well as Figure 5.2 shows that women also dominate on the Facebook account and accounts 79%.

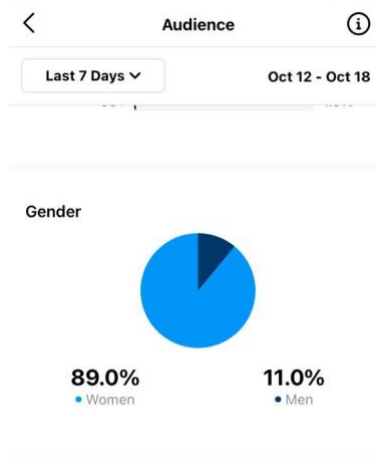


Figure 5.3 Instagram gender distribution from Trendy Stylist page

In Figure 5.4, the most popular countries on the Trendy Stylist Instagram page are Russia with 15.6%, the United States with 11.5%, and Brazil with 6.4%, while Figure 5.5 shows that the most popular country on the Facebook page is Brazil, followed by the United States, and Russia.



Figure 5.4 Instagram

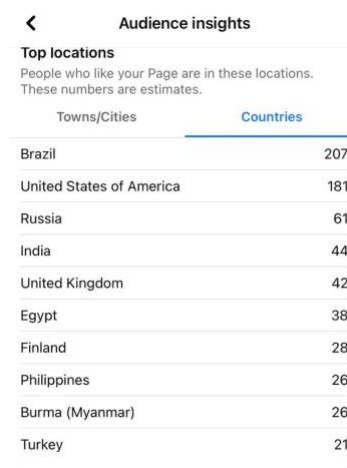


Figure 5.5 Facebook

Figure 5.4 shows Instagram metrics and Figure 5.5 shows Facebook metrics for Trendy Stylist

These metrics of current customers help Freshbox Games better target leads, tailor specific marketing messages and content to attract them, and maintain direct communication with the existing customer base.

For instance, a company can launch a marketing campaign on Instagram and know precisely who to target, such as country Russia, age group 18-30, women. Of course, successful marketing campaigns narrow down even further to a specific target segment, but this is already a good starting point, and by researching what Russian women between the ages of 18 and 30 value, a marketer might even compose a direct message for them in their native language.

5.1.2 Segmentation

Market segmentation means dividing the entire market/consumer base into groups with similar illustrative characteristics such as demography, psychography, geography, or others (Kotler & Keller 2016, 268). The most valuable target audience of Trendy Stylist is adult women aged 18-25-35 due to their financial independence.

The author of this thesis will use multiple segment specialization, which means covering more than one segment, but as attractive and appropriate as the leading segment; therefore, the company can have a broader scope in the marketplace and not miss out on possible profits from these subgroups (Kotler & Keller 2016, 287). For instance, men interested in dress-up, fashion games may also be a subset of this segment.

Thus, Table 5.1 below describes segment 1, and Table 5.2 describes segment 2. The tables indicate the characteristics, interests, and values of the two main segments of the Trendy Stylist game.

Table 5.1 Segment 1 of the Trendy Stylist game

Segment 1	Characteristics	Interests and Values
B2C customers <i>Student</i>	18-25 years old females Location – across the globe Income – low to medium-sized Extended digital networks Lifestyle – loads of free time (2/3 of the day spend on their phone) Active usage of apps and social media channels	Interests – fashion, celebrities, social media Values – convenience, mobile game can be downloaded for free, interactive in-game challenges, content of the game

Table 5.2 Segment 2 of the Trendy Stylist game

Segment 2	Characteristics	Interests and Values
B2C customers <i>Hospitality or retail worker</i>	25-35 years old females Location – across the globe Income – medium to low sized Extended networks Active lifestyle Frequent usage of social media channels	Interests in fashion and celebrities Values – convenience, game is free to download and offers engaging content. Visual appeal of the offering

5.2 SMART Objectives

Now that the target market has been identified, it's time to set objectives.

According to Chaffey (2021, date of retrieval 18.10.2021), since digital marketing is measurable, it makes sense to articulate the goals as precisely as possible. SMART is the starting point to

understand its objectives and achieve them. This part involves setting up ambitious yet achievable goals and determining how to track results over the period described time.

S-M-A-R-T goals should be specific and precise about what the company wants to see and expect upon arrival. Measurable when numbers serve as a means of measurement and comparison. Achievable, that goals are possible and not hard to implement. Realistically, for example considering resource constraints, costs, time, and so on. And time defined which helps to establish boundaries around the goal. (Farley 2020, date of retrieval 18.10.2021.)

The main goal of Trendy Stylist is to become one of the leading lifestyle game for women between the ages of 18 and 35. To achieve the main objective, other goals that will help achieve the main goal are related to the company's digital marketing by raising awareness and interest among target audiences and creating traffic to the mobile game on the app stores and social media accounts.

The objectives for the Trendy Stylist game of this marketing plan are as follows:

- An increase of app installs after the paid marketing campaigns on social media platforms are estimated at a 3% conversion rate. Conversion rate is one of the most crucial measurements of digital marketing campaigns. It indicates if the advertising efforts are effective, or in other words, shows the percentage of users who downloaded the app/game after the ad campaign. (Game marketing genie 2021, date of retrieval 18.10.2021.)
For example, the advertisement on Instagram was shown to 100 people, and 3 of them through the guided link downloaded the app; therefore, the conversion rate is desired 3%. The company itself can invest financial resources for paid marketing campaigns or partner with more prominent publishers to fund more significant financial resources in acquiring users. Still, we want to see the same 3% or more conversion rate. A 3% conversion rate will indicate that the company targets the right segment in cyberspace. Therefore, it is crucial to know and understand your target market.
- Next, the company's social media page traffic aims to grow to up to 25 000 Instagram followers and 15 000 Facebook followers in 6 months. The number of followers is significant for building the trust of new users, as it is evidence of social proof. Good reviews and other positive customer reviews confirm this once again. It is also a free marketing

channel for delivering other content, announcing updates, and deepening engagement with followers.

- In addition to the goals mentioned above, the Trendy Stylist game aims to increase brand visibility through constant improvement in search engine optimization on Google and app stores. Search Engine Optimization or SEO is an attribute of improving the site's ranking on search engine platforms, such as Google and others, to increase free/organic traffic to the company's sites. One way to optimize the SEO is to create long and rich content which includes carefully chosen and highly targeted keywords. (Wikipedia 2021, date of retrieval 18.01.2021.) SMO stands for Social Media Optimization and refers to the utilization of social media to manage and increase a company's communication messages and its online presence. Social media optimization is used to raise awareness of new offerings, communicate with customers, and reduce potentially harmful news. (Kenton 2021, date of retrieval 9.11.2021.) Freshbox Games, for its game Trendy Stylist will provide regularly interactive, educational, and informative posts and images on social media platforms and website.
- Alongside SEO and SMO optimization, developers must pay attention to ASO, App Store Optimization. ASO is optimizing mobile apps to rank higher in App Stores, such as Google Play and AppStore search results. By maximizing the app's position in the app store search results, the greater chances of potential users to see the app and download it. (Wikipedia 2021, date of retrieval 10.11.2021.) Google Play and AppStore have their search system or algorithms that the app developers must adopt in order to rank higher in each store (Patal 2021, date of retrieval 18.10.2021). Freshbox Games will provide carefully selected keywords for keyword fields, title, screenshots, icon images, and videos in the correct dimensions on each app store platform for the Trendy Stylist app.

5.3 Strategy

As the author has identified the concrete objectives for the Trendy Stylist game that are planned to achieve, it is time to define a strategy for achieving those objectives.

5.3.1 STP model

According to Kotler and Keller (2016, 57 & 297), all marketing strategies are based on the STP model, segmentation, targeting, and positioning. The model is designed for creating marketing strategies through identifying market segment opportunities, targeting the segment whose expectations the product/service can meet, and positioning the product/service by delivering solutions to selected segment needs and wants.

It is important to segment the audience. Nowadays, users want more personalization and respond better to personalized ads. By categorizing the users using varying demographics, marketers can better understand each segment and target them more effectively. Positioning is most effective when the ad is placed, and the target user is more likely to take an action or is interested. Therefore, it is crucial to know your current and potential customers to implement the right strategies to deliver the specially tailored value proposition to them and, as a result, get the expected outcomes.

5.3.2 Integrated marketing communications

Freshbox Games' online strategy for Trendy Stylist is to aim for integrated marketing communications by effectively utilizing owned, paid, and earned media. According to Kotler and Keller (2016, 44-45), it is important to focus on integrated marketing communications across all possible marketing channels to complement each other and thus increase return on investment (ROI). Currently, Trendy Stylist game and its developer Freshbox Games are not well-known brands in the global market. Therefore, the most efficient marketing strategy will be an outbound marketing strategy in order to conquer and introduce the mobile game to a broader market.

Outbound marketing or push marketing is a traditional marketing method typically applied strategy by unknown brands to generate leads (Kotler & Keller 2016, 516). Outbound marketing involves activities that require large financial resources. However, it is crucial to adopt this strategy to reach out to the target audience in order to create brand awareness and let the world know about the game's existence.

Branding is a process that creates a strong positive image for a company or its offerings through customers' emotional connection. As buying is an emotional experience, and when acquiring your

product or service, it is important that customers feel good and have positive associations. (Van Engelen 2019, 163.)

Outbound marketing will be done through paid marketing campaigns on social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook, as well as cross-platform promotion, where similar genre games will promote the Trendy Stylist in their game. In addition, taking part in industry events, such as Pocket Gamer Connects, White Nights, Nordic Game, and others. Some conferences are currently held online, therefore more affordable, and accessible for all level developers.

In addition to outbound marketing, Freshbox Games will integrate an inbound marketing strategy, which covers the actions a company can take to increase traffic and brand awareness in cyberspace, which does not always require direct financial resources. Inbound marketing relates to organic channels such as search engine optimizations (SEO), social media, and content marketing. Inbound marketing is all about earning attention and love from the selected segment of the company and interacting with the target segment by providing relevant content and addressing their needs. (Fishkin & Hogenhaven 2013, 2-4.)

Freshbox Games for B2C activities will utilize inbound marketing through content marketing on social media platforms and website, search engine marketing, and influencer marketing (in the future) to get quality backlinks to the app stores and sites. B2B activities will be carried out on social media accounts such as LinkedIn, Reddit, and Twitter, as well as on closed gaming community pages on Facebook, Game Development, Indie Game Assets, and Tools IGD by posting informative posts of the Freshbox Games and its game Trendy Stylist to raise awareness among industry professionals, protentional investors, or purposeful partnerships.

5.4 Acquisition

For the user acquisition will launch a UA campaign in Russia, the United States, and Brazil in January 2022 until the end of March 2022 on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. The key information will be gathered through Facebook My Business and AppsFlyer. Metrics to track - clicks, impressions, installs, conversion rate, D1-D7-D30 retention rate.

Freshbox Games integrated for the Trendy Stylist game 3rd party attribution tools, such as AppsFlyer and Facebook My Business. The 3rd party attribution tools allow a company to oversee the game's advertisement performance on various platforms. Facebook My Business displays Instagram and Facebook insights. And AppsFlyer, a mobile app analytics and marketing software that enables companies to track and optimize their customer acquisition. It provides flexible reporting, detailed analysis, and performance metrics. The external integration created allows the company to target campaigns from various media sources. (AppsFlyer 2021, date of retrieval 3.11.2021.)

KPI's or key performance indicators to be looked at are conversion rate, which the author covered in the smart objective section 5.2, such as the Freshbox Games aiming to see a 3% conversion rate after the UA campaigns.

CPI stands for cost per install, and it refers to the rate a company pays to acquire new users or how much the company pays per app's install (Dogtiev 2021, date of retrieval 3.11.2021). Freshbox Games are aiming at an average of 1USD or less per CPI.

Retention rate indicates the percentage of players who installed the app and the percentage that returned to play after installing the app. Usually measured three periods after the initial install, such as Day 1, Day 7, and Day 30. Standard F2P mobile game retention rates are 40% on the first day, 20% on day 7, and 10% on day 30. (Llobet 2021, date of retrieval 3.11.2021.)

Another effective user acquisition marketing channel is cross-platform promotion, which the author of this thesis covers in Chapter 6.

5.5 Engagement

Engagement is the degree to which the audience, such as readers, visitors to the company's sites, viewers, followers on social media, values your content enough to be willing to stick around. Client engagement is the deepness of the connection between the client and the brand. Participating clients usually are buyers, preachers, responders, or repeat customers. (Van Engelen 2019, 163.) Freshbox Games for the Trendy Stylist game will create a buzz two weeks before the relaunch, which is planned for the beginning of January 2022. Social networks, such as Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Reddit, and Twitter will systematically provide insights on updates, demonstrate game

improvements, value proposition, new collections, and working processes before the actual relaunch of the game. All these activities are done to re-engage existing followers on social networks and attract new followers and users by encouraging the followers to engage, take an active part, and re-post the content. After the actual relaunch interaction through Instagram's and Facebook's posts and stories will continue on a regular basis and frequently B2B updates on LinkedIn, Reddit, and Twitter.

5.6 Summary of the chapter

To summarize the chapter and answer the question - where does the company want to be, and how will it get there?

Freshbox Games envision Trendy Stylist as one of the premier lifestyle mobile game for women between the ages of 18 and 35. It will be done by carefully selecting a market segment that will be reached and targeted through various online channels by leveraging outbound and inbound marketing strategies. Where push marketing pushes out paid advertising campaigns and informs the segment about the existence of the Trendy Stylist game and its value propositions. Followed by versatile inbound tactics by pulling in the target segment to Trendy Stylist game on app stores and social media platforms by providing entertaining and educational content.

6 TACTICS

This chapter will cover step 4 of the SOSTAC methodology, tactics. That will explain the marketing mix followed by tactics. Tactics refer to concrete online combination tools planned to utilize to achieve the marketing plan's goals. In the tactics part, the marketer details the actual tactics, how they will target a specific segment. For instance, point out channels and key actions that will be executed to implement the strategies. (Van Engelen 2019, 163.)

There are numerous ways to promote the company and its offerings. Nevertheless, the most crucial criteria for developing integrated online marketing strategies are consistency. It is vital for a brand and its offerings to constantly be present online to raise consumer awareness and build trust. The main goal of this approach is to increase market share and remain competitive.

Mainly online marketing tactics are used given the characteristics of the offerings offered by Freshbox Games, as mobile games are digital products. Therefore, digital tools, such as digital advertising, provide convenient links leading directly to app stores and company sites. Another significant benefit of online or digital marketing is the ability to better understand the target audience through the measurement tools it provides, such as the ability to track, analyze and organize information based on data, impressions, clicks, likes, visits, many other KPI's to measure the efficiency.

6.1 Marketing mix

The marketing mix includes a set of actions and tactics that a company uses to influence demand for its offerings in the market. The 4P's form marketing mix, such as product, price, place, and promotion. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 78.)

Product

A product in a marketing mix refers to a company's offering to its target segment (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 78). Given the nature of a mobile game, a product is not considered a tangible product, but a source of value delivered to the user. Therefore, mobile games are classified as services based on intangible, inseparable, and perishable product characteristics. Games are

targeted at consumers of mobile games; hence, they fall into the B2C category, or in other words, business to consumers. (Jooste, Strydom & Du Plessis 2012, 200-201.)

Trendy Stylist game

The Trendy Stylist (Figure 6.1) is a 2D mid-core / casual online mobile game. And the gameplay blends social media and fashion. The game is like Instagram, where instead of taking pictures, players style their avatars. The Trendy Stylist game creates its category - social media games.



Figure 6.1 Trendy Stylist

Figure 6.1 screenshot of the Trendy Stylist game

To better understand what 2D, casual or mid-core games, and online games mean in the mobile games industry, the author of this thesis will briefly explain their meaning:

2D - refers to art design in games that are 2-dimensional and generally associated with flat shapes and objects (Wikipedia 2021, date of retrieval 6.10.2021).

Casual games - usually have uncomplicated game mechanics and in-game rules and can be learned quickly (Mitchel 2012, 35).

Mid-core games - require specific skills and strategies to develop in the game. Hence, players need to invest more time and abilities compared to the typical casual game. (Wikipedia 2021, date of retrieval 6.10.2021.)

The online game - refers to a partly or fully played game through the internet (Mitchell 2012, 234).

Price

Price in marketing mix refers to the amount of money a company is charging its clients for its offerings (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 78). Freshbox Games opts for a competition-based pricing model given the high level of competition in the market. Competition-based pricing is a pricing pattern that involves setting up prices relative to a company's competitors, obtained from the public information about competitors' prices (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 340). As discussed in chapter 4, section 4.1.1, mobile games' most common business model is the free to play (F2P) model. This model allows a large number of users to download the game for free, and monetization takes place through in-app purchases, video ads, and banner ads that are played during the gameplay.

Place

Place in marketing mix refers to the process of moving the offering from the producers to the intended consumer (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 78). A place in the case of mobile games refers to the channels through which they are distributed. Distribution channels assist in displaying, selling, or delivering the company's offerings to its consumers (Kotler & Keller 2016, 32). Freshbox Games uses direct distribution channels, which means that distribution is online-only. The game can be downloaded from an Android or iOS mobile device from the app stores, such as Google Play or AppStore.

Promotion

Promotion in marketing mix refers to strategies and methods that help convey and communicate the company's offer to its target audience and convince them to buy the offering (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 78). As discussed in Chapter 5, the author will utilize integrated marketing communications or promotion mix. Promotion mixes consist of numerous promotion tools at the disposal of a

business, such as advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and others (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 78).

The visibility of the Freshbox Games offering Trendy Stylist will be increased through active engagement on social media, SEO, SMO, and ASO optimization paid advertising on Facebook, Instagram, and cross-platform promotion.

6.2 Marketing tactics

The author of this thesis will explain each marketing tactic and how a company will execute them, such as SMO, SEO, and ASO, online and social media marketing, consumer-generated content, CPM and CPC, cross-platform promotion, and affiliate marketing.

6.2.1 SMO and SEO

SMO (social media optimization) and SEO (search engine optimization) have similar goals of generating web traffic and raising the awareness of a company's sites. Nowadays, due to the increase in popularity of social media networks, SMO has come to the forefront, occasionally merging with SEO. SMO has become a more effective way to strengthen the brand, reach leads, expand the company's reach online, and directly connect with the target audience. In addition, SMO often direct potential customers from those social media accounts to the company's website or app stores where additional information is ensured. (Kenton 2021, date of retrieval 9.11.2021.)

Based on competitor research and its carefully selected keywords for the SEO strategy. Freshbox Games will also optimize their SEO keywords as this provides the company with a platform to compete directly and rank higher. In order to enhance organic site search results, SMO will respectively be performed. The main aim of the SMO and SEO is to combine the social media accounts and sites of the Trendy Stylist game into a consistent network. Freshbox Games will outsource SEO and SMO to achieve the desired results. Before the launch in January 2022, both SEO and SMO will be executed.

6.2.2 ASO

App Store Optimization (ASO) focal point is to improve app performance and to rank higher in app store search results and a click-through rate (CTR), which indicates how successful a mobile app is (Patal 2021, date of retrieval 18.10.2021).

Based on discoveries from Google Marketing Insights, 40% of apps are found when searching in app stores (Tiongson 2015, date of retrieval 10.11.2021). Therefore, it is crucial for developers to utilize this free marketing tool that can make the app stand out in a crowded app store as it helps boost the app's visibility and therefore increase downloads.

There are several differences in ASO on AppStore and Google Play platforms. The app's name is the primary ranking signal in both AppStore and Google Play, so the most important keywords should be included in the app name. Application name on Google Play and AppStore is limited to 30 characters. The subtitle, keyword field, screenshots, app preview videos vary in each platform. (Patal 2021, date of retrieval 18.10.2021.) The aim is at integrated organic search optimization as a foundation of the Trendy Stylist online presence across all platforms. Freshbox Games will outsource ASO, SMO, and SEO specialists for implementing these strategies and get out most of the organic promotion.

6.2.3 Online and social media marketing

Online marketing is a rapidly growing form of direct marketing, and it utilizes marketing tools such as websites, online videos, emails, social media and blogs, mobile ads, and other online channels to directly connect with the target audience at any time through their electronic device (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 538). Social media marketing involves using a variety of social media platforms to connect with the target audience directly, grow brand awareness, boost sales, and increase traffic to the company's sites. Social media marketing includes posting engaging and entertaining content on social media accounts, engaging with the audience, reviewing the results periodically, and paid social media campaigns such as ads. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 544-547.) In addition, the primary data gathered from interviews with industry professionals also highlighted the importance of using social media to better communicate and understand the audience.

Freshbox Games will primarily use the social media platforms Instagram and Facebook to run paid social media campaigns and provide engaging, interactive, and educational posts and stories. The Instagram and Facebook platforms were chosen because the Trendy Stylist game is like Instagram and Facebook and may appeal to those who love social media.

Both platforms belong to the same Facebook, Inc. group so that campaign results can be tracked, compared, and analyzed more efficiently. However, according to the segment analysis presented in Chapter 5, the first campaigns on the Instagram platform will target segment number 1, such as women aged 18-24, while campaigns on Facebook's platform will target segment number 2 women aged 25-35.

The posts will inform about upcoming events, new collections, fashion trends, and so on. Whereas Instagram and Facebook Stories engage with the audience more closely by showcasing new collection ideas, Trendy Stylist work in progress, and encourages the audience to republish Trendy Stylist content on their social media pages. As well as organizing competitions on Trendy Stylist social media accounts for the audience to vote, engage in a conversation, or ask for an opinion. The primary purpose of these tactics is to increase brand awareness, foster interaction, and build relationships with the consumers. Moreover, social media marketing tactics are utilized to better customer retention and loyalty, traffic, SEO and SMO rankings, consumer contentment, and other benefits.

Successful marketers are those who carefully cultivate customer satisfaction and loyalty (Kotler & Keller 2016, 148).

6.2.4 Consumer-generated content

User-generated content means that its consumers create it, not by the brand. Such content may include text, videos, images, and testimonials. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 482.) Freshbox Games encourages Trendy Stylist consumers to post and republish images using the Trendy Stylist hashtag. For example, encourage the audience to share their everyday game looks, suggestions, or new play ideas, and they'll be republished on the Trendy Stylist page.

6.2.5 CPM and CPC

Based on segmentation analysis Freshbox Games, for its game, Trendy Stylist will conduct targeted paid ad campaigns on Facebook and Instagram platforms. The most important KPIs will be measured through the Facebook My Business platform.

One of the key metrics for mobile apps is CPM which means Cost-Per-Mile; this KPI shows the marketer how much it costs a thousand impressions of an ad for a mobile app, as well as how much the company will earn for thousand impressions displayed. In October 2021, the average CPM for Facebook ads was 14.1 USD per thousand views. (Revealbot 2021, date of retrieval 29.10.2021.)

CPC stands for Cost-Per-Click, which indicates how many clicks will receive for a set budget, as well as how much a company pays per each displayed click. CPC Facebook ad rates vary by location, with the most expensive regions being Japan with 1.6 USD, Canada with 1.5 USD, and the United States with 1.1 USD. Whereas inexpensive locations for Facebook Ads are Spain, Brazil, and Indonesia, ad click costs start from 0.19 USD. (Dogtiev 2021, date of retrieval 1.11.2021.) However, these rates are averages and vary by industry sector.

6.2.6 Cross-platform promotion

Cross-promotions are usually seen as promoting ads of the company's games within their other games (App Agent 2021, date of retrieval 3.11.2021). However, it is common nowadays to advertise a game in a similar genre or, in other words, into rivals' game your game, which is called cross-promo. There are several ad mediation platforms to show the games to the world through cross-promo in a large developer community. This tactic helps developers to introduce the game to the right potential users. Services such as Chartboost allow developers to exchange users with each other. Chartboost is a development platform powering the business of mobile games by offering promotional tools that allow developers to promote the game in other games, as well other games are promoted on your app. Direct bidding platforms enable developers to connect with others to conduct mutual advertising, such as cross-promo and direct-deals marketplace with income division. (Chartboost 2021, date of retrieval 4.11.2021.) As well as Chartboost provides insights and metrics of the campaigns that are recommended to be reviewed regularly to understand what performs well and what does not (Chartboost 2021, date of retrieval 4.11.2021).

Freshbox Games will register for a Chartboost account in December 2021, complete and submit the form, take other required steps, and wait for verification. Once the profile has been verified, the process can begin by looking for games of a similar genre and figuring out what partnership terms Chartboost provides.

6.2.7 Mobile game publishers

Today, a good tactic for indie game developers is to partner with mobile game publishers. In interviews with research companies Riimu Games and Purple Tree, the companies unfold that they rely on mobile game publishers for user acquisition (UA) campaigns and recommended this marketing tactic to startups as one of the most effective. Mobile game publishers introduce the game to the global marketplace through UA campaigns. They can invest thousands or even millions of dollars in marketing campaigns, and these campaigns provide an even greater return on investment for mobile game publishers and developers.

This tactic will be used by Freshbox Games when they attend the mobile games conferences in order to possibly connect with the right mobile game publishers.

6.2.8 Affiliate marketing

Another tactic Freshbox Games for its game Trendy Stylist should consider is affiliate marketing. Affiliate Marketing is a marketing partnership with third parties that allows specific people to become "affiliates," which generates traffic to the company's sites and stores (Kotler & Keller 2016, 536). The benefit of affiliate marketing is to reach the right audience who most probably would be interested in Freshbox Games' offerings/mobile games and expand its marketing campaigns.

Influencer marketing plays a vital role in today's online world, especially if they have a large number of followers. These bloggers can act as influencers who can influence their followers' decisions and raise awareness of the offerings to a larger audience.

This tactic is considered; however, influencer marketing is very costly and therefore put on hold until a more significant investment is received for marketing.

6.3 Summary of the chapter

To answer the question, what exactly must be done to get there?

Freshbox Games will use the following tactics for the Trendy Stylist mobile game to reach its primary goal. Integrated SEO, SMO, and ASO strategies to improve organic traffic to Trendy Stylist sites and app stores. Engage with its target audience with engaging, interactive, and educational content on Instagram and Facebook platforms. Investing in paid targeted ad campaigns on Instagram and Facebook to reach more users with KPIs like CPM and CPC. As well as collaborate with the platform, such as Chartboost, for cross-platform promotion to introduce the game to a broader audience who already enjoys playing similar genre games. Look for the right mobile game publishers through industry events to potentially partner with them. And finally, it highlights the importance of affiliate marketing tactic and their benefits in today's world.

These tactics are planned to capture attention by leads of the Trendy Stylist game on channels that defined target audience uses the most.

7 ACTION AND CONTROL

This chapter will cover the last two steps of the SOSTAC methodology, action, and control. Starting with step 5, which relates to actions and determines what needs to be done in each of the tactics, so to speak, the specific steps that the company will take to achieve its goals. For example, assigning responsible personnel, setting a budget, setting time frames for planned events, and so on. (Van Engelen 2019, 164.) The last step in the SOSTAC methodology concerns the part of the control that monitors and measures the implementation of the established plan, which is inseparably linked to the metric. The marketer needs to identify the KPIs for the plan and then track that data periodically to keep the plan on track or adjust strategies in order to meet the stated goals. (Van Engelen 2019, 164-165.)

7.1 Actions

Marketing implementation refers to transforming marketing strategies and plans into marketing activities to achieve strategic marketing goals (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 80).

The author of this thesis suggests Freshbox Games utilize the objective-and-task budget setting method. The Objective and task budgeting method determines a company's promotion budget based on what it wants to achieve through promotion. This particular method of budgeting includes, firstly, setting specific promotion goals, secondly, identifying the tasks that need to be completed to achieve the goals, and thirdly, estimating the costs of completing these tasks. The total cost is the recommended promotion budget. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 462.)

The author proposes to allocate 13 000 euros for such marketing activities before launching tasks in December 2021, followed by targeted advertising campaigns and other marketing functions in the first quarter of 2022 - January, February, and March, shown in Figure 7.1 and Figure 7.2 below.

Objective-and-task MARKETING BUDGET

CATEGORY	TOTAL BUDGET	% OF BUDGET	AMOUNT SPENT A week	Q3	Q4		
				Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Content Creation on soc media & management	€ -	0 %	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -
Cross-promo	€ 50,00	36 %	€ 350,00	€ 1 400,00	€ 1 400,00	€ 1 400,00	€ 1 400,00
Advertising on Instagram & Facebook daily (UA)	€ 50,00	36 %	€ 350,00		€ 1 400,00	€ 1 400,00	€ 1 400,00
ASO, SEO, SMO & paid promotion specialist	€ 40,00	29 %	€ 160,00	€ 640,00	€ 640,00	€ 640,00	€ 640,00
Creatives	€ -	0 %	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -
Mobile game conference	€	% OF	€				
Video creatives	€ -	0 %	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -
TOTALS	€ 140,00		€ 860,00	€ 2 040,00	€ 3 440,00	€ 3 440,00	€ 3 440,00

Figure 7.1 Objective and task marketing budget for the Trendy Stylist

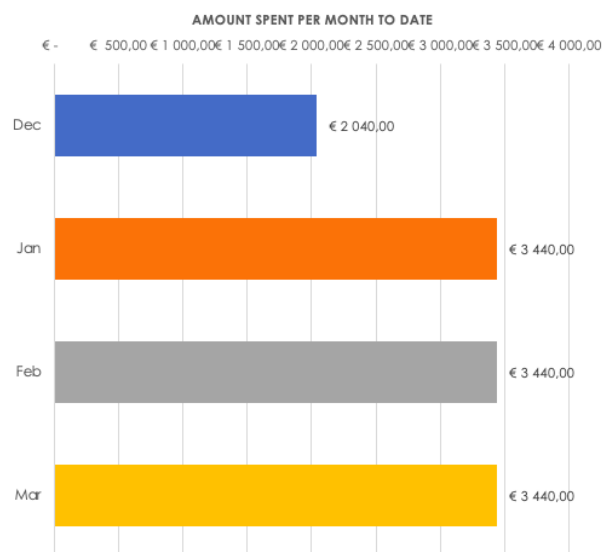


Figure 7.2 Amount spent per month for Trendy Stylist

The marketing activities of Trendy Stylist are partially done in-house, while paid advertising, SEO, SEM, and ASO are outsourced.

To create a consistent timeline for each marketing activity, the author of this thesis has developed content plans. These plans contain a further description of the activities, their respective timelines, and the people responsible for their implementation.

Quarterly events include evaluating SEO, SMO, and ASO results and cross-platform promotions outcomes, setting up campaign plans on social media platforms and paid advertising against quarterly plans, in-game updates (new clothing collections, game events, and so on), and usability testing.

Monthly activities during the first three months after the relaunch of the Trendy Stylist game consist of cross-platform promotions on Chartboost, paid advertising campaigns on social media platforms, Instagram, and Facebook, preparing and posting posts for B2C and B2B across relevant social media channels, and monthly meetings. Monthly meetings will be held to review and, if necessary, adjust for better B2C and B2B performance.

Weekly events include updating Instagram and Facebook posts which will be posted every three days, and at least five Instagram and Facebook stories every day.

The below Figure 7.3 presents Trendy Stylist's annual marketing guide by emphasizing pre-launch activities in December 2021 and launch activities in the first quarter of 2022.

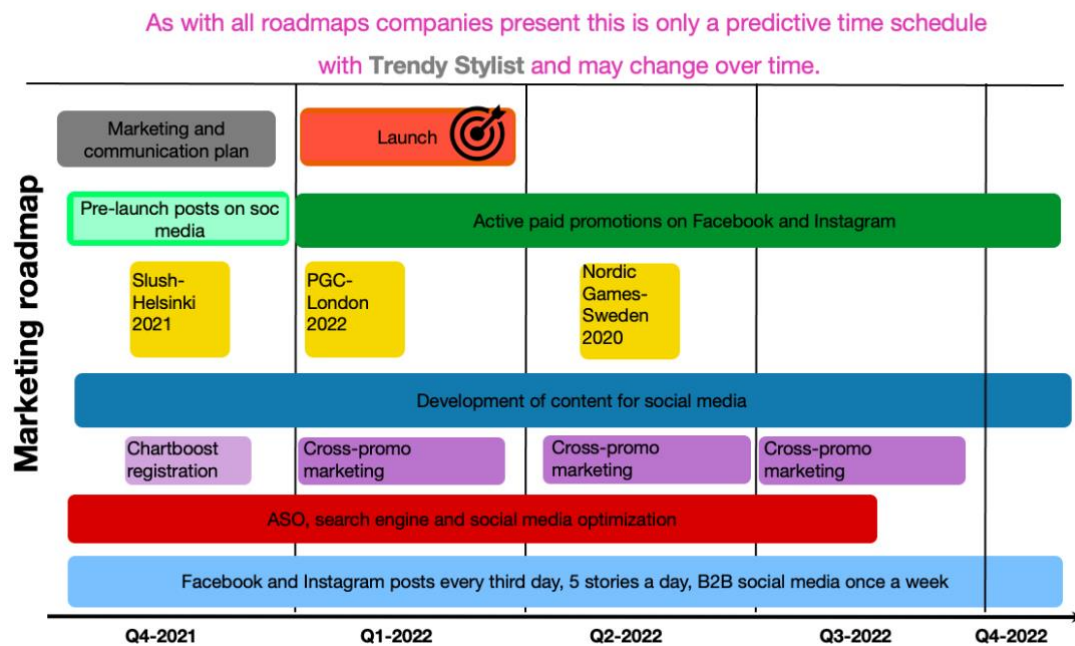


Figure 7.3 Marketing roadmap for the Trendy Stylist game

7.2 Control

Marketing control refers to measuring and assessing the outcomes of implemented marketing strategies and plans and taking corrective measures to ensure that objectives are being reached (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 83).

Freshbox Games for its mobile game Trendy Stylist marketing controls will track target results, such as conversion rate after the paid ad campaigns and organic social media interaction and engagement level will be measured monthly. The results of SEO, SMO, and ASO will be evaluated every quarter. Cross-platform promotions will be assessed after each campaign and updated at monthly meetings with staff and external experts.

The key tools for analyzing customer behavior, traffic, and return on investment are Facebook for Business, Appsflyer, Google Analytics, and Chartboost provide metric tools that Freshbox Games will overview. Plus, app analytics will be overviewed on both app store platforms that Google Play provides, that is, Play Console and AppStore provides App Store Connect.

The information gathered about paid traffic includes conversion rate, cost per install, cost per click, cost per mile, retention rate, daily /monthly user activity, lifetime value (LTV), and others. The information gathered about organic traffic includes click-through rate (CTR), page views, visits, sources of traffic, time spent, time spent per session, and others. Besides, Freshbox Games regularly conducts usability testing and customer satisfaction testing based on the feedback received and surveys provided.

7.3 Summary of the chapter

To answer the question, what is the plan, and how is the company performing?

The plan is to turn the plan into an action plan by assigning staff to perform specific tasks, schedule planned events, and set up an objective-and-task budget so that the company knows how much each of the tactics costs and prepares a budget for that. In addition, scheduled quarterly, monthly, weekly meetings to analyze the performance of each tactic. And measure the performance through key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess the effectiveness of planned strategies and change the tactic and its strategy if necessary to achieve set goals.

8 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter's conclusions and discussion concludes the whole thesis. It starts with an answer to the research question, followed by recommendations for further research, and discussions of the whole research process.

8.1 Conclusion

This thesis focused on improving the mobile app chances in the overwhelmed mobile game market. The research aimed at finding the most effective marketing methods with the least financial resources required to improve the brand and app visibility in cyberspace. And the author created a detailed marketing plan for a startup company Freshbox Games, and its mobile game Trendy Stylist.

Theoretical reviews and empirical research data about marketing in the mobile game industry have identified marketing strategies and tactics for improving mobile apps and brands' visibility in cyberspace.

Throughout the research, the primary investigative question is: How can a startup promote its mobile game to its target audience? It is being answered.

First, the company must identify its target audience. According to Kotler & Keller (2016, 557), is crucial to define the target market to whom the company will deliver its marketing communications; otherwise, the misunderstood target audience can lead to a waste of financial resources. In section 5.1, the author indicated a target segment for the Trendy Stylist mobile game, adult women aged 18-35.

In addition, in section 4.1.3, the author identifies that woman are an underserved market in the mobile game industry, even though half of the mobile gamers are females. Figure 4.1 illustrates that women are more loyal and spend more time and money on mobile games than men.

These findings through the research help the case company tailor their marketing communications to the female audience by emphasizing that the company is developing specially designed offerings for women and serving the underserved market.

Below the author lists top promotion channels gathered throughout the research for startups to reach their target audience.

Promotion channels

Social media

As one of the most effective promotion channels, today is social media. In section 4.2.1, the author lists Forbes magazine findings that 98% of generation Z own smartphones and spend 4 hours per day on apps (Kastenholz 2021, date of retrieval 18.10.2021). As well as in section 6.2.3, the author points out that online marketing is a rapidly growing form of direct marketing that uses a variety of online channels to directly connect with the target audience at any time through their electronic device (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 538). In addition, the findings through empirical data in section 3.2 also stressed the importance of social media as the most effective way of connecting directly with the target audience.

In section 5.3.2, the author lists the inbound marketing strategies by leveraging social media channels for the Trendy Stylist game. B2C interactions on Instagram and Facebook. And B2B presence for informative updates on LinkedIn, Reddit, and Twitter social networks. These platforms are recommended to use on regular basis to engage with the target audience and encourage followers to actively participate in republishing and sharing content, thus acting as word-of-mouth marketers, and encouraging their followers to take an interest in the Trendy Stylist game. Furthermore, section 5.2.3 discovers outbound marketing strategies, such as paid marketing campaigns on Instagram and Facebook through their common platform Facebook My Business to bring awareness and introduce the Trendy Stylist game to a broader audience, increasing its user base and correspondingly market size.

Instagram and Facebook platforms are primarily used for inbound and outbound marketing strategies due to characteristics of the mobile game that the gameplay is like Instagram, plus Figure 4.6 in section 4.1.4 indicated that the Instagram platform is currently the most popular social media platform in the world. For this reason, now, the author believes that Instagram and Facebook are the most preferred channel by the Trendy Stylist target audience.

SMO, SEO, and ASO

SMO (social media optimization) and SEO (search engine optimization) have similar goals of generating web traffic and raising the awareness of a company's sites described in section 6.2.1. ASO (app store optimization) explained in section 6.2.2 the main point to improve app performance and ranking in app store search results.

All engine optimizations on various platformers allow a company to rank higher on such platforms by selecting relevant keywords, content, and so on. This tactic does not require direct financial resources. However, it is recommended for Freshbox Games to outsource this service to external specialists for better results. And possibly outperform well-established companies on this free marketing platform.

Mobile game publishers

Through the empirical data analysis described in section 3.2, both research companies admitted that the mobile gaming industry is highly competitive and complex. For this reason, it is recommended for indie developers to connect with the right mobile game publishers, as only mobile game publishers can invest a significant number of finances for user acquisition, plus take some marketing activities off the developer's shoulders so that developers can focus on their core activities.

In the same section 3.2, the research companies listed other effective marketing channels, such as connecting with the local mobile game community for advice and support. Mobile game conferences allow small and big developers to connect, present a proposal to interested parties, and schedule meetings with industry professionals, investors, and publishers.

However, it is not guaranteed that the mobile game publisher will partner with the game company. Therefore, inhouse marketing activities recommended in this paper can help strengthen the mobile app chances in the overwhelmed mobile game market by utilizing social media channels for inbound and outbound marketing strategies, optimizing SEO, SMO, and ASO. In addition, the outcomes of these tactics can help indie developers better present their offerings to mobile game publishers and independently strengthen their positions in the market.

8.2 Recommendations

Suggestion for further research, a more focused study covering female audience for female genre games, as discussed in the study that most games are made for male players, or male developers create games for the female audience, mainly with the male viewpoint.

“Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with the absolute truth”, says Simone de Beauvoir (1949) – French writer and philosopher (Perez 2019, Preface).

More focused study about the female gender and their preferences will help understand the female audience better and improve marketing strategies.

8.3 Discussions

This research aimed at providing a marketing plan for the mobile game Trendy Stylist to improve the app's chances in the overwhelmed mobile game market. The mobile gaming industry is constantly evolving and improving due to the constant arrival of new entrants. Therefore, this marketing plan covered specific marketing actions that a company is recommended to take in order to reach its outlined goals. However, due to the constant changes in the digital world and mobile gaming industry, this marketing plan can be valid for up to a year and after is recommended for a mobile game company to look for up-to-date information on new marketing tools, practical steps, and tips.

The author obtained secondary data from books and reliable electronic sources. In addition, conducted two interviews with experienced mobile game developers to gather primary data. The theoretical basis is primarily based on Philip Kotler and other well-known authors of modern books on marketing. The author learned many new definitions, terms, and information about marketing in mobile games and how to apply theory in real life, thereby complementing the author's previous knowledge. However, the author needed to acquire and improve the skills of researching the World Wide Web. Because some literary books are outdated and no longer fit the modern world, therefore the author improved her ability to assess reliable sources of information on the Internet.

The author also learns about local and international game companies, their work practices, and strategies for achieving the best marketing results. This knowledge was gained through interviews with mobile game developers, which was very useful to complement the answer to the research question. However, one of the biggest challenges was to connect with the relevant mobile game company to collect the primary data. And the author's strategy to connect with the developers through their provided email addresses on their websites did not work out at all. Therefore, the best way to connect with the relevant company is to ask someone related to the industry, and then the person recommends the appropriate person for the interview.

Overall, the author is pleased with the research carried out in this paper, which answers the main research question on finding the most effective channels for promoting the Trendy Stylist game. In addition, other startups or small mobile game companies can use the results in this paper as an example to improve their marketing tactics.

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To whom it may concern,

My name is Baiba Limpuce, and I am an International Business student at Oulu University of Applied Sciences. I'm conducting a research study on the marketing plan for a startup company. I would like to invite you or another relevant person for a short interview, which won't take longer than 30min and can be held on any online platform at the most appropriate time for the interviewee. The discussion will be regarding your company's most effective marketing techniques for your mobile games.

I am writing a marketing plan for a startup company where I interned in 2020 and remained working as a part-time marketing staff parallel my studies. My commissioner company built free-to-play female genre mobile games for adult women.

And like most startups, they lack sufficient financial resources for effective marketing efforts. Therefore, the plan for this study is to highlight the importance of marketing in today's world and the utilization of free marketing tools offered by the digital world that startups should use. I choose to interview mobile game professionals to get insights and see if my understanding and suggestions for a startup's will be similar to yours or the opposite.

I understand that some information about your company may be confidential, and I will respect if some questions will not be answered.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Baiba Limpuce (Oulu University of Applied Science student)

Open questions

1. How important is marketing to your business and how do you plan it?
2. Most effective marketing channels that are out there for your game company?
3. What marketing challenges mainly do you come across when launching a new game?
4. In your opinion, is there any difference in marketing tactics when it comes to the female audience? And if yes / no - why do you think that is?
5. Is there any suggestion you would like to share about your mobile games marketing strategies that could be beneficial for other startups?