

# Increasing costs of video games



## The Greedy Faults of the Video Game World

The video game industry is one of the fastest growing in the world any stores today sells a game or has a sponsorship with a company, and billions are made a year from it. Underneath the surface; however, is a parasite that is slowly strangling the industry without it knowing, threatening everything that it has built up. This problem is not because of the cancerous players in the fanbase, nor does it stem from the various opponents of video games. The murderer is the developer whose heart is set on money, the murder weapon are the many nefarious plots, and if this problem is not fixed, everyone involved will become a victim. The video game industry is going to have another crisis because of games having heavy dependencies on micro-transactions, unfinished games, and poor production.

In this age of instant access to free media from sources all around the world, video games have developed a new way to gain revenue. According to Tomic, micro-transactions denote payments for purchasing applications for mobile phones or payments for purchasing the additional content for video games” (Tomic, 241). When they were originally created, micro-transactions served to add extra content to the game or system. An early example is the e-reader for the Game Boy Color that, when activated, allowed games made for the Nintendo Entertainment System to be played on the Game Boy.

As games were connected to internet services, the system changed; micro-transactions now served as an opportunity to add additional gameplay, known as downloadable content. The new additions were not vital to the core focus of the game; however, they could provide additional bonuses to play.

Soon after, the problems revolving the system became clear. Game stores on mobile devices became popular, many boasting no cost to install. The microtransaction system was installed as the way to gain money, many of which providing virtual currency that could be used to speed up often time-consuming processes or provide advantages against other players. They could be purchased with only a few button presses, and they were unlimited. Soon after, events appeared in the news where young children would spend thousands of dollars on these payments, simply because their parents' credit card information was on the device (Narcisse, Kotaku). Despite multiple refunds being awarded, the system did not change, and the system has expanded to prey on those who are vulnerable to manipulation.

A major micro-transaction that has caused controversy in recent years is the loot box. A player can spend a small amount of money to receive an item that gives out random items that can be found in the game. There is a low chance to obtain a rare item using a loot box, and from there comes the appeal and the controversy. Unlike currency micro-transactions, which always provide the same reward whenever purchased, loot boxes are entirely random, making the practice share many similarities to gambling. Delfabbro described the main issue with this best: " In situations of this nature, players will often spend an escalating amount of money that begets further spending on the game. The investment of an irretrievable sum of money in pursuit of desirable virtual items may be seen by players as an investment to the extent that it will increase the likelihood of obtaining these item "(Delfabbro and King, 1967). Countries in Europe have already

forbidden games featuring loot boxes from being sold to minors, but the rest of the world is still exposed to this issue.

Another issue surrounding loot boxes is that many of them are found inside games that must be purchased in order to play, making fans argue: “ why are we paying extra for a sixty-dollar game?”. Companies have yet to find a good answer. For example, Electronic Arts, the makers of Star Wars Battlefront 2 (One of the bigger games in this controversy), responded to a user on the site Reddit saying that it would give players a “ sense of pride and accomplishment” (EACommunityTeam, Reddit). The comment quickly became the most disliked comment on the website with over 650, 000 dislikes due to the disappointment it gave people. As a result of this controversy, many people have stated that they are going to boycott games that use this practice, which could drop the revenue of many major companies.

The practice of micro-transactions is dangerous to many—, but some developers have been able to earn money in a crueler way; many companies will release unfinished games at full retail price, which is normally 40 to 60 dollars. In most cases, an unfinished game would be where there are multiple bugs throughout that might make it unplayable; however, where the developers have left things out. The most recent example of this is No Man’s Sky, developed by Hello Games. When the game was announced, one of the biggest selling points was that it would have an advanced explorations system through outer space. Upon release, however, many found that this feature had little depth to it, and the gameplay around it grew dull after only a few hours (Kollar, Polygon).

Consumers hate discovering a game is unfinished because it is a waste of their money. Many big name games today cost 50-70 dollars, which is a big investment for the 16-25 year old players who might enjoy it. (Ghuman and Griifiths, 8). It can be especially frustrating if, due to micro-transactions, major parts of the game are added for a price (Ryan, 421). If they due pay, the developers have little reason to focus on finishing the game if people are still buying it. Once again, people have decided to boycott companies that due this, dropping profits more.

There have been many instances in which mistakes have been made because of a developer's desire for money. Other issues, though, stem from the preferences of the consumers- there are times when they believe that the game was not developed properly, and that there was too much focus in one aspect and too little in another. On many forum sites, there is constantly dismay towards a new game in a series because it kept the same gameplay but upgraded the graphics. Unlike the other issues, this one is much more subjective, but it has been proven from past mistakes that it is not one to scoff at.

In the late 1970s to the early 1980s, Atari SA had a monopoly on home video game consoles, and everyone bought their products for entertainment. As time went on, people noticed how many games seemed to rely on the name alone rather than anything about the game itself. One person did a side by side comparison- as an example- of the game Pac-man as it was on an arcade cabinet versus on the Atari 2600; the Atari version showed less effort in the graphics despite the fact that it had more processing power. It was the same situation for many other games. The tipping point came in 1982 with

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the release of the game “ E. T. The Extra-Terrestrial”, named after the movie. Planned to release for the holiday season, the game was rushed, with what many considered the worse visuals of the era along with the horrible gameplay. In the years to come, the video game industry lost billions.

A similar crisis is incoming, though this one may be leagues ahead of the crash in 1983. As the market becomes flooded with unfinished, poorly designed, and payment reliant games, the number of people who will buy them will shrink at a considerable amount. This change is necessary for the millions who pick up the controller in order to have fun without needing their wallet.

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