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Analysis SEC 2

New Age Gambling

Addiction can be shown throughout many different sources in various forms of technology that may not seem like a true form of disease. Many examples of the video game industry have shown forms of new gambling addictions through different purchasable rewards. In the past, game companies made money by simply purchasing the game. As time went on, game companies added various DLCs or more purchasable items for the player's enjoyment. They soon shifted into what we know today as loot boxes. Loot boxes are essentially a form of slot machine in that you purchase hoping for a rare item or cosmetic for the game(Neely). Many people can get caught in this loop of purchasing more and more, hoping for one specific item or cosmetic that gives status in the game or is extremely rare. Big corporations know that making these items extremely rare is a genius way for the player to keep spending more and more hoping that they will acquire said item. The constant need or hope for acquiring a rare cosmetic demonstrates the new age of gambling addictions in younger audiences.

Video game companies make tremendous amounts of money besides these loot boxes. Before this new age of not knowing what you are purchasing, game companies made money primarily on game sales. In the age of buying physical copies of games from places like Game Stop and big box stores, people would get the whole game for what they paid for. A typical price would be 60 dollars for any game. This was the most simple transaction in the gaming world. Soon gaming companies realized they could be making more money from their users. On top of purchasing your 60-dollar new game, you could also spend more for different versions. An

example of this could be how Call of Duty, an extremely popular first-person shooter game sells multiple versions that would be 20 to 30 dollars more giving you exclusive content that no one else can get unless you have that version of the game. This of course creates a want to be different in the player's eyes. Companies let this become the new normal and were able to add more purchasable content known as DLCs. These are in-game purchasable content bundles that can unlock new maps, weapons, cosmetics, and other content in the game. The want to have something you don't yet own is what drives these sales so high. On top of all this, a new form of money-making arose known as subscription-based purchases. This is where for a certain length of time if you purchase a certain subscription in the game as you level up you unlock more and more from your subscription. The main draw to these purchases is mainly status. For example, the game Fortnite is a subscription-based game. The reason the game did so well was the game was free to download but if you wanted cosmetics you had to either purchase them in the shop or from the battle pass subscription. People spend endless amounts of money on these subscriptions mainly for the status of having the end of the battle pass or completing it. Eventually, this leads to microtransactions and loot boxes. The main course for these usually consists of different levels of purchases from common drops to rare drops fluctuation in price based on the chance you have for a rare item. For example, common drops could have a .03 percent of unlocking a rare item and a very rare drop could have a 5 percent chance of unlocking something rare. Players can easily be locked into trying to unlock a rare item. This can easily lead to a very scary form of gambling addiction that can be blown off as just trying to unlock something. People will spend endless amounts of money going for that one item or one skin. The age group that is mainly affected by this is mainly 12 to 15. Most kids this age have access to their parents' credit cards due to the fact that most have asked to purchase something or the card is already hooked up to

the device they are playing on. Some parents don't know that their child can now purchase anything at the press of a button without their parent's knowledge. At a young age, children are exposed to a form of slot machine with loot boxes where the chance of winning that item is a greater dopamine hit than actually having the item.

Gambling is a known addiction that has ruled over people since the early ages of society. Gambling addiction usually starts with a harmless or innocent introduction. This may appear harmless or even enjoyable for the first time(Priory). People engage in the same version of gambling for multiple reasons such as seeking the thrill associated with taking risks. The excitement of winning or using it as an escape from personal problems can also push a gambling addiction further. The main problem is also if someone in this mindset wins even once this can spiral into a relentless pursuit to recover losses or replicate that initial euphoria they once felt. As they get more and more addicted their tolerance for risk-taking can grow exponentially. The behavior is further reinforced by rewards. This then gradually paves the way towards developing a full-blown addiction characterized by loss of self-control or obsessive thoughts about gambling pursuits consequences permeating various aspects of one's life. (The Science behind Gambling)

Bringing loot boxes into the gambling picture can easily be seen in the want to unlock a certain prize.” Loot boxes create a type of gambling habit where one is always looking for that dopamine hit of winning”(Boyd). This can be pressured in many different ways. One way is simply status. Through players and social media having certain items such as legendary skins or other rare cosmetics can tell other players that you are actually “better at the game” Another way that these game purchases can hook players into purchasing is simply the cost of buying(McCaffery). Most loot boxes in games are anywhere from five to ten dollars. This may

look like not a lot to the spender but over time these purchases add up fast. The company wants you to think that you're not spending that much and it's not a big deal but this allows the companies to wait for the long run and can always be making passive income off a game even if it is outdated.

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