**Creative Technology
Professionalism Technical Report**

Impact of social, casual and mobile games in the evolving games

24th October 2016

Notes

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I. Abstract

Past research shows that socialization is an important mean to bring people play to video games. How it impacted the game industry at the beginning and the consequence nowadays on the new game released. How the game industry have designed social game. Explanation of the casualization, why the game industry have decided to casualize the video games industry. What are the different consequences on the the last and coming video game generation. What are the consequences of the casualization on the customers and the market. Study around the new El dorado of the video games industry : mobile games. What are the aim of editors on this platform and how socialization and casualization are taken an important place in the mobile games. Research on the recent success of the mobile game, the features included to use the socialization and casualization in order to touch the largest panel of people as possible.

What are the impact of socialization, casualization and mobile game on the evolving game industry ?

II. Introduction

This is my first technical report I write in English, I apologize for any mistakes in my English.

In order to deal about the impact of social, casual and mobile games in our current game industry, we will divided this subject 3 main parts.

In a first time, we will introduce the notion of socialization, and what it is including in the video games. Then we will do a statement on the current state of social games in order to find the procs & cons of the socialization of a game.

Then, in a second part we will discuss around the impact of the casualization in the past last years and for the future video game release.

Finally, we will study how mobile game are impacting the evolving game industry and show the importance of the 2 features developed previously.

III. Analysis

1. <u>Impact of the socialization in the evolving game industry</u>

A. What is the socialization, where do it come from in the game industry?

To introduce the concept of social game, I have wroten a short study about the game industry history. This study is a resume about how the game industry made video games as a popular entertainment and explain why the social aspect is a very important features for game designers

You can **find it in appendices part** at the end of this report.

Social game : a mean to bring people to play together at video games

B. Actual statement

As a resume of the point **A.**, we can define a social game as a game with interaction between players (mutual aid, exchange, etc.) or multiplayer mode features. From the beginning of the 21th century, the game industry conscious on the fact that social game is the main feature to bring and keep people to play at their video games, they designed a new generation of game with a main content based on multiplayer mode.

As an example we can take the statistic of the day of the biggest PC video games platform : **Steam**

Main content

- ▬ Multiplayer
- ▬ Solo
- ▬ Mixed
- ▬ Trend

		current	peak
Concurrent Steam Users:		**6,777,733**	**12,900,444**

Top games by current player count

CURRENT PLAYERS	PEAK TODAY	GAME
611,458	1,040,714	Dota 2
141,916	625,538	Counter-Strike: Global Offensive
59,717	156,135	Sid Meier's Civilization VI
35,833	71,970	Team Fortress 2
22,197	63,500	Grand Theft Auto V
21,148	58,937	Sid Meier's Civilization V
20,820	54,536	ARK: Survival Evolved
13,963	49,911	Paladins
13,755	40,221	Fallout 4
13,681	38,704	Football Manager 2016
13,662	44,236	The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
13,297	40,593	Rust
13,239	31,332	Warframe
12,803	50,254	Garry's Mod
11,911	56,807	Rocket League
11,832	40,087	Unturned
9,512	37,418	Arma 3
9,175	15,412	Clicker Heroes

Steam game stats - 23/10/2016

Or even we can check an online streaming platform, in order to have an idea about the actual trend of the game industry :
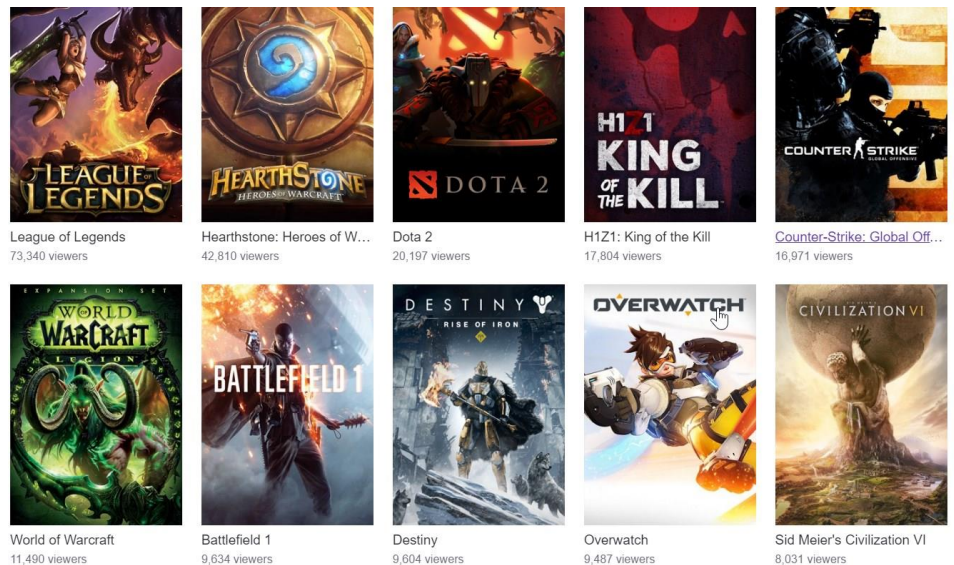
Top 10 of the 23/10/2016 – Twitch.tv

We can note that the game the most played on computers are only social game which include multiplayer content as the base of the game, this can be explain by the important community around this game.

Even if we can find new game released (as Civilization VI in this case) in the most played game, this is just a temporary trend.

Moreover, there is one of the first social game designed in this top 10 : the MMORPG **World of Warcraft.** Released in 2001 it is one of the game the most played in the past 10 years, this is due to the update provided by the editor (here Blizzard Activision) but mostly to the important community around this game.

This statistic about social game are more played than solo game can be also confirmed on the platform as console for example.

Top 5 selling game of the year - VgChartz

C. Pro & Cons of social games : impact for the next generation

In the point **B.,** we have seen the proof that the social feature is still the key to make a game popular and bring the most of possible player in the current game designed.

<u>As advantages we can note a shortlist :</u>

- ✓ Social game bring people into the video game entertainment, that able to increase the number of potential players
- ✓ Players can stay many years on the same game (ex : World of Warcraft, League of Legends)
- ✓ Players can build an important and faithful community around it, this will do the promotion and give a view of an active game.
- ✓ Etc…

<u>However, as all concept there is not only advantages for the game industry :</u>

- Promote the game industry to develop as a main part the multiplayer/interaction mode of a game (ex : Call of Duty which provide a short campaign)
- Reduce the number of solo game designed due to the fact that it is less attractive and a game as **The Witcher III** for example cost more than a Hollywood's production so it is less lucrative even if it was a success for this title.
- Social game new release put in the shade new licenses due to their success. Even if the new license can be an incredible game.

We have seen with the last release **Fifa17** of the editor EA Sport Game the effect of the new release of a popular game, most of buyers of this game bought it in order to play with their friends together in their home. Many of the buyers had probably no idea of the new features included, they just bought this licenses because it is the more popular instead of another game (ex : **Pro Evolution Soccer** 2017 selling is 20x less than **Fifa17**)

PES2017 vs Fifa17 selling, from vgChartz

2. Impact of the casualization in the evolving game industry

A. What is the casualization?

"Casualisation is a process leading to the opening of video game production to every demographic category"

src : inaglobal.fr

This definition give us a great overview of the aim of the casualization. For video games editors, the casualization is another mean (in additional of the social features) to bring the most of people on their game.

By opening the access at a game, which we can define by reducing the gameplay difficulty of the game, casual game hope to keep the player in order to make him as a regular player as possible or even a hard gamer.

A family playing at the same game on the Wii

From the release of the **Wii** by Nintendo in 2006, the casualization became a features included in the next generation of video games.

The aim of this platform was to have an easy mean to have a good time with your friends by playing a video games.

Whereas the other platform as **PS3** and **Xbox360** provided complete solo game, multiplayer mode but with only a 2 players game on the same devices. Nintendo delivered a way to play as 4 and have a good time even if you don't know the game or are bad at video games.

Nintendo Land, a casual game delivered with the WiiU

This game experience from Nintendo was a really new way of playing and was crowned of success. It brought a new kind of people into the video games entertainment.

Since 2006, more and more casual game have been designed, you can find below some examples :

Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare (2007)   The Sims 3 (2009)   Bejeweled 3 (2010)

A casual game could define a game which is easy to begin and have pleasure to play it, it can be a simple puzzle as well as a management game or even a shooting game.

B. Trend in the evolving game Industry

The casualization of video games have encountered the popularization of this entertainment, as show on the charts below, we can note that the selling of game consoles had significantly improved due to the new kind of players who bought consoles.
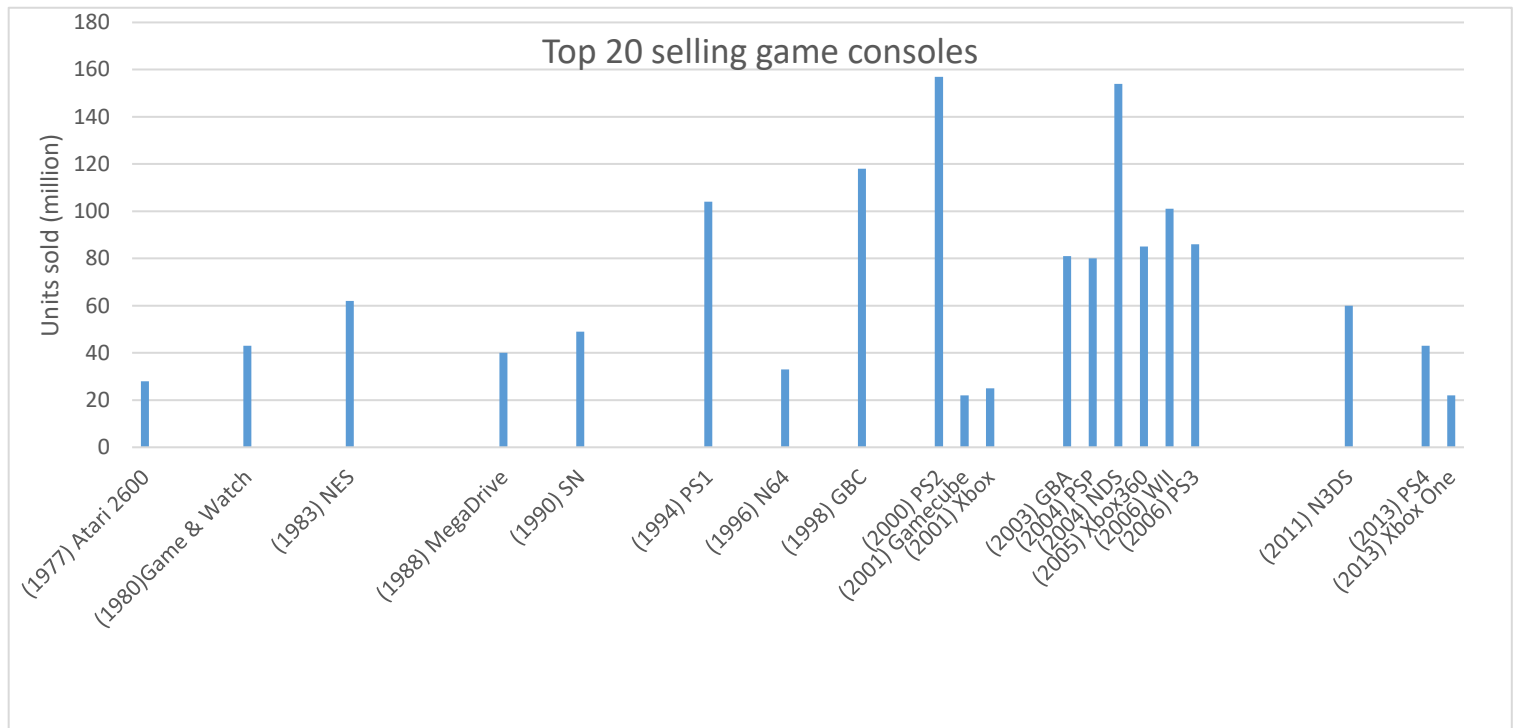
Data source : List of best selling game consoles

As a proof of that casualization is an good mean to bring people on your games, I will take the example of a kind of game : MOBA (Multiplayer Online Battle Arena), it is actually the most popular kind of game.

To demonstrate I will use 3 games which are dominating the market :
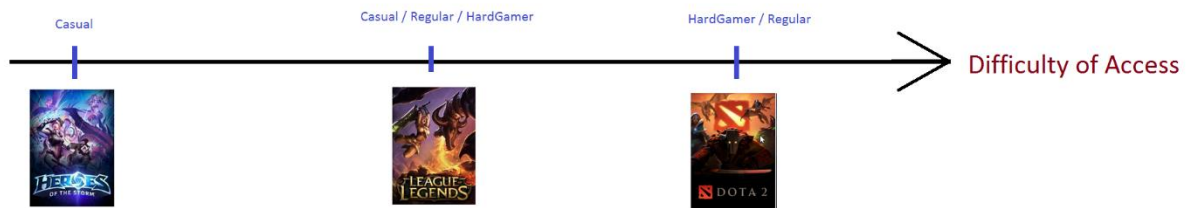

League of Legends
72,482 viewers

Dota 2
19,307 viewers

Heroes of the Storm
3,063 viewers

You can have an overview of their popularity by watching the number of viewers of each game on Twitch.tv

This 3 games are based on the same concept (MOBA), but they differ by they game features which can define their level of "casualty".

<u>We can caricature this 3 games as :</u>

This 3 games are including different features and they are not designed for the same customer. In this case **League of Legends** is the most popular game because they succeed to bring the different kinds of players (casual, regular, hardgamer) as well.
Dota 2, is more designed for hardGamer, but strong of the popularity of the license it have an important amount of players.
And the new one **Heroes of the Storm** have been designed specifically for casual gamer who won't invest too much of their time in a MOBA.

MOBA games are one of a proof to illustrate that casual games are popular and bring the most of possible players in your game.

Still in order to satisfy and bring player in their games, the game industry have also realized adaptation of other popular entertainment as cinema, and series.

For example we can quote **Game of Thrones Telltale** which retrace the history of the series. After the success of the series it is a good mean to bring people in video games.

Game of Thrones Telltale - Game view (2014)
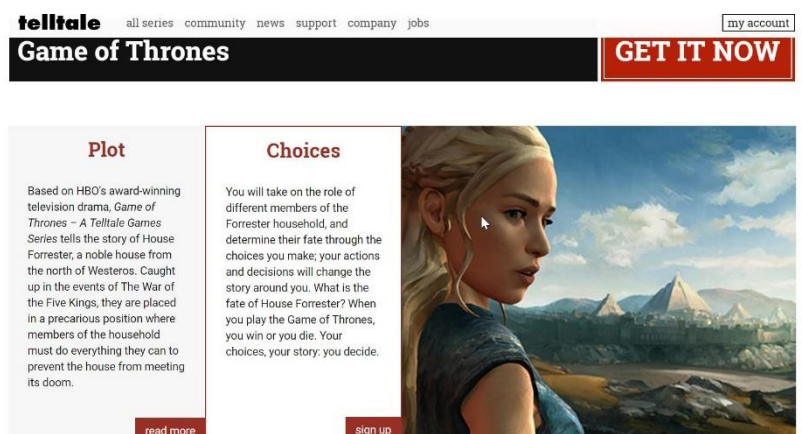
Telltale website

Adaptation is a reliable mean to casualize a game, because the player will already know about the background of the game and he could be interested even if he have any ideas about the gameplay.

C. Pros & cons : Impact of the casualization

In addition of the socialization of video games, by adding the casualization the game industry have another important mean to bring people.

<u>The casualization have pushed the industry to :</u>

- ✓ Develop a background around the game, this is more and more important features which have been emerge. Nowadays for players a good game should include good mechanics of course but also a decent background.
- ✓ Able easily to play with your friends at any game.

Cazualization : video games for all

<u>Whereas the advantages are very interesting there is also debate between players around the casualization and the way of development of the game industry :</u>

The game industry is making recent game easier to play, in order to not frustrate the players and bring the most of possible people in their game.

For some players (casual, regular) it is a good news, but for another part of the community it could be a bad news (regular, hard gamer).

However, it's true that the main part of editors a pushed to ease the gameplay of the recent game in order to casualize game, but there are also licenses designed especially for players who are seeking hard game.
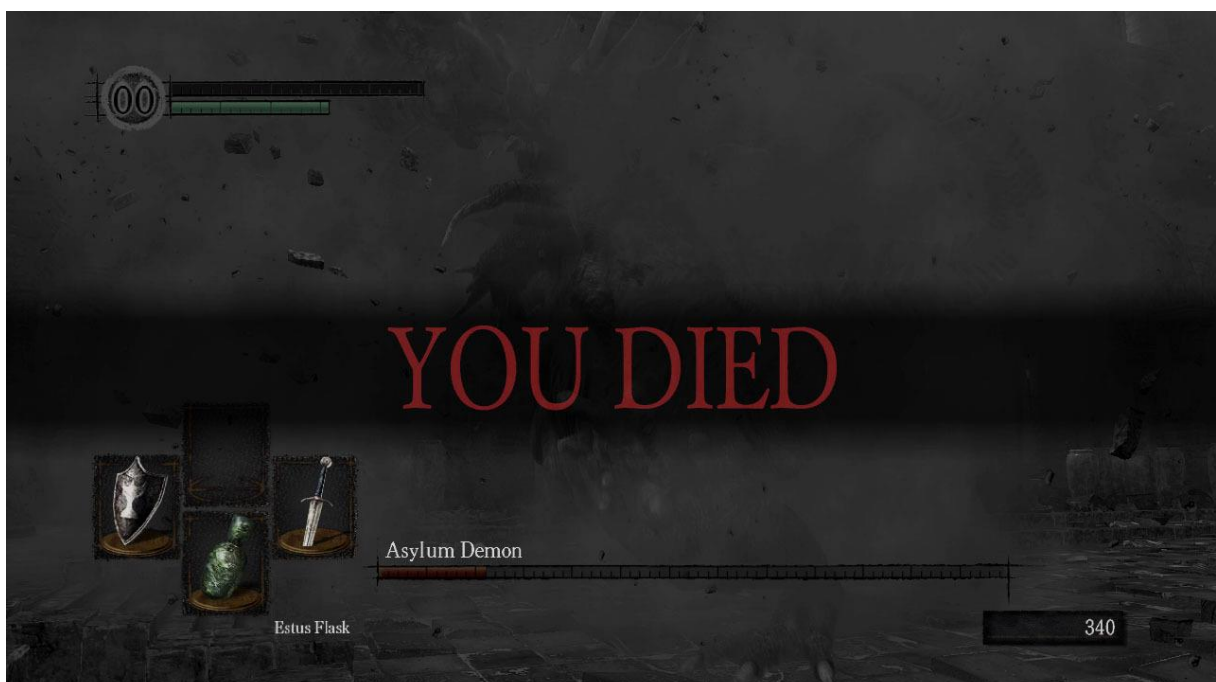
Dark Souls 3 (2016) – a popular screen of the license

Video games are considerate by most of the people as "game for children", it is not well appreciated if you are playing at 40 years old for example, you have already "raise the age for this kind of game".

Whereas video games are designed for customers between 8 and 25 years old and especially for men, the casualization have change the rule.

Indeed, one of the main interesting advantages of the casualization is the fact to expand the video games entertainment to another kind of people.

For example, if we take the platform as DS, Wii, Facebook which can be considerate as the more "social" platform, we can note than in 4 years the default customer have taken a different profile of player.
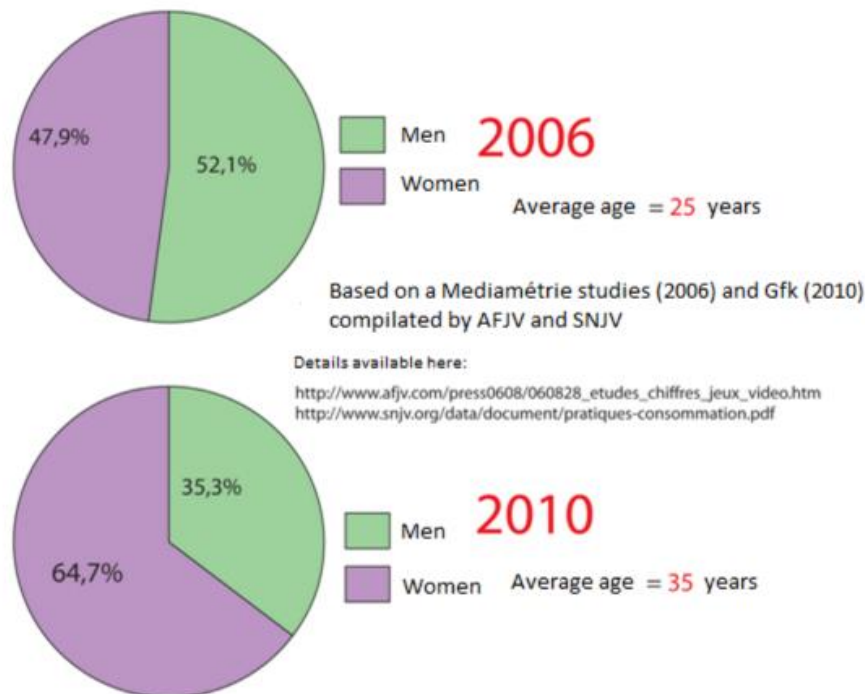
Profil of French players - who played in the past months - in 2006 and 2010.
In 4 years, the Wii, the DS and Facebook has greatly changed the profil of the average player.

Source : inaglobal.fr

This change is a real proof about the impact of the socialization and casualization of the video games entertainment due to the strategic choice made by the game industry.

Street Fighter 5 (2016), a game only designed for men ?

3. Impact of the mobile games in the evolving game industry

A. Trend of the market

With the technology advances, smartphone are nowadays able to run basic video games as well as complex, that's open an interesting market for the game industry.

For 5 years the market have boomed and there is millions of games available on the Android OS or iOS.
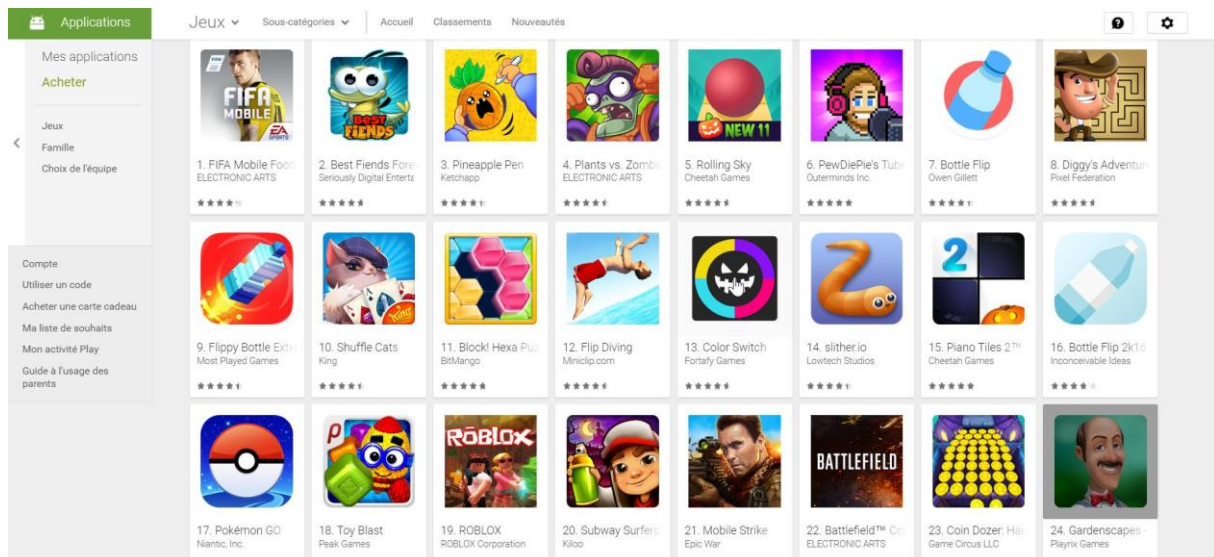
Top rated game of the play store – 23/10/2016

Due to the number of new games delivered each week, this is a market in perpetual evolving, there is a small amount of game which stay few month in the top 20.

Even if there is a multiple of editors the market is dominated by important studio as :

- Supercell (Clash Royal, Clash of Clan…)
- King (Candy Crush)
- Electronics Arts (Sims, Simpson, Fifa)
- Gameloft
- Rovio (Angry Birds)
- Etc..

B. Game designed for mobile

We can separate editors in 2 different category :

- Editors who create game designed for mobile usage
- Editors using game portability on mobile

First of all, I will deal about mobile editors, let's take the example of **Candy Crush :**

Mobile platform is an awesome mean to provide game to people. That's why King (the editors) decided to create a puzzle game.

The game is designed for casual players, the mechanics are simple to be use and the graphics are colored ! In order to still bring more people King added social features in this game as if you want to progress faster you should require the help of your friends or wait or pay.

Most of popular game (Candy Crush, Clash of clans, ..) are free but used a concept to create an addiction for the players in order to bring him back each day if he desires to progress that's pull him to spend money if he want to win time.

Candy Crush Game view

Now I will take the example of a game which was the success of this summer 2016 : **Pokemon Go.**

It was the phenomenon of this summer. Surfing on the Pokemon community a group of people designed a game which able players to catch Pokemon on the street.

Few days after being published, the license was bought by Nintendo, and it was a good opportunity because the game generated more than 200 millions of dollars.

<u>The success of this game is due from 2 main features included in the game :</u>

- **Social part :** Even if you can't exchange your Pokemon, as you should walk in the street with your phone it is giving a real social feature. The community was so excited during the launching of the game that you met people everywhere and there were improvised event/meeting of trainer.
- **Casual aspect :** The game is really simple, even if you are bad at video games, you just need to spend your time to be better than anyone.

However, the casual aspect could reboot real player, it was such as phenomenon that all players try it to be with their friends, even if they didn't enjoyed graphics or mechanics.

The Pokemon Go experience was the **first real interactive experience for mobile players** and it give an important course to the game industry.

It the next months, we will probably see an amount of original game in order to try to reproduce the same phenomenon. That's a good impact on the game industry which is push to develop new concept in order to exploit a new trend.

Source: Apptopia
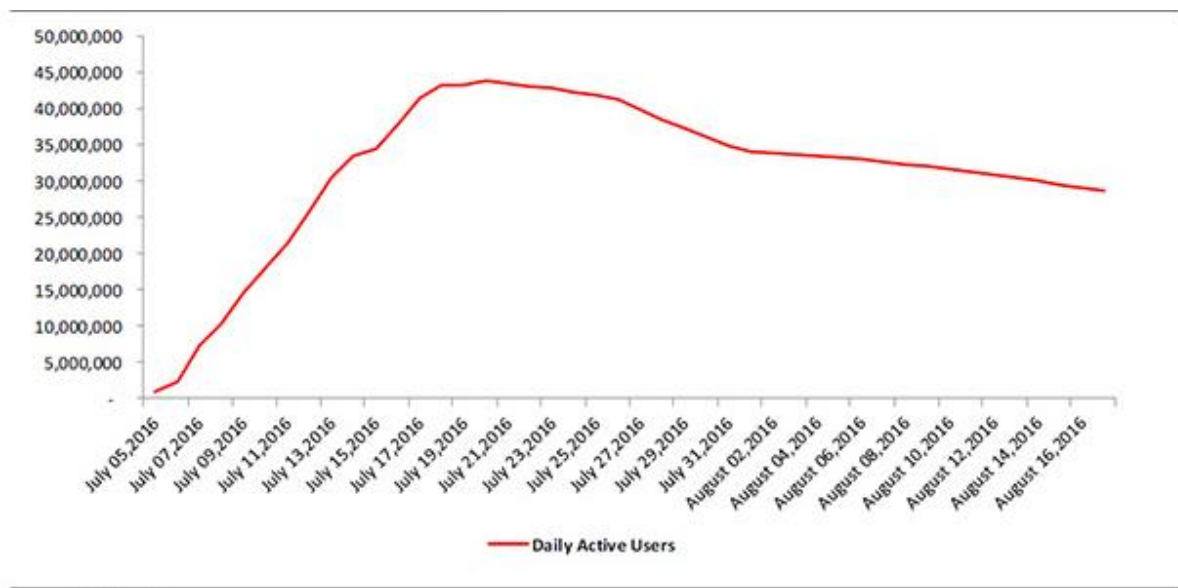
<u>Pokemon Go Worlwide daily active users</u>

C. Game portability

The other kind of editors, provide more complex and complete game for customers, this is due to the fact that they are providing a release of a game designed for PC.

Minecraft Pocket Edition (Original PC release 2011)

It is a recent phenomenon, more and more company of the Game Industry are designing a "pocket edition" of their game.

The aim of this kind of game is different from the game designed for mobile. As a PC it is more complete and you should spend more time to play it compared to a game designed only for mobile use.

Don't Starve Pocket Edition (Original PC release 2013)

There are 2 kind of customers for this games :

- The players who already know the game on another platform and would like to be able to play it on his mobile device.

- The new players who will discover the game and probably download it on the original platform of the game.

There are pros & cons about game adaptation :

The main advantages of this kind of games is to provide a complete game to the players and if he like it, he will probably come on the original platform. It is a good mean to promote the game, but it can also be used to keep a player which can't use his platform for a time as an active player of the game.

Hearthstone (Original PC release 2014)

However, if the game have a nice adaptability to be played on a mobile devices, it can reach the monopoly of the market. As an example we can take **Hearthstone** which is providing shade on the other cards game.

Moreover, it could be difficult to create a new card game or to popularize an already existing game even if it is famous, as an example we can quote **Magic the Gathering**, even if the game is not designed for casual player (which are the main parts of mobile players).

Dofus Touch (Original PC release 2004)

IV. Conclusion

In the first part of this report, we have define what is a social game, we can resume that a social game include an interactive part with another player, it can be just an exchange (Ex : Pokemon) or a multiplayer mode.

After the analysis of video games selling on different platforms and streaming views, we have seen what kind of game are the more popular : social game.

It bring a proof that people preferred to play at social game. Players want to play together at a game, or share their own experience to another player.

From 10 last years, the game industry have designed social game in order to bring the most of possible players on their game. And it worked, since 2000s more and more people are buying and playing video games. The game industry succeed to recognize the fact to play game as a good and social entertainment instead of an entertainment specific for hard gamers.

As a consequences of socialization, more and more multiplayer game are developed comparatively to solo game.

Still in order to improve the number of regular player, the game industry was seeking a new way in addition of social feature to bring people. They wanted to expand the kind of players, we have seen in the second part another process organized by the game industry during the last years : the casualization of the video games.

We can simplify the casualization by the fact to ease the access to a game for people. If you are a new player, a regular player or even a hard game the casualization will able you to enjoy the game at the beginning without any complex requirements.
It bring a large panel of people to play video games. However with the casualization, editor are less forced to provide new original license and it is reducing the creation.

In the last part, we have studied the impact of mobile games, which are the most expanded way of play nowadays. By checking the popular games we have deduced that games which provide social and casual features were the most played.
Moreover we have also note the different strategies of actors of the game industry on this platform, which is nowadays and in the future the platform with the biggest potential of development.

As a conclusion we can say that the game industry is and will be more becoming one of the most lucrative field in the future (Virtual reality is coming…). Moreover even if some budget of game exceeds a Hollywood movie, it is not a proof that your game will be a success. Actually the more impacting feature are the casual and social aspect of a game.

V. References

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First video game history - bnl.gov

A casual revolution by Jesper Juul - books.google.co.uk

Mobile gaming trends - engadget.com

VI. Appendices

1. The beginning of video games

A. Tennis for Two

William Higinbotham, this name mean certainly nothing to you, but he was a major scientific of the 20th century. He worked on very important project as for the electronics for the first nuclear, radar and others projects during the World War II.

However more than great scientific, he is also the creator of the first video game: **Tennis for Two**

This is the first video game created

We are in 1958, and William Higinbotham designed a sport video game for display at his laboratory's annual exhibition.

The game design was a two player game of a simulation of a tennis game, including features of the tennis as wind, net, air resistance, etc …

To work correctly the game, it needed a lot of space, because 30 analog computer were required to power the game.

Moreover in order to display the game he took the analog screen of an oscillator.

The exhibition was a really success, and as while this project did not include innovation but only entertainment concept, it is considered to be the first video game created but it stayed an project and there was no marketing of Tennis for Two.

Display of Tennis for Two

B. Arcade machine

Few years later, in 1971, the borning game industry created the concept of arcades machines, and published arcades 2D games (and then 3D games). It was the first game playable for the general public and people must come to arcade amusements to play it.

View of an arcade amusement

At that time, due to technological limit, there were only arcade game designed (short game with different level). In order to popularize the video game in the society, the game industry created many kinds of arcade games to bring the most of possible player to come in arcade amusements and tried to make people who coming as a regular player.

Space Invaders (1978) Pacman (1980) Donkey Kong (1981) Tetris (1984)

We can for example take 4 famous Arcades Games to show the diversity of the gameplays available.

The economic environment of the arcades games was to put a small amount of money to play the game, and when you lose or reach the final objective the game is over and you should re-insert money to play another game. Still in order to bring more people to play, the game industry had fixed a cheap price to play, they wanted to bring people from any social state and addiction for players.

The aim of the game industry was simple : suggest a non-traditional entertainment to the public.
Even though it was a great technological improvement, it stayed a niche entertainment.

It was frowned upon to go on arcade game amusements to spend his money in a solo game (even if there were few two player games) because players were considered are non-sociable people compared to the main part of people which preferred to play pinball, billiard or table football.

Although, arcade amusements encounter a great success called "Golden Age of arcade video games" (1978 to mid-1980s) and created an important community around it, which organized tournaments or events.

Newspaper article dealing with a tournament

As a proof of that success, there were more than 10 000 video games arcades amusements across the USA during the golden age.

2. Popularization of video games

A. Home Gaming : The beginning

After the comment of the customers about the arcade machine cons (need to move in an arcade games amusements, expensive for regular players, etc…), the game industry decided still in the aim to bring the most of possible people to play of their game to launch a concept new concept.

Pong machine (1972)

Strong from a success of one of the most popular arcade game published in 1972 called **Pong,** Atari who were one of the leaders on the market decided to create a new way of playing with an adaptation of Pong for home gaming, one of the first home console is born.

Pong console (1975)

Thanks to the golden age of arcade game, game industry had improved significantly the technological limit to be able to power more and more complex and beautiful game.

That's how, in only 3 years they were able to create the first console which powered the same game as an arcade machine.

It was a real electronics prowess !

It was a real challenge to the game industry to be able to produce an important quantity of reliable console (more than 200 000 sales the first year), that's why the price was quite expensive : 100$ without taxes to play only at one game.

Even though, this new version of Pong encounter an incredible success with the non-video games player, which an important amount of people decided to buy one for themselves.

After this successful experience from Atari, the others actors of the game industry decided to launch their own product, which coincide with the end of the arcade golden ages and even more the death of arcade games amusements.

B. Home Gaming : game platform development

Thanks to the boom caused by this new way of play, aware about the customer's desire, the game industry decided to develop the next generation of platform for home gaming able to run different game on a same device.
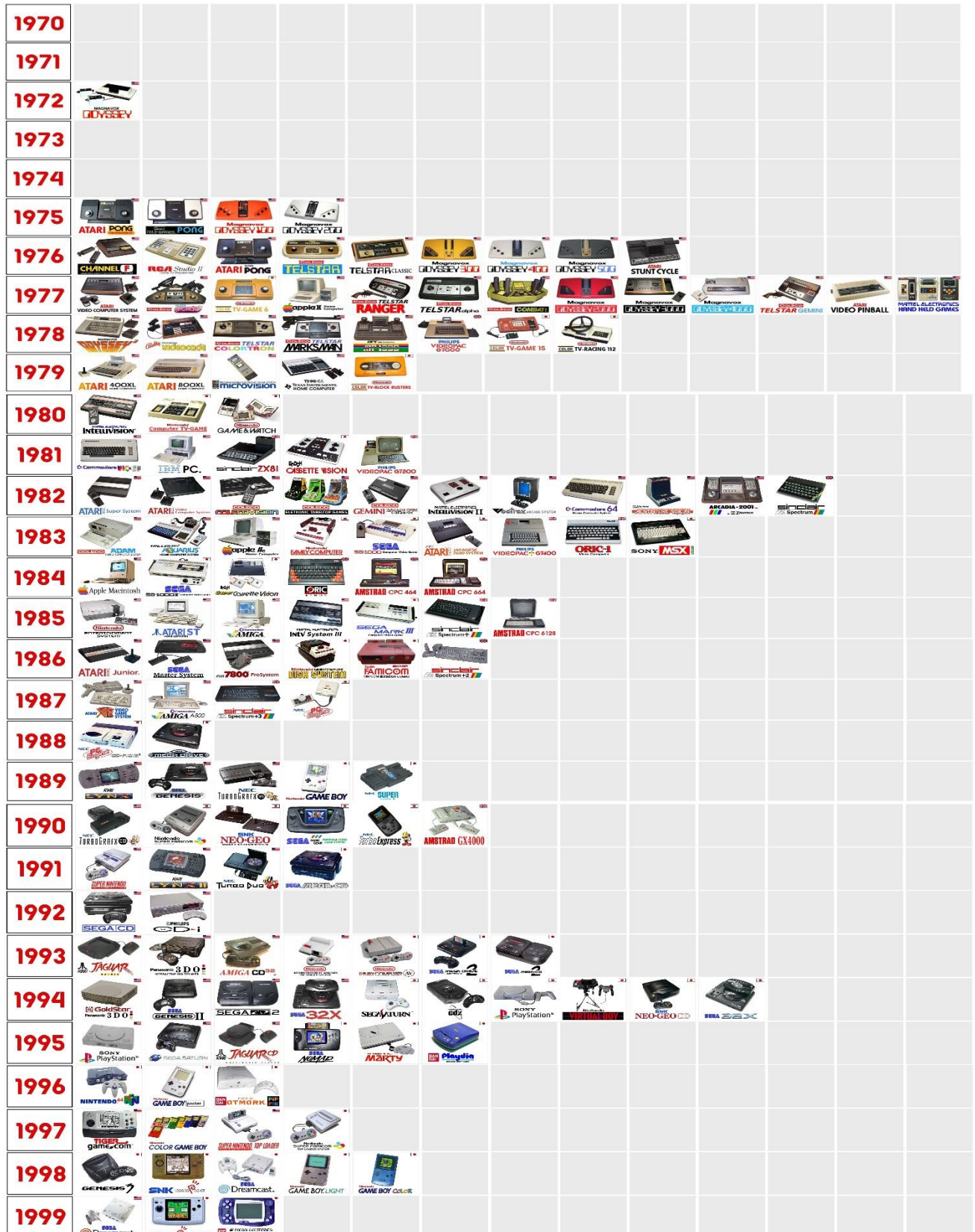
Video Gaming Timeline 1970 to 2000 - deviantart.com

As you can see on this timeline, the game industry designed an important (148 different models) amount of devices to play video games in only 20 years !

This is due to the boom of the video game market. We can note than there was a large number of companies which designed gaming platform compared to the actual market monopolized by Nintendo, Microsoft and Sony.

This important number of platform brought the game industry to publish many games because the multi-platform game didn't exist with this generation. That's why many game weren't completely developed, had a bad game length, were too difficult (to improve the game length), etc.

Whereas games developed weren't awesome, more and more people bought video games and it became a real entertainment and widely accepted by people.

C. Gaming communities

From 1995 with the significant hardware progress, new generation of platform as the Nintendo 64 and the Playstation 1 became a real success nearby the player.

This technology progress have been exploited by the gaming industry to provide more complex and complete game for players. (Super Mario 64, Mario Kart 64, Zelda, Crash Bandicoot, Tomb Raider, Final Fantasy, etc).

Tomb Raider 3 : Adventures Of Lara Croft (PS1 - 1998)

Even if, there were a main part of solo game, they encountered a large community of fans, and it brought more and more players to play video games. But video games were still considered as a specific entertainment for "Geek".

Therefore, since 1998 the game industry aware about the player's desire decided to design **interactive and social game**.

3. Socialization of the game industry

We can define the word "Socialization" as :

"A learning process, one that involves development or changes in the individual's sense of self"
src : sociology.org

However in our case we are talking about a game, a game where players could exchange together, create a community, or even play together.

Since 1998, the game industry started to make social games, because they have discovered that there is great benefits to provide a social game to a players.

For me one of the best example of a first social game is **Pokemon.**

A. Pokemon : sharing his experience

 I believe that original Pokemon Games designed by Nintendo don't require an introduction due to their success of the launching of the license in 1996 and still nowadays.

We can pull 2 features from this license which make this game a social game :

- First of all the aspect of to be a collector by playing this game, you want to show your own collection to others players.
- Secondly, it is based on an incredible and still working marketing ploy : 3 versions of the "same" game. By including special features (exclusive Pokemon to catch) in the different release Nintendo had realized a mean to force players to build a community around it, in order to complete the game, that's make the game a social game.

People should meet each other to exchange their Pokemon if they want to complete their collection to finish game.

An exchange of Pokemon on GameBoy Color

Few times after his launching, Pokemon became a reference for Nintendo mobile platform, it was the game the most played.

The game industry realized that social game and multiplayer game are a powerful mean to bring people to play video games.

GBC special edition

Moreover they designed goodies, special edition and also event around it.

The socialization of this game created an important fans community.

Even if the game was/is simple or even more considered as a game for kids and there is the same aim on each release, it is still a best seller and many people buy the new release for the license without any idea about the content of the game.
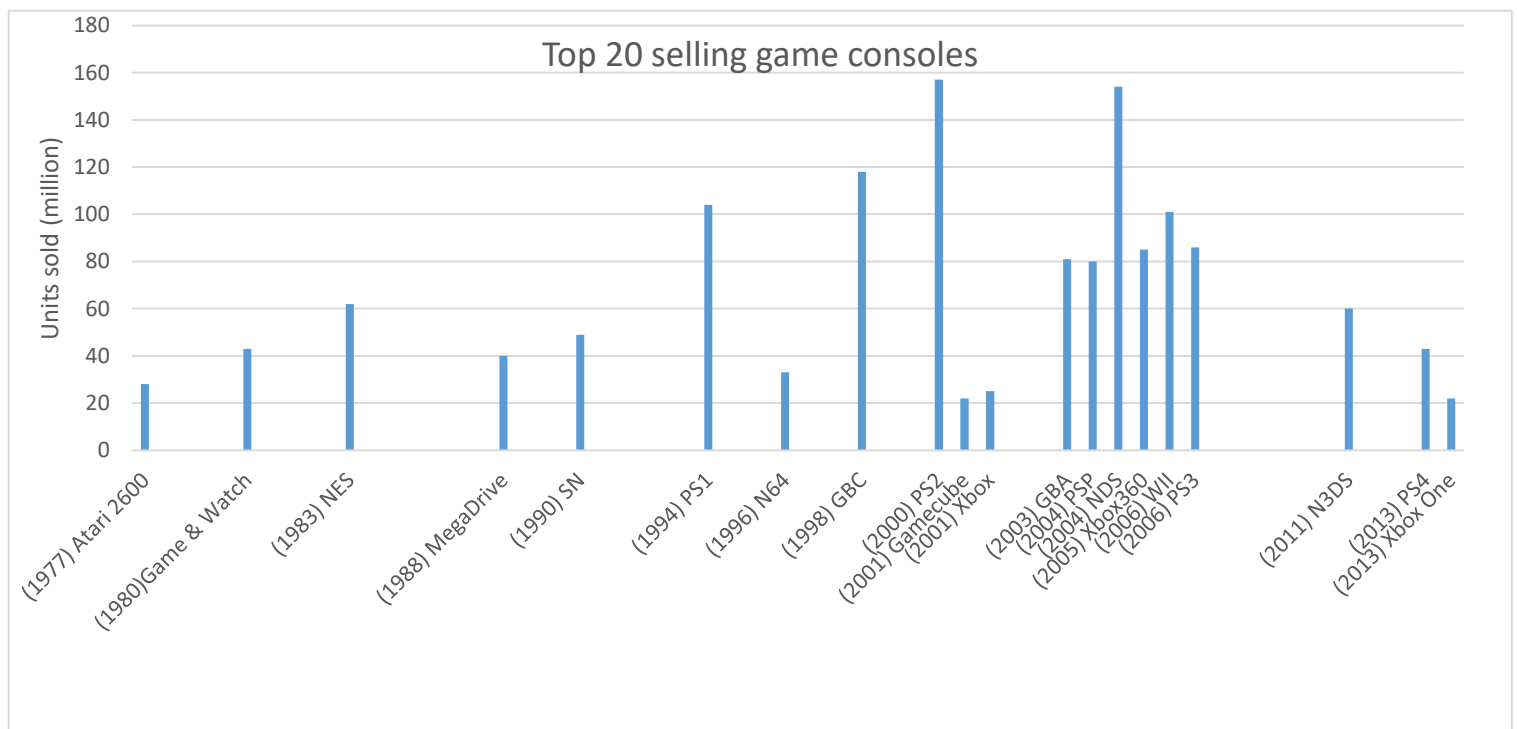
B. Multiplayer : online gaming

Thanks to the hardware and internet progress, the game industry provide at the beginning of the 21th century with the new generation of PC and the 6th generation of platform especially the following model : PS2 (2000), Xbox (2001), Nintendo DS (2004), WII (2006) the possibility to play online game.

This progress could allow people to play together in different places by sharing their experience or making an experience together, that's define a social game.

Editors designed game based on a main part of multiplayer than a solo in order to keep the player on their game, and it worked.

As a proof that social game was one of the main features which interested players we can note from the following charts that with the 6th generation of console the selling have boomed, especially mobile platform as Nintendo devices (GBC, GBA, NDS) which included a great part of social game (Nintendogs, Pokemon, Mario, Animal Crossing, …)

Data source : List of best selling game consoles