**"Beyond the Hype: Investigating the Success Factors and Pitfalls of Free Fire"**

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COMM 110

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St. Lawrence College, Cornwall

December 8th, 2023

In online gaming, Garena Free Fire’s unique appearance has set the standard compared to all other battle ground games since the year 2020.Free Fire was first founded by “Sea Limited” and “111dots studio” under the company name “Garena” in the year 2017.Garena Free Fire stands out as one of the most successful F2P (free-to-play) games in history. Garena Free Fire achieved significant milestones with 150 million daily active users in August 2021 and had a total gross revenue of 4.33 billion by the end of the year. This game’s rise and decline are related to its early success, which was driven by creative gameplay, Esports boom, and strategic marketing. However, obstacles: competition in industry, and user’s varying interests of gameplay led to the company’s loss. Let’s delve into the key elements that make Free Fire a captivating and influential game.

Free Fire was greatly successful because of innovation and easy playability. Set in a virtual battlefield, Free Fire plunges players into intense, 10-minute matches where 50 players compete to be the last one standing. What sets Free Fire apart is its “One of the biggest cornerstones in this whole success story is targeting low-end devices like mobiles before any anyone else did it” (Grillova, 2022, para.1). Which makes it accessible to a broad audience around the world. Its success may be ascribed to the perfect blend of simplicity and depth, allowing both casual and hardcore gamers to experience the heart-pumping action. On the other hand, the company struggled to keep pace with technological advancements: they didn’t fix the bugs in game (e.g. character position glitches), Hacker’s annoyance to the real players, a shot through the wall also in critical situations like fighting against the whole squad user’s character suddenly becomes static and after few seconds it dies which creates irritation to play this game. Consequently, Since August of 2021, Free Fire has been on a steady decline (Kim, 2022). Based on data.ai (an analytics and data provider) estimates that game’s revenue has fallen from peak (in August 2021) to trough (June 2022) by over 78%. Indeed, data.ai estimates about $15.3M in weekly net revenue for the week of Aug 22–28, 2021. Free Fire drops to an estimated low of $3.3M in weekly net revenue for June 12–18. Let’s explore the elements that set Free Fire apart, analyzing game’s innovative features, creator’s creativity, and effective marketing strategies that have played a crucial role in securing its unique standing in further paragraphs.

Moreover, what sets Free Fire apart is its developer’s creativity and innovation. The developers focused on optimizing the game’s performance, creative concepts to attract users and more. For instance, the diverse cast of characters, known as “Survivors,” each with unique abilities, adds an extra layer of strategy to the game (Sharma, 2023, para 3). One thing to note here, that nowadays Garena tries to introduce new game characters from real life by collaborating with athletes, different bands, and celebs: Ronaldo, Hritik Roshan, Alok, Kashmir, BTS- this is very impactful marketing strategy. However, there are other battle royal games in market that competes with Garena Free Fire: Player Unknown’s Battlegrounds (PUBG), Call of Duty: warzone (COD), Fortnite, Apex Legends etc. Ironically, this game has maintained its position and reputation gaming market above all its competitors. To illustrate, in May 2020, Free fire beat a record set by Fortnite when it came to the most player online at the same time (Naavik, 2022, para1- bullet point 1). Free Fire was the most watched battle royal game of 2021which was 1.08 billion hours, slightly edging out Fortnite. Related, since December 2020, it is the second most watched game on YouTube, after Minecraft. As Free Fire maintains its prominent position in the gaming industry, the focus now shifts to the game's continuous evolution and commitment to engaging gameplay which is discussed in next paragraph.

Furthermore, Free Fire’s success is not only due to its technical prowess but also its commitment to evolving gameplay. The game frequently introduces new features, events, and collaborations, keeping the community engaged and excited. From seasonal updates to thematic in-game events, Free Fire continually offers fresh content, ensuring that players always have something new to explore. In terms of games decline, According to Sea’s latest report, its Digital Entertainment division (Garena) reached $529.4 million in revenue in Q2, down 41.2% year-over-year and down 1.9% quarter-on-quarter (Baker, 2022, 4th section para 3). The company attributes the decline to “moderation in user engagement and monetization year-on-year. This incredible downfall not only led to company’s failure but also other applications which were driven by the game. It has such impactful effect on Sea Labs, a development arm that is now cutting staff and shutting some of its biggest experiment blockchain and public cloud projects. Booyah!” A gaming livestream app will be shut down and its staff will be let go.

In conclusion, Garena Free Fire’s experience in the gaming industry illustrates the dynamic interaction between strategic marketing, innovation, and the challenges posed by a quickly changing environment. While, the game’s decline is indicative of shifting user interests, its lasting, its enduring appeal and global significance highlight the transformative power of a skillfully designed gaming experience. As it continues to break records and engage a diverse global audience, Free Fire stands as a testament to the transformative power of innovation and strategic foresight in the gaming industry.

## Reference

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