

TITANFALL: THE TITAN THAT SHOULD NOT FALL

Analysis from outside perspective
by Antonius Ayodya



This is writer's tribute to one of his hobby, and also marks the first effort of the writer to get out of depression and anxiety disorder that has been haunting him for his entire 5 years of life. The effort to make a living, and reach his full potential, satisfying his top Maslow's Pyramid needs for self-actualisation. This analysis comes from several article, built up by several business theorem and contained personal opinion that heavily influenced by the information retained by the writer. Any criticism and suggestion for the future project can be sent by contacting the provided contacts below.

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PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Executive Summary

Titanfall 2 is a game developed by Respawn Entertainment and published by Electronic Arts Inc.. Titanfall 2 is part of Titanfall franchise, a series that focuses itself on fast paced FPS gameplay with robots as its additional mechanics. As a publisher, EA had many products in their arsenal to be launched. They had Titanfall 2 and Battlefield 1 to be launched in 2016, and was rivaled by Activision's Call of Duty at that time. Titanfall 2 released after Battlefield and before COD. Problem came after its release, its indicator was the poor performance of Titanfall's sales, while its rating said that it was a great game. We try to tackle this by identifying what was the main problem of the poor sales performance. The main problem was that Titanfall got squished by Battlefield and COD at release, with only 4 days gap with Battlefield and 1 week gap with COD, both of the franchise has been already established for almost 15 years, compared to newly released Titanfall franchise in 2014. We recognize that release date is not the only problem of Titanfall. Even if it was released almost at the same time with the other IP, there should be no problem for EA to overcome its marketing problem. There should be segregation between the old established IP and newly released IP, to be able to boost the new one while retaining the share of the already established. There are two recommendation being presented here, is to manage the release date of Titanfall and to make a separate team to manage each of the brand, or specifically, to manage incoming release of new franchise that is going to be released by EA.

THE GAME



Titanfall 2 is a game developed by Respawn Entertainment and published by Electronic Arts Inc. as part of Titanfall franchise. While Titanfall 2 was released in 2016, its predecessor released two years prior to Titanfall 2's release. The franchise brought First-Person Shooter or FPS as its main genre, and blend them together with parkour and mech riding gameplay. This game was released before such mechanics became popular as it is right now with Valorant and Apex Legends, in which the latter stands as the spin-off of the Titanfall franchise



THE PUBLISHER



Both of Titanfall title was published by Electronic Arts Inc., also commonly known as EA. Electronic Arts Inc. is an American video game company that successfully published titles like Battlefield, The Sims, and several licensed title like FIFA and Star Wars.

Being a multi-billion company, of course did not guarantee a spotless track record. Despite its successful run over several decades, EA's notorious bad public relation and greedy behavior has led them toward several problems. Take example at their egregious problematic Star Wars: Battlefront 2 apology in 2018. Its loot boxes almost brought the game dynamic's into Pay-to-Win situation. The so-called Anthem, a multiplayer game announced at 2017 E3 and released in 2019 that received many criticism. The incompatible team combined with bad word of mouth hit Anthem hard at that time. There are more flop happened but these two is really relatable to the matter at hand.



PART TWO: **THE PROBLEMS**

CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED, FINANCIALLY ASHAMED

Titanfall franchise in 2017 was great. Frankly speaking, every Titanfall title always received above average rating from critics. Critically acclaimed did not stop Titanfall to be financially ashamed. Titanfall 2 reportedly had no sales number, despite being a great game nonetheless. Upon reading their financial report for the fiscal year 2016, the only thing mentioned there was that there was net revenue decrease. There was no detailed information for which franchise met the expectation and not. VentureBeat did mention about the 2nd title sales but got a vague answer instead.

"This decrease was driven by a \$757 million decrease in revenue primarily from Titanfall, and the Battlefield and FIFA World Cup franchises." - EA Financial Report 2016

The strange phenomenon happened twice, the first was with the first Titanfall. The game was well received, but as Forbes quote, they did not mention anything further regarding its sales. People were speculating about the shortcoming of this game at that time because of this. There was no doubt that Titanfall had place in critics' heart, but there was no disclosure about how much this game sold, of how many copies did it sold.

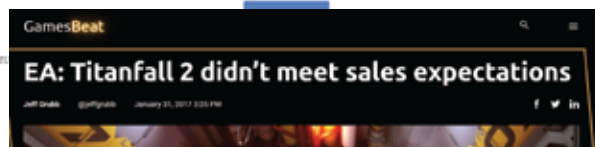
Focused on Titanfall 2, many analysts had done similar things to this analysis. Similar case happened with Titanfall 2, and many concluded that Titanfall 2 flopped because of its release date. 1 week after Battlefield 1 and before Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare (COD:IW) packed with Modern Warfare for a fairly new franchise was just hard on paper.

Nov 18, 2016, 10:28am EST

The Less Obvious Reason 'Titanfall 2' Might Be Failing: Presumed Xbox One Exclusivity



Paul Tassi Senior Contributor ©
Games
News and opinion about video games, tele



From this point onward we can tell that: both Titanfall title had their problems. The first iteration did not have its income statement disclosed. The second, was an obvious failure, in a sense that it did not sell well compared to other game released by EA at that time, namely Battlefield 1. It was not that Titanfall was such a bad game, but rather had somewhat strange sales curve. It was indeed perplexing phenomenon

This analysis will cover what happened to Titanfall 2 instead and will be focusing on the why and the what of this case.



PART THREE: EXPLAINED



BACK TO BASIC, EXPLAINED.

For this case, back to basic was one of the choices to better the sales of Titanfall 2 at that time. A simpler marketing strategy for greater impact. Before building strategy, we need to examine what is wrong, what went wrong, and what to fix. On that matter, we need tools diagnose the main source of Titanfall 2 downfall.

Video games can be categorised as service. At the very least, every video game has its own service, however small it is. Franchise video game can be seen as a service product. In general they tend to seek new comer while retaining their fanbase to be able to enjoy their latest iteration of said video game.

As additional information that will be used later, in 2016, there were three games that were launched almost at the same time. In the span of two weeks, two video games were released by EA and one by Blizzard Activision, one of EA's rival in FPS genre mainly because of their Call of Duty title. First, Battlefield 1 was released on October 24, 2016. At the following week, exactly four days after that, Titanfall 2 was released. Lastly Activision swooped in and released COD:IW on November 4 in the same year. Three of the game had the same genre, FPS. Two of them, Titanfall 2 and COD:IW had almost the same mechanics, which is fast paced FPS with parkour as its supporting mechanics.



EA had essentially two same product released at the same time. For many, this was where the shortcoming came from. Citing from EA's CEO, These two designed to target different market.

Even if Battlefield 1 is not counted, EA had to face COD:IW head on as their rival. A game with almost the same premises as their new title, and much older than theirs of course. COD was and is a long running title after all. Even both Titanfall 2 and Battlefield 1 was released on the same platform: PlayStation 4, Xbox One, and Windows OS.

*"We think there's really three types of players,[...] People that really love Battlefield and that kind of **big strategic gameplay** that will orient in that direction; the player that loves the **fast, fluid, kinetic gameplay** of Titanfall 2 that will really orient in that direction; and the player that just has to play the two greatest shooters this year and will buy both." - Andrew Wilson, VentureBeat Interview*

**WHAT
IS
THE POINT,
THEN?**

Notice that Battlefield 1 and Titanfall 2 not only had the same platform and almost exact release date, but they were released globally too. This was potentially dangerous. Well, it was the obvious reason why Titanfall 2 failed after all.

Case like this, if not managed properly, became a disaster. Maybe they were both not a bad product, or even a bad service, but they sure did sell differently. One of them was punching the other out of the league. At the end of the day Titanfall never see the light of the day. It had so much potential, but got taken down and got cancelled left and right by its own developer.

This phenomenon is known as market cannibalism. Simply put, it is when two products of the same category, in this case genre, compete and ended up eating its rival or counterpart sales', whether it is new or existing products, whether it is competitor's or our own product of the same category. Sure, releasing the same products at the same time may increase the total market share for company to grab, but there is also downside potential that can ruin existing market share of the existing products. The time of introduction of a product can determine said product's failure or success (Moorthy, 1992).

There are many types of market cannibalism. A product can either increase market share, acquire some of its counterpart, or both; taking some from the existing products while creating a whole new market share. It could be the other way around, existing product ended up taking part of the new product sales, indirectly or directly.

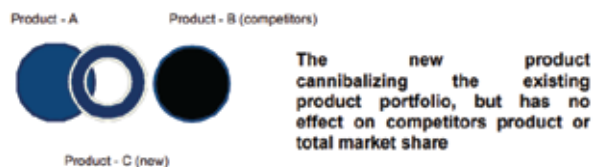


Figure 1

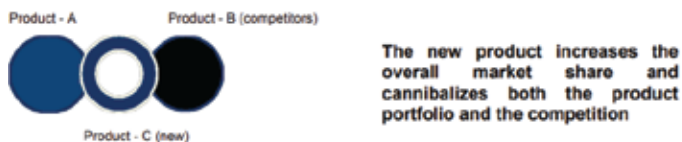


Figure 2

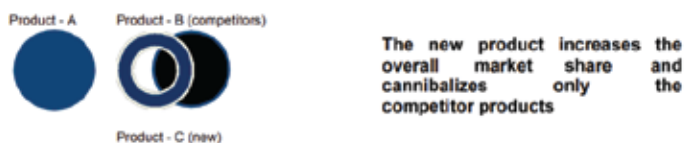


Figure 3



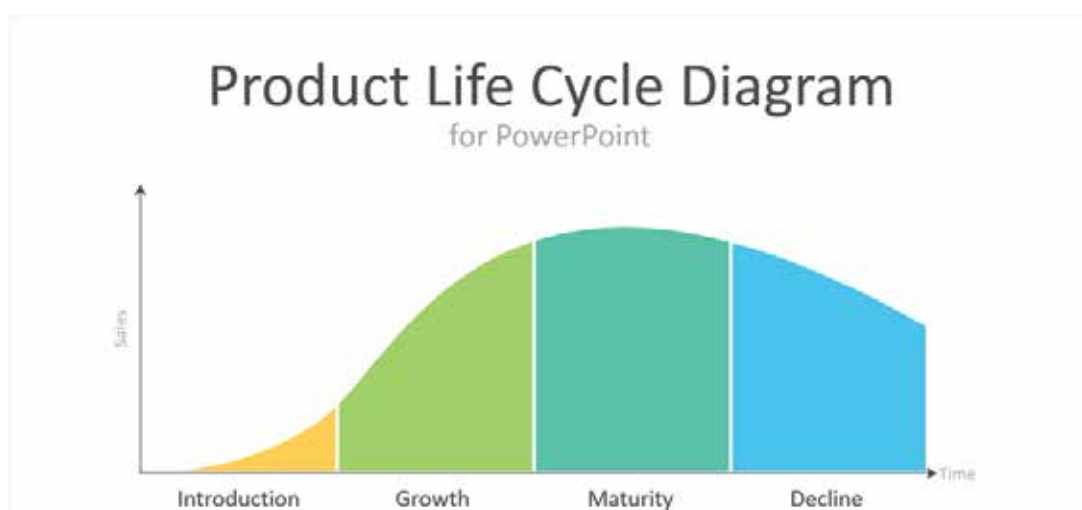
Figure 4

One of the reasons why Titanfall 2 flopped was because late 2016 had its schedule packed with the long running juggernaut like COD and Battlefield. Both of this product overshadowed Titanfall 2, resulting in poor performance of its sales. Established franchise like Battlefield and COD had huge fanbase, while Titanfall 2 was fairly new, barely 2 years old at that time for its franchise.

PRODUCT LIFE CYCLE

The product life cycle for the entire FPS genre in 2015 almost reached its decline state. The market was over-saturated with FPS games. Many of FPS game got average to less-than-average rating.

Product Life Cycle Theory is a theory developed by Raymond Vernon, explaining the life cycle of a product. Generally, every product goes through four life stages in the market. These stages are: Introduction, Growth, Maturity, and Declining. International trades explained by Vernon said that same product on different market will go through different stage depending on time the product introduced, and the culture of the market itself, hence, what Moorthy said synergise with these theory. In normal situation a product will go through all 4 stages in order, but special case like Titanfall 2 had only one or probably two life stages, that is introduction and growth, and died. It comes from many things, but for Titanfall 2, mainly because of its marketing failure.



2016 was when the FPS genre got partially revived. The most renowned Overwatch was released in 2016, The notable FPS puzzle Superhot was released in 2016. EA came with BF going back to their roots as historical FPS, while COD polished their futuristic theme to make it more playable and not stale. It was indeed still a saturated market, but notice that Overwatch to this day this was written still played by many people while Titanfall had little to no development continuation.

Lastly, to quote the previous analysis done by Forbes, The less obvious reason why Titanfall 2 failed was because of its release platform. The first iteration of Titanfall released before was released exclusively to Microsoft, Xbox and Windows OS, while the latter got more freedom spanning its wings to PlayStation 4. PlayStation was and is indeed a different market share while it comes to gaming. There are many console competing with many games they offered too, Xbox had its exclusive, PlayStation 4 had its exclusive, and even Nintendo Switch had its exclusive.

WHAT TO DO? AND NOT TO DO?

*This part will be pure **analysis of what was presented by the previous part**. Any analysis here was based on the fact presented by many source that are publicly available and explained by compatible theories. This analysis will not dictate what is right and wrong, because ultimately, there was, is, and will be no a right answer to this. This analysis built on an assumption and past information given publicly, and there is no guarantee that this will change the course of the tide **in favour of EA**.*

It is clear that Titanfall had 2 main problem: Its release date was troublesome, It got squished between two colossal franchise; and released on entirely new platform for Titanfall to grab, PlayStation. Looking at the bigger picture, Titanfall 2's main problem was because the way it was released, but this was just the beginning. This problem showed the incapability of EA's marketing team to identify their product and their targeted market. There should be changes of how their team handles introduction of product. It should be planned more carefully; more specific, the way Titanfall introduced to market needed to be changed.

Firstly, Titanfall 2 problem can be identified with 7P of marketing mix easily. Marketing mix is a basic concept that dictate that every marketing has four elements: Price, Product, Place, and Promotion. In Zeithaml's Service Marketing book, there are three more addition to the original four, that is: People, Physical Evidence, and Process.

Product	Place	Promotion	Price
Physical good features	Channel type(s)	Promotion blend	Flexibility
Quality level	Exposure	Salespeople	Price level
Accessories	Intermediaries	Selection	Terms
Packaging	Outlet locations	Training	Differentiation
Warranties	Transportation	Incentives	Discounts
Product lines	Storage	Advertising	Allowances
Branding	Managing channels	Media types	
Product-support services		Types of ads	
		Sales promotion	
		Publicity	
		Internet/Web strategy	
People	Physical Evidence	Process	
Employees	Facility design	Flow of activities	
Recruiting	Equipment	Standardized	
Training	Signage	Customized	
Motivation	Employee dress	Number of steps	
Rewards	Web pages	Simple	
Teamwork	Other tangibles	Complex	
Customers	Reports	Customer involvement	
Education	Business cards		
Training	Statements		
	Guarantees		

Titanfall 2's problem mainly came from its release, we can identify that they have problem with place, in this case, their release platform.

Second problem came from their lack of understanding people, in this case their own market, specifically, the FPS market at that time. Did they need to release an essentially two same products together? What was their goal releasing them at the same time?

We are going with assumption that EA wants to satisfy its investor by maximising their profit, which of course, is very common thing to do for a big public company. Their value depended on their financial performance after all. With that in mind, we want to do as best as we can to maximise Titanfall 2's profit without hurting Battlefield 1's sales, and possibly hurt COD:IW sales instead, hijacking their share of market. Titanfall 2 needs to be defined first if they wanted it to thrive to become a new franchise for EA to get profit out of. First of all, Titanfall 2 was indeed a futuristic-themed video game. Compared to Battlefield 1, which theme was historical shooter, it sure had different theme, but once we got through the main mechanics of both games, it was all the same FPS. EA's Rival was all more the same. With Titanfall 2, COD:IW stood on the same ground. Same futuristic theme, same genre, and aside from Titanfall's specialty, which is mech, the "parkour" mechanics felt almost the same.

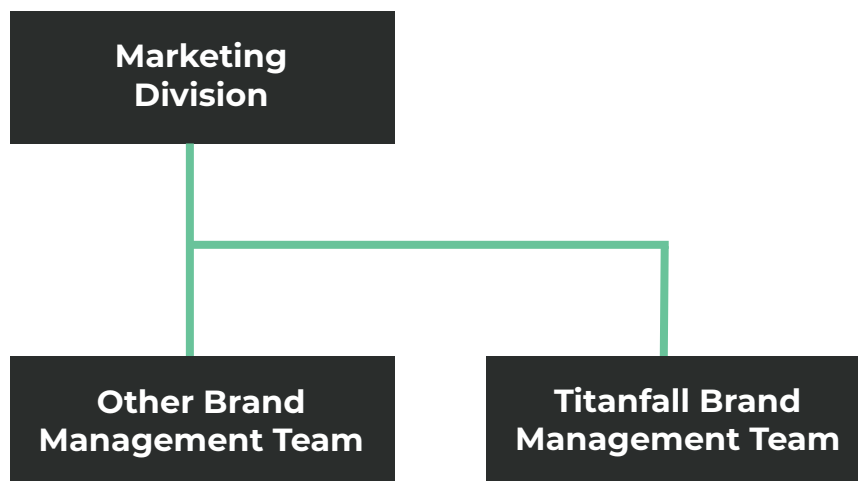
Clearly, Titanfall 2 will more likely to face head-to-head with both of the products. So we know now:

	BF1	Titanfall 2	COD:IW
Genre	FPS	FPS	FPS
Sub-theme	Historical shooter	Sci-fi shooter	Sci-fi shooter
Franchise age	14 years	2 years	13 years
Latest release	BF: Hardline	Titanfall	COD: Black Ops 3
Latest rating of Franchise	BF: Hardline	Titanfall	COD: Black Ops 3
Metacritics	71%	86%	81%
Common Sense Media	4/5	4.5/5	4.3/5
IGN	8/10	8.9/10	9.2/10

All the more product less the people. EA needed to give attention to their audiences, primarily their FPS market. EA made a good run before with BF: Hardline, so that was a promising lead. EA stated that they were “very happy” with the sale, even if they are on number 10 for Hardline in NPD chart. People loved Battlefield, and surely, a long running 13 years franchise had a big fanbase. It was the same with COD, it had their own fanbase, it has been running for at least 12 years.

Something fresh does not mean something entirely fresh. A concrete example would be The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt – Blood and Wine. It did not offer anything other than a whole new continent and story to be discovered. There was no change of core mechanics either. It was safe to say that at that time, Battlefield 1 gave a good swoop for that fresh air. Titanfall 2 on the other hand was entirely new. There was branding gap for these two to be stuffed together into a packed release schedule. Branding familiarity in customer's buying behaviour played a big role in this case that was somehow forgotten by EA.

In order to minimise this error, EA could assign different team to market these two brand. One team to manage long running franchise and one team specialised to create engagement better for new coming franchise. That way, there would be more consideration regarding how to approach each product without losing sales no both ends.



EA will need to maintain 7P for Titanfall and that is including keeping constant knowledge of what fans want and doesn't want. They have already had advantages, big corporation and big name, giving birth to a new IP would be easier than having a new company and IP altogether. Titanfall 2 had a reasonable pricing. At that time, they are priced the same as any other AAA games, which was pretty standard conventional practice from all AAA IP. It was not a bad product, nor just a good product. It was great. There was rating to quantify its greatness, many positive remarks from critics pre launched. Market-wise, FPS was already a saturated market but Respawn still pulled it off with their newest title at that time. The release plan for 3 main and popular console was indeed a bold move, and not a bad one, but lack of awareness. People only knew Titanfall could only be played on Xbox and PC, making it Microsoft's Exclusive, while the second one can run on Sony's giant, PlayStation 4. It was available worldwide, so there was no problem to access this game wherever the customers are.

There was no problem on the rest of the aspect except promotion and people engagement. With that being said, EA needs to do two things: one was to categorise their product specifically. EA definitely knew that they were releasing the same game with almost the same premises. Battlefield 1 and Titanfall 2 was clearly two cuts from the same cloth, but at different parts of the cloth. Two was to make branding management for these two to be separate. The reasoning behind this was that there was barely any fight between Titanfall 2 and Battlefield 1. Battlefield 1 traded blow with COD:IW, but Titanfall 2 was left behind withering away.

For Titanfall 2 branding team, their goal would be to introduce and take as many feedback as possible to and from the fanbase, new and old alike. Making of this new team would made them focused on getting engagement for Titanfall and Titanfall only, so there will be more room to grow for Titanfall as separate brand rather than overshadowed by a long running franchise. Aside from the standard billboard, poster ads, trailer, and E3 presentation, twitter account, or social media account in general, allowed people to engage and make complaints easily. EA could use viral marketing. one of the example around that time was Wendy's twitter account. Engagement as a company to maintain feedback and information going out from company is very important. Wendy's pioneered the more humane and relatable twitter account. In 2021 there are lots and lots of company that do it. Information going in and out faster, and it would close the listening gap between EA and customer while raising awareness to newcomer and people that did not know that Titanfall 2 exists.

Second is passion marketing, as done by CD Projekt Red with their Witcher 3. Burning passion can be fuel to sell things. Witcher 3 did it well, they used their production team's passion to create hype. An atmosphere that everyone should wait this project, shared through showing their passionate designer, producer, and engineering team. The medium should be the same, we use social media, ads, poster, journalist to review our game, E3, and YouTube, as the main stage of the show. Passion showed by the process of making the game can be attraction and worked also as setter to player's expectation.

CLOSURE

Ultimately, what Titanfall 2 needed was branding, and a better placement of release schedule, and better categorisation overall by EA themselves a combination of the right ingredients can really bring Titanfall 2 to its shining era. Was it bad to put Titanfall 2 in between Battlefield 1 and COD:IW? There was no telling. It could work if EA had better strategy to introduce it in that state too. There was no telling that anything could work, and vice versa, decision making process for one company can be different from time to time, and from outside perspective, we could not tell what was affecting their decision making at that time to make it that way.

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This is the first series to "Analysis from outside perspective by Antonius Ayodya", I aim to learn as much as I can while enjoying my hobby, that is analysing things, learning, and observing and playing video games.
