Influence of In-Game Purchases on Involvement of Players in Video Gaming Industry

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Chapter 1: Phenomenon of In-game Purchases

Imagine yourself playing a video game where you have your favorite character and you saw the other player having a character dressed in very unusual and special clothes. You initially perceive him as more experienced player that you are and he has the opportunity to show his personality through his in-game character. Another situation, you just bought a brand new game and after first few hours of playing you understand that to unlock your favorite character or to move to another mission you have to spend weeks or even months of playing or you can buy virtual items which will immediately unlock your preferred character or move you to another mission.

These two examples describes how modern games are working and view of the players from inside the game. This dissertation will be focused on exploring today’s connection and influence between in-game purchases and involvement of the gamers. People start to play computer games because they want to escape from reality, to feel the flow, to be someone else in the virtual world. Nowadays, virtual goods and other forms of in-game content have significantly and rapidly become one of the biggest forms of online consumption for gamers and at the same time revenue model for game publishers.

Global games market consists of such segments as mobile gaming, console gaming, and PC gaming. In the year, 2019 revenues in this market expected to be approximately $151.9 billion dollars (Wijman, 2018). By the year 2021, it is predicted to be around $180.1 billion. Interesting fact that around 2021 year, mobile gaming segment expected to be larger than combined PC games and console games. It should be explained that profit in this market comes from not only from selling copies of games and purchasing in-game content but also from eSports competitions which always provided on big famous stadiums with a lot of fans. Nowadays, the most established of all eSports games are DOTA, Counter-Strike, StarCraft and League of Legends they always attract a good number of live audience. eSports during this years attracted not only big audiences but at the same time opened up some new business opportunities for sponsors, developers of the games and companies which produce accessories for gaming. The 2018 World Championship Finals of the game League of Legends attracted 99.6 million unique viewers. The Finals were broadcasted in 19 different languages through more than 30 platforms and television channels. The World Championship Opening Ceremony presented was by MasterCard which is known as the
famous American multinational financial services corporation. It proves that this market has an enormous audience and huge potential for companies to participate in such events as sponsors and increase their sales significantly.

There are two models in the online gaming industry that are dominating the market today: **free-to-play (F2P) and pay-to-play (P2P)**. In the following chapters, I will go deep in analyzing these models and the sources of making revenue by using them. Ingame purchases are the main source of profit for free-to-play games model. There are two main reasons why I decided to go deeper exactly in this field.

First one, I was playing computer games since my childhood and was always searching for something new in this field. People who play computer games they think about games not only at the time when they playing but even when they are at school/university/work. It is part of their life as a hobby or sometimes even more. Some players are even being paid, as a beginner you can earn from $500 and as professional around $5 000. If your team is a top 3 in the worldwide rating you can earn around $10 000.

The second reason why I decided to make my research in this field because I see myself in the future working for a company which producing games. Preferably in the marketing or communications department. Therefore, after playing thousands of hours and spending hundreds of dollars I started to think about in-game purchases and how it influences the players. Do they feel more involved or attached to a game when they buy in-game content? Involvement is an interesting factor that we can measure in this case. There are two notions of participation in the marketing literature: activity-focused notions and output-focused notions. Involvement and engagement are related to consumer participation side and belong to activity-focused notions (Nyirő, Csordás, Horváth, 2011). The higher the level of involvement the higher in result personal relevance and attachment to a product or buying decision. Consumer-product relationships play an interesting role here, if the company want their consumer to feel involved, their product should be relevant to them in every possible way. If a player and a game have a long-term relationship, a player feels engaged and feel that the content of it is related to him even in a subjective way. It is considered as win-win outcome for both sides. Game publishers have to create and post always on time and relevant content; it applies also to introducing in-game content that their consumer would like to
purchase. As a result, a gamer feel this connection between two sides of their relationships. Nowadays, field of online gaming, in-game purchasing, feeling of involvement and engagement of a players in the process of researching and development. A big amount of related articles, books that connected to phenomena of gaming in general and related literature were analyzed during this research to find the right explanation and answer to my research question, which sounds in the following way. “How in-game purchases influence on involvement of the players?” After getting the bachelor’s degree and during my master degree studying I clearly understood that the main goal of every company or brand is to generate maximum profit. Exactly this goal drives companies in video gaming industry to introduce in-game content.
Chapter 2: Economic and Psychological Background of Online Gaming

Over the past decade, the easy availability of internet access transformed the gaming industry into a powerful and influential one. Each passing year showing increasing market revenue of companies in the gaming industry, which makes businessmen want to invest in this sector and researches to explore this field more deeply. To get the holistic overview of this, let us start from the origin of game phenomena and understanding why play element of culture and society is so important. *Homo Ludens by Johan Huizinga* (1938) is one of the most foundational books considering games from the perspective of culture and play. The author stated at this book that play is older than culture because animals did not wait until the man would come and teach them playing. In his study, he also identifies five main characteristics that play must have.

Inspired by Huizinga’s book, *Roger Caillois* (1961) introduced his own interpretation of play but from the perspectives of variations and forms. The author stated that the goal of play is not to produce. The play itself does not create wealth or goods in his opinion it is the occasion of pure waste. Caillois suggested four types of games: Agon (competition), Alea (chance), Mimicry (simulation), and Ilinx (vertigo). In his opinion, these categories have to be combined sometimes to make a better experience and enhance the interaction for players.

In 2006, Fostikov discussed the influence of games on physical and intellectual development in her article. Nowadays games give us many opportunities for learning and developing our skills. The author symbolizes the Internet – the new playground, at the same time computers are interactive toys. Latest developments in the game industry created special types of games called educational. This type has both roles: educational and pleasure.

Moving forward, it is relevant for this research to discuss the topic of product involvement. According to Zaichkowsky (1985), it is the personal relevance of a product which is based on some individuals needs, interests and values. There are two levels of consumer’s product involvement: high level of involvement and low level of involvement. Different product categories relate to different levels. In the same time, involvement linked to the buying process and marketers are forced to use different
marketing strategies in case of low and high involvement products (Nyirő, Csordás, Horváth, 2011). Before buying decision, the consumer has to think it over and evaluate the level of perceived risk.

Davis & Lang (2013) found that there is a positive influence of self-congruity on usage behavior and game purchase. Self-congruity measures the psychological link between the user’s self-concept and the symbolic value that can be earned from the game (Kang et al., 2009). In the same time, self-congruity has a significant effect on a player’s emotive state. Research findings of mentioned before authors consistent with previous research that found that self-congruity had a positive effect on a consumer’s attitude, intentions and behaviors (Alden et al., 2010; Sirgy et al., 2008).

The video game industry mainly focused on marketing, development, and monetization of video games. In the 90s era, the video gaming industry was struggling with piracy issues because they were using pay-to-play (P2P) model. To overcome this issue they created a free-to-play model (F2P) which now has the dominating place in the game industry. The F2P game can be downloaded and played for free of charge while players are encouraged to buy virtual goods (in-game content) during playing the game. In the same time, this model has its own advantages and disadvantages which will be discussed in the following chapter (Alha et. al., 2014).

Sheth et al. (1991), suggested five theory of consumption values which are functional values, emotional values, social values, conditional values, and epistemic values. Nowadays, we can relate them to the intent of customers to purchase virtual goods in online games. In his opinion, customers choose products and brands based on these five theory of consumption values.

To make players buy your in-game content it is important to be able to build loyalty from them towards your game. According to Choi, Dongseong & Kim, Jinwoo (2004) people tend to play specific online games repeatedly because they have a high level of customer loyalty to the games. If the player is loyal towards your game, he will come back again and continue playing despite the releases of the new games. If the player enters the flow state during playing an online game, this means that the gamer is interested and curious about the the game, experiencing full control over the game, and is ready to play the game with no other distraction.
There are two types of virtual items in the online games. First, one is **functional items**, which gives the players certain competitive advantage it is the main value that they can get out of this purchase. For example, in game advantages through increased competitive strength or speed of game progression. Motivation of players to buy functional items is clear to have better results than others in a much faster time through buying in-game content. Second one is **non-functional items**. It is much harder to understand why players spending their money on non-functional items in games. Ben Marder et al. (2019) in their research tried to find and understand such motivation of players in online games.
Chapter 3: Human Beings and Gaming

3.1 Overview of Game Phenomena

The study within the framework of this topic should begin with a deep understanding of the theoretical basis. Johan Huizinga (1938) in his study stated that play is older than culture and animals did not wait for a man to teach them their playing. Even civilization has not added any significant feature to a general idea of play. You have to create certain rules and just having fun and enjoy. In this book author using Homo Ludens instead of Homo Sapiens which means Man the Player. In his opinion, play must have such characteristics; firstly, it is a voluntary activity. No one is forcing you to play, you have the freedom to decide whether you want to play or not. Secondly, it is separate from ordinary life. This another space has its own rules and boundaries. Like a playground, that has its own territory, special purpose and accepted rules. At third, the author says that play has its space and time. In general, play always has a beginning point and the ending. In the play, time is not equal to “real time” it has its own flow and how you feel it depend on the players. Then play creates the specified order through its rules. Rules and order are absolute; if someone wants to destroy the order, it will destroy the game accordingly. Also, play cannot exist without community and social groups because they are engaged in the “play”. According to Huizinga, after merging of sport and play it had lost its pure play-quality. In modern times, the spirit that professional players are having is no longer a play-spirit. Such factors as spontaneous and careless have been lost. Even amateur players cannot feel this pure play-quality because they suffer from feeling that they do not have good enough level of skill.

Inspired by Huizinga’s book, Roger Caillois (1961) introduced his own interpretation of play but from the perspectives of variations and forms. In his work, he defines play as an activity that is free, separate, uncertain, unproductive and governed by rules. It is free because if the play would be obligatory it will lose its play-quality. The play is uncertain because the results or outcomes of the play are not known in advance and cannot be predetermined. It is also unproductive, as mentioned before because they produce no goods or wealth. In the same time, play governed by rules that define the goals and appropriate means for these goals. Caillois pointing the difference between rule-based games and make-believe. While people playing they like to act as if they someone other than who they are at the moment. The play itself does not create wealth.
or goods in his opinion it is the occasion of pure waste. While expressing his thoughts, the author excluding professional players from this concept. In his opinion, they are rather workers then players. Caillois divided games into four types:

*Figure 1: Types of games by Roger Caillois*

![Diagram of types of games]

In his opinion, these categories have to be combined sometimes to make a better experience and enhance the interaction for players. Agon type of games that tests skills among participating players. The winner is who proves through the game that his skills are on a higher level than others. In this case, an example could be chess. Alea is the opposite of Agon, in this case, luck is the factor that picking the winner. For example, playing the slot machine. Mimicry is a role-playing type. Here the player through the game trying to make himself and others believe that he is different from who he is in real life. The best example is an online role-playing game. Ilinx is a category of games where you experiencing a strong emotion (fear or panic) the stronger your emotions are, the stronger your sense of excitement and involvement. For example, playing a horror game or riding a roller coaster. It is important to mention, that these categories can be combined to create an exciting experience and to make players more interested and involved. In the end, he mentioned two dualistic polarities within these four categories: Paidia (spontaneous play using improvisation) and Ludus (a game designed before playing and requires effort and skill).

Fostikov (2006) discussed the influence of games on physical and intellectual development in her article. Nowadays some games give us opportunities for learning and developing our skills. The author symbolizes the Internet – the new playground, at the same time computers are interactive toys. For example, Counter Strike this game
become very popular not only among young audience but adults also like to play this game and continue to do it. Important skills here are the speed of reflexes and speed of moves. These times computer games are used in the military as exercises in developing skills. Latest developments in the game industry created special types of games called educational. This type has both roles: educational and pleasure. For example, games for learning the foreign languages of games using mathematical elements. Some games include historical elements and facts in them. Playing the Tycoon games (Railroad, Transport) we could gain knowledge of different transport systems, which played an important role in the history of communications. Shooting games are often made on the basis of some historical events. For example, Medal of Honor, Call of Duty, Battlefield or ARMA. These games are often very realistic and using weapons, airplanes, transportation that were actually used in historical events (e.g. II War World).

3.2 Involvement and Self-congruity

There are two notions of participation in the marketing literature: activity-focused notions and output-focused notions. Involvement and engagement are related to consumer participation side and belong to activity-focused notions according to (Nyirő, Csordás, Horváth, 2011). As I mentioned before, it is relevant for this research to discuss the topic of product involvement and purchase involvement. According to Zaichkowsky (1985), product involvement is the personal relevance to a product which is based on some individual’s needs, interests and values. This relevance is expressed how much the product is interesting and important for the consumer, it is kind of response of the consumer to a product category. Involvement force consumers to produce a big amount of thoughts, with greater evaluation, based on the information that they have gathered before (Celsi and Olson, 1988). One of the consequences of such involvement is more personal connections of consumer towards a product. There are two levels of consumer’s product involvement: high level of involvement and low level of involvement. Different product categories relate to different levels. In the same time, involvement linked to the buying process and marketers are forced to use different marketing strategies in case of low and high involvement products (Nyirő, Csordás, Horváth, 2011). When involvement is low consumer often is not motivated to gather and search for information from past experiences. Products in this group are more about
excitement, enjoyment but not associated with risk. Low-involvement decisions sometimes have routine response behavior which means that consumer makes an automatic purchase decision based on limited gathered information. There is also impulse buying decisions like buying products without any analysis or pre-purchase search, you buy products only because you saw it a few minutes ago and you realized that you want it. On the other side, when involvement is high consumer is motivated to retrieve a lot of information from his/her or even from other past experiences to create his own opinion about the potential purchased product. Such products are usually expensive and associated with high potential risk. Before buying decision, the consumer has to think it over and evaluate the level of perceived risk.

According to a study made by Aguirre-Rodriguez et al. (2012), self-congruity plays an important role in consumer decision-making and motivation. Self-congruity measures the psychological link between the user’s self-concept and the symbolic value that can be earned from the game (Kang et al., 2009). In the same time, self-congruity has a significant effect on a player’s emotive state. Interesting fact, that self-congruity is often motivating a consumer irrationally through their emotions (Jie et al., 2012). Davis & Lang (2013) found that there is a positive influence of self-congruity on usage behavior and game purchase. Research findings of mentioned before authors consistent with previous research that found that self-congruity had a positive effect on a consumer’s attitude, intentions and behaviors (Alden et al., 2010; Sirgy et al., 2008). In game self-congruity, there is a direct connection between the games images and projected experiences and the consumer perceived self-concept. This described connection is complex because of two reasons. First of all, game images and experiences that are consumed by players have complexity, diversity, and variability. We can relate it to the physical technology, the brand of console/device, game brand, brands placed within the game, the character that the games chose and the gamer’s peers who play the game. The second reason is to which extend the self-concept is complex, it means the interaction between the symbolic value of these objects. Which part of selfconcept, for example, the actual, ideal, social and virtual self is being affected (Morschett et al., 2008; Hafedh and Faouzi, 2008). Talking about violent computer games, self-congruity not always the case of buying such games. There are some other factors that influence buying and playing such games, like practicing new
skills, being in-trend to play the latest game, being able to join friends who are playing such game on the Internet, wanting to feel a different personality.

3.3 F2P and P2P Revenue Models in Video Gaming Industry

Nowadays, over 1.7 billion people around the world play online games – a number that continues to grow significantly. Trending devices among current players are mobile gaming, console gaming, and PC gaming. Revenue generated in the online games industry has now exceeded Hollywood movies industry and reached $100 billion. Global games market consists of such segments as mobile gaming, console gaming, and PC gaming. In Figure 1, you can see some factors that are influencing players to purchase video games according to the 2018 year according to the Entertainment Software Association.

Figure 2: Factors influencing decisions to purchase video games

Source: Entertainment Software Association.

In the 2019 year, revenues in this market expected to be approximately $151.9 billion dollars (Wijman, 2018). Profit in this market comes not only from selling copies of the games but also from purchasing in-game content. In the 90s era, the video gaming industry was struggling with piracy issues because they were using pay-to-play (P2P) model. To overcome this issue they created a free-to-play model (F2P) which now has the dominating place in the game industry. The F2P game can be downloaded and played for free of charge while players are encouraged to buy virtual goods (in-game content) during playing the game. There are two main reasons why game publishers using the F2P model. First, it allows flexible price policy for players with different
levels of income and willingness to pay for additional in-game content. Second, it allows to gain a wider range of player segments to access the game. It proves the current tendency of creating new games mainly based on this model, also some old games, for example, Counter-Strike in 2018 changed their model from Pay-to-Play to Free-to-Play to increase their profit from in-game purchases. In the same time, this model has its own advantages and disadvantages which will be summarized in the table below. According to a study made by Alha et. al., (2014), among professionals in this field, that had game industry experience for an average of about nine years.

**Table 1: Positive and negative aspects of Free-to-Play revenue model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Free-to-Play</th>
<th>Positive aspects</th>
<th>Negative aspects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Free to try before purchasing</td>
<td>• Pay-to-win (players with the most money would get unfair advantage over players who do not use money)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F2P games are often developed forward after the launch Player can decide by himself when and how much he wants to spend on in-game content After buying in-game content consumer will continue to play</td>
<td>• Creating more in-game content than focusing on development of the game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Uncontrolled spending’s of children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Possible addiction of high spenders (ethics side)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author's elaboration

In general, the F2P model looks like the most optimal choice at the moment. Companies that are not currently at the F2P business are considering and having some plans on entering the business in the near future.

3.3.1 Functional and Non-functional Virtual Items

Free-to-play games are usually heavily monetized through in-game sales of virtual items. These virtual items divided into two categories: functional and non-functional. Both types of before mentioned virtual goods are very popular among online game players, together contributing to revenues in excess of $15 billion of in-platform purchases annually (Bonder, 2016). Functional items bring in-game advantages. They
enhance the competency of the game user. For example, the purchase of a more powerful fighting sword offers the player better opportunities for game progression.

However, some players have a negative attitude towards this because they feel like they “pay-to-win” and their results are based on the monetary investment, not on their skill. Such games like Dota 2, LOL, Counter-Strike are purely monetized by non-functional items. When a player buys so-called “skin” it is only changing a look of the player’s avatar or a character. These type of in-game items are only aesthetic and do not add any advantage in the game. Some games have at the same time functional and nonfunctional items. For example, in GTA V Multiplayer version you can buy virtual currency and spend it on items that will give some advantage compared to other players (e.g. weapons, boost characters skills ) or buy some property or clothing (non-functional items). Talking about pay-to-play (P2P) games usually, they are played by a large number of gamers at the same time, over the internet, where players who interested in particular game pay to get access for playing games. Gamers like the pay-to-play option for various reasons, for example, extra features, challenges, and layers compared to F2P games. Often players have equal opportunities to win or to get some achievements.

3.3.2 Steam Market of Virtual Items

Steam community market is much more than just digital game store. It is a place to discuss new releases, to get useful tips about gameplay, to find new friends and much more. The Steam Community Market, commonly known as the Steam Market, is an ingame item trading service provided by Valve and is available to all users of Steam. Steam users are able to use the Steam Market to buy or sell in-game items with/for their Steam wallet funds. These items are mostly skins (cosmetic features for weapons or for the appearances of characters) for such popular titles as CS:GO, Dota 2, TF2, PUBG and other games available at this platform. The popularity of the Steam platform and games from it has made some Steam items quite in demand. The Steam items market is an ever-changing structure, where prices on skins depend very much on the mood of the community. Gamers are ready to pay lots of money for a nice weapon skin for CS:GO, clothes for PUBG heroes or even the most expensive Team Fortress 2 items. Here is the list of some examples of the most expensive items sold on this market. Their Steam inventory value will help to understand the whole seriousness of the situation.
First example would be from the game called Dota 2. “Dark Moon Baby Roshan” – courier that help to deliver your purchases within the game. It is non-functional item because it does not give you any competitive advantage. This item selling on Steam market on average for €1400 and the highest ever price for it was €1847 captured on February 17, 2017. Also, “Golden Ornithomancer Mantle of the Benefactor” is a Mythical back-slot item for Rubick. It was first released on 30 August 2016 and you could get it from the Trust of the Benefactor 2016 Immortal treasure. An average price for it on the Steam Community Market is 1200€ and the highest price sold at 1661€ on July 29, 2018. Second example would be from the game called Counter Strike: Global Offensive. This skin called “Dragon Lore” for AWP and it is selling on the market for the average price € 1360. Even if it is so expensive, it is still extremely hard to get it because of the huge demand on it. Third example would be the game called PUBG that released in 2016 and got viral from the very beginning. The most expensive items selling via this game is “Ivory School Uniform” set which cost an average €1250 (Bozhenko, 2018). The last example would be from the famous free-to-play game Team Fortress 2. The most expensive item from this game called “Unusual Burning Team Captain” and the price for it on the market is €6450 after this one goes “Collector’s Dead of Night” and the average price is €2300. Some of the items mentioned before you can see in the following figures:

Figure 3: Virtual item Dragon Lore  
Figure 4: Virtual item Ivory School Uniform set
Along with many positive aspects of this platform, the Steam Market also has some limitations. Users cannot get real money from it after selling items that they own. Even the most expensive skins sold here (for example CS:GO items) will only yield funds for use inside of Steam Community Market. In order to get real money out of it you have to use other internet services and websites that help you to sell your items and get money afterwards. It is the whole another industry which uses this virtual items that players want to sell to make additional money on taking fees from selling them to other players though their own services. Provided before examples, can show a clear picture about the seriousness of attitude from players towards virtual items. They ready to pay a huge amount of money to impress other players in fact that in most of the cases that do not even know them.

3.3.3 Theories of Consumption Values
Sheth et al. (1991), suggested five theory of consumption values which are functional values, emotional values, social values, conditional values, and epistemic values. Nowadays, we can relate them to the intent of customers to purchase virtual goods in online games. In his opinion, customers choose products and brands based on these five theory of consumption values showed in Figure 2. Functional values are related to the functions of the product. Emotional values are related to product characteristics that connected to customer feelings. Social values are related to product and brand characteristics that create connections between product and brand users. Epistemic values are related to product characteristics that promote customer interest or freshness. Conditional values are product or brand characteristics that create functional or social value under specific circumstances. Previous studies related to marketing and ecommerce showed that theory of consumption values affect customer purchasing behavior and customer purchasing decisions.
3.4 Importance of Loyalty in Online Games

To make players buy your in-game content it is important to be able to build loyalty from them towards your game. According to Choi, Dongseong & Kim, Jinwoo (2004) people tend to play specific online games repeatedly because they have a high level of customer loyalty to the games. If the player is loyal towards your game, he will come back again and continue playing despite the releases of the new games. If the player enters the flow state during playing an online game, this means that the gamer is interested and curious about the game, experiencing full control over the game, and is ready to play the game with no other distraction. In their opinion, the optimal level of experience during play activity in this case defined as flow. They believe that if the player experiencing the flow state quite often while playing an online game, he or she would have higher customer loyalty to the game.

Let us talk more detailed about an interaction in online games. One of the most important aspects related to optimal experience with computer games is interaction according to the authors. Interaction could be defined as the behavior of communicating with two or more objects and accordingly affecting each other. They consider two types of interactions while playing online games: the first is the interaction between the user and the system (personal interaction). The second is the interaction between user-
touser (social interaction). Referring to problem-solving theory, personal interaction can be classified into three different categories: goals, operators, and feedback. As we know, online games connected to the network system, which gives the opportunity for players to meet each other in the virtual space and interact among all other users. Different factors of social interaction can be divided into two categories: places for communication and tools for communication. Places for communication we can describe as the virtual territory, where all the players meet each other and playing at the same time. Tool for communication can be explained like an in game function that gives the opportunity for gamers to relay their opinions among themselves. According to mentioned before theories we can create a figure, which will describe our vision of relationships of this factors and in-game purchases.

**Figure 7: Influence of customer loyalty on intent to make an in-game purchase**

For gamers and experts in this field is well known that there are two types of virtual items. First, one is functional items, which gives the players certain competitive advantage it is the main value that they can get out of this purchase. For example, in-game advantages through increased competitive strength or speed of game progression. Motivation of players to buy functional items is clear to have better results than others in a much faster time through buying in-game content. Second one is non-functional items. It is much harder to understand why players spending their money on nonfunctional items in games. Ben Marder et al. (2019) in their research tried to find and understand such motivation of players in online games. They have a view on this motivations as being three dimensional, being utilitarian, hedonic, and social. The utilitarian assumes consumption occurs to accomplish a known outcome, underpinned
by the assumptions that consumers approach problems rationally. At this point of view, the consumer is viewed as motivated by such drivers as cost savings, convenience, and product functionality. The second dimension is hedonic. This consumption is forced by three Fs: fun, feelings and fantasies. Hedonic consumption describe such elements as emotions, fantasy related, multisensory which surround consumer experience with a product after the purchase. Previous researches has found that non-functional virtual items are mostly motivated hedonically. First, these items increase enjoyment while playing through increased multisensory (e.g., visual or audio) appeal in the game (Hamari, Keronen, & Alha, 2015; Turel et al., 2010). Second, these items operate as a way of self-expression, allowing players to express their actual or ideal selves through their online characters (Lehdonvirta, 2005, 2009). Guitton (2011) finds that hedonic factors are important in digital environment to express social aspects. Finally, social motivations are relevant while players purchasing non-functional items. Such consumption can be motivated to show status in social settings, which can increase a consumer's self-esteem (Babin et al., 1994). In the same time, such consumption creates the sense of belonging or shared social identity within a group (Homburg, Wieseke, & Hoyer, 2009; Lehdonvirta, 2005) as well as creating a social distinction from other groups or players by showing ‘visual authority’ (Lehdonvirta, 2009).

All theories, concepts, models, and researches gathered in this chapter give us the more detailed picture and deeper knowledge about the history of “play” of culture, games, their types, and categories, the influence of games on physical and intellectual development. How different historical events or old transportation systems are shown in modern games. The importance of involvement and engagement in the gaming industry and its influence on the interaction of players with games. During this research, we found that there is a positive influence of self-congruity on usage behavior and game purchase. In this chapter trends and statistics of the industry of video games was explained. Also, dominating revenue models of the game industry that we have these days. Positive and negative aspects of the free-to-play model from the professionals’ perspective.
Chapter 4: Methodologies Used in This Research

4.1. Research Aim and Objectives

In the previous parts, we discussed the literature related to the topic of our research and the theoretical framework. All this information was extremely important and useful to have a deep understanding of this field, to see how it works, to which extend it researched and how we can add even more up to date information and scientific value with our research. Based on that, we will create the methodology that is the best one to use in this case. To continue our research in this section, we define the methodology to implement, to gather and analyze our data. In order to develop an analysis that completely reflects the situation, it is necessary to conduct a marketing study. In order to do that we analyzed and studied such topic as Classification of Marketing Research Data (Ian Dei, 2005). It gave us an overall view about types of data and all possible advantages and disadvantages of using them. The obtained results, as well as the recommendations, may serve as the basis for the development of such an analysis.

Before we conduct our research, it is necessary to define the research question. In this research, we can formulate the main research question as follows: How in-game purchases influence on the involvement of the gamers? Besides, to better understand the nature of the work it is necessary to reveal the issues which can be examined in the research to explain the main findings.

To show a good progress in finding the answers for the research questions objectives play an important role. Here we can mention the main objectives of our research: To observe current literature about gaming phenomena and involvement and identify gaps;

- To discover a theoretical framework to build the research from available concepts and test the results in applied context;
- To develop a methodology to conduct the current research;
- To assess consumers motives and behavior towards purchasing of in-game content;
- To conclude the study by giving the answers for the research question;
- To process the gathered data, interpret results and provide recommendations.

Moving forward through this study our next step is to identify the propositions to achieve assigned goals.
4.2. Propositions

Before conducting qualitative research, we created four hypotheses based on our assumptions after studying related literature and in general this field. Propositions that we have created are explained in the following text.

Proposition 1: Experiencing enjoyment state while playing an online game increases the intent to purchase in-game content.

During exploring relevant literature, we figured out that when a player experiencing a state of flow or pure pleasure while playing an online game his intent to purchase ingame content increases. He spends more time playing the game and attached to it more as usual. According to Choi, Dongseong & Kim, Jinwoo (2004) people tend to play specific online games repeatedly because they have a high level of customer loyalty to the games. If the player is loyal towards your game, he will come back again and continue playing despite the releases of the new games. If the player enters the flow state during playing an online game, this means that the gamer is interested and curious about the game, experiencing full control over the game, and is ready to play the game with no other distraction.

Proposition 2: Unlocking of the new missions and personalization of a character through in-game purchases increase attachment of players towards the game.

One major form of in-game content is unlocking more content to play such as maps, new levels, and rewards for completing them. In the same time majority of the games offers to players opportunity to differentiate themselves from other players by personalizing their avatar, look of their in-game characters or skins of guns or other equipment using inside the game. These items operate as a way of self-expression, allowing players to express their actual or ideal selves through their online characters (Lehdonvirta, 2005, 2009). Social motivations are relevant while players purchasing non-functional items. Such consumption can be motivated to show status in social settings, which can increase a consumer's self-esteem (Babin et al., 1994). In the same time, such consumption creates the sense of belonging or shared social identity within a group or showing a social distinction from other groups or players.
Proposition 3: Player finds more reasons to play the game after spending money on in-game content.

Mostly humans behave in a way that after spending money on something they value these things more. It works in this field also, probably after buying in-game content (new levels, skins of equipment or boosters) the player will feel more motivated to continue playing.

Proposition 4: After buying in-game content, the player feels more involved and connected to the game.

Buying in-game content increases players involvement which is the personal relevance to a product which is based on some individuals needs, interests and values. This relevance is expressed how much the product is interesting and important for the consumer, it is kind of response of the consumer to a product category. Involvement force consumers to produce a big amount of thoughts, with greater evaluation, based on the information that they have gathered before (Celsi and Olson, 1988).

In the design of our study, these hypotheses have to be tested and result that we will have afterward analyzed. Their testing is supposed to be conducted by using qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews and autobiography.

Figure 8: Conceptual map of interrelation between propositions
4.3. In-depth Interviews

Qualitative research is defined as an exploratory research method that focuses on obtaining data through open-ended and conversational communication. According to Malhotra (2010) study, qualitative research procedures are divided into two categories as direct and indirect. From direct category, we used in-depth interviews which were conducted on a one-on-one basis and the interviewer tried to uncover the respondent’s underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings on a topic. Main advantages of in-depth interviews that you can uncover great depths of insights, it associates the responses directly with the respondent it was taken and there is no social pressure. In the same time, there are some disadvantages. For example, skilled interviewers capable of conducting in-depth interviews are expensive and difficult to find, the lack of structure makes the results very affected to the influence of the interviewer, the quality and receiving of completely answered questions depends very heavily on the skills of the interviewer and the data gained during interviews is problematic to analyze and interpret.

Respondents were selected according to such criteria’s as time spending on playing games, money spend on in-game content (they had to have purchased in-game content at least once before), players have to be amateurs, meaning playing is their way to relax or as a hobby. We exclude professional gamers from our survey because according to Roger Caillois (1961) they are rather workers then players because they are paid for playing games and they do not feel enjoyment that much in this position. Also mostly, they forced to buy in-game content to entertain the whole community. Professional players already highly involved in the game so the additional purchase will not have a significant effect on them.

We conducted seven in-depth interviews with selected in advance respondents according to previously mentioned criteria’s. In-depth interviews were taken using Skype because of different locations of respondents. All gathered material was recorded and analyzed after the interview again.

4.4. Autobiographical Research

The second method that we used is autobiographical research. According to Polkinghorne (2010), this method empowers researches to analyze events in the past and actions as a means to examine previous outcomes as well as to predict possible
future outcomes. The use of autobiographical narratives gives the researcher the opportunity to draw from questions that examine life experiences to analyze the self within the lens of the critical side. One of the advantages of autobiographical research is that everyone, no matter of their status and experiences, has a past. Nonetheless, these pasts can be forgotten or could be hidden somewhere far in memory, which could lead to the loss of identity. Also, interesting side of autobiographical inquiry, that by placing the “I” as the subject of our research, we mix first-person memories with reflections to create a data source in which the researcher plays the role of the voice, interpretation, and analysis of the narrative itself. Such a way of research includes both personal and social contexts. It also connected to the past, present and future. Linked to different places, physical and non-physical, which represented in the storyteller’s space.

Avi Shankar (2000) mentioning why is it rational to use autobiographical narratives as a research method. First, we are all consumers, academics or practitioners and when we are focusing on studying human experience the best place to start is to examining one’s own. Holbrook (1995) named it “ultimate participant observation” and said that while the experience is our own we are able to interview and ask ourselves more critically than other people. In the same time, the researcher interacts with the researched topic most of the time, have a high awareness and in some cases even a huge experience. These factors make this type of research even more convenient to choose in order to get some interesting insights on the topic even if it is biased sometimes. Second, accorded to Silverman (1993) in general techniques which we are using for collecting data cannot be true or false, only more or less useful. As far as the researcher decides that exactly this method is “useful” for his research, it is acceptable to use it. Holbrook (1995) considering that “social consensus” is very important for new approaches to become accepted, a perspective that he calls “intersubjective agreement”. Mainly for qualitative researches the main goal is not to make their conclusions focused only on the “truth” factor but to create a research which is meaningful and trustworthy. So, as a player from the early age it is truly logical to use and take into consideration my personal observations and experience in this topic.

We can conclude that, autobiographical narrative is a story about the self. Usually the subject is an important or key event within the writer's childhood or adolescence. Main parts of a good autobiographical narrative:
Introduction

• An engaging opening: start by getting your reader's attention. Use an intriguing quotation or a surprising statement;
• Background information: additional background information will help your readers to understand the context of your narrative;
• Hint of meaning: end the paragraph by providing a hint as to the significance or importance of the experience.

Body

• Your first experience: begin your narrative with the first event that makes up your experience;
• People details: describe the appearances of important people in your narrative so that readers can create images in their heads of those characters
• Sensory details: use sensory details to allow readers to see, hear, feel, understand characters and their actions
• Feelings: reveal your thoughts and feelings about events and characters which you describe in your narrative
• Second event (new paragraph/section of the essay): continue to describe events in the order in which they happened in real life
• Final event: describe the final event in your story.
• Interior monologue: the conversation you are having in your head as these events unfurl. This monologue is an effective way to reveal your thoughts and feelings and describe them.

Conclusion

• A look back from the present time: describe your reflection on the experience and consider its meaning
• Significance meaning of this experience: end the essay by letting your readers know the meaning of the experience personally to you; what you learned from it or how it changed you.

These are the main things that should be described and mentioned in autobiographical narrative. Following all these steps will help the readers to create a clear and
understandable picture while reading this essay. It would be much easier to get insights from it for the future analyzes.
Chapter 5: Elaboration of In-game Purchases and Influence on Involvement of Players

Video game industry is grew significantly over the last decade. Due to a big number of innovations and new technologies, video game industry found its place on the high positions in ratings of fast growing industries. In the year, 2019 revenues in this market expected to be approximately $151.9 billion dollars (Wijman, 2018). That is the reason why it is highly important to continue researching this sphere and find a clear understanding how things work in this field and understand the behavior of consumers on this market. Also, due to a high potential of this industry. After studying all related literature and previous researches, it became more clear how this industry is working, current trends and preferences of consumers. All gained knowledge were used during creating questioner for in-depth interviews and analyzing gained data after held interviews. In this research, the author wants to study the influence of in-game purchases on consumers, their motives and attitude. The research question sound this way “How in-game purchases influence on involvement of the gamers?” The results of this study will be retrieved though the use of direct technics of qualitative research as in-depth interviews and autobiographical narratives.

5.1 In-depth Interviews Circumstances

Interviews were conducted by the author of the research. Interviews took place via video conferencing due to the geographic dispersion of the interviewees. All interviews were recorded and analyzed again afterwards. In order to transcript all the answers and use them in elaboration and analysis parts. It is important to support all the statements and results with quotations of respondents. Participants were made aware that the interviews would be conducted in English or Russian depends on their preferences or proficiency of English skills. Respondents were selected according to such criteria’s as time spending on playing games, money spend on in-game content (they had to have purchased in-game content at least once before), players have to be amateurs, meaning playing is their way to relax or as a hobby. You can see the aggregated profiles of respondents in the Table 2.
### Table 2: Overview of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Code</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Video gaming industry involvement</th>
<th>Favorite game</th>
<th>Time spent playing (hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Dota 2, PUBG</td>
<td>13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Dota 2, Civilization V</td>
<td>4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>CS: GO, Dota 2</td>
<td>5,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Civilization, GTA V</td>
<td>4,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Dragon Age, Dota 2</td>
<td>8,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>WOW, PUBG</td>
<td>2,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>The Witcher</td>
<td>2,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We exclude professional gamers from our survey because according to Roger Caillois (1961) they are rather workers then players because they are paid for playing games and they do not feel enjoyment that much in this position. Also mostly, they forced to buy in-game content to entertain the whole community. Professional players already highly involved in the game so the additional purchase will not have a significant effect on them. In return for participation, interviewees were given the opportunity to receive a summary of the research findings.

### 5.2 Insights from In-depth Interviews

This chapter will show important insights gained through conducted in-depth interviews. With the help of them, we can provide analysis and at the end prove or disprove suggested propositions. Average time of all in-depth interviews was 37 minutes. All the respondent were males and at the age of 20-25 years old. Mainly level of video gaming industry involvement of respondents is medium or high. This level
depends on the amount of days that respondent spends playing video games and how hard he keeping up with what is happening in the game industry today.

5.2.1 Gaming as a Lifestyle

All the respondents mentioned that they are following on the daily basis updated information about games and about companied that are developing these games. It is highly important for the gamer to always stay updated and be aware about existing companies on the market. How they compete, which values they are representing and their attitude towards the gamers. Do they value their community and supporting after some problems with the game etc.? That is why I have decided to ask them about all this moments after fast screening questions. Here are some quotes from them related to the question about keeping up on what is going on in the video gaming industry:

“I always try to be updated. Actually, for a different reasons to talk with my friends about them afterwards or just because this is the sphere which is interesting for me” (Respondent 1)

“I always keep information updated about the game. I do not know why I do not even play those games. I like the community, the whole impact of those games on the society” (Respondent 6)

“I follow news that are related to the companies who develop and introduce games more than just checking releases of games” (Respondent 5)

“Yes, sure I do follow recent news on the daily basis. Especially, I like to read about scandals between players or companies and see they handle them” (Respondent 4)

It was also important to understand why they are spending their free time on playing computer games. People in general always spending their free time on things that are important for them or would bring some joy or benefits in the future. Therefore, I find it important to ask respondents about their personal opinion about spending their free time playing computer games and following this industry. What exactly drives them when they decide to do that? **Majority mentioned it is a good way of relaxing, socializing and competing with others.** For example:
“Personally, it is just a very casual and easy way for me to relax. Some games I play because they are difficult and challenging in some cases. Other games just a casual experience that I can do after work while all the other sources of entertainment do not provide me the same level of entrainment as games do” (Respondent 5)

“When it is a single type of game I consider it as waste of time. When it is a multiplayer, you have a feeling that you are socializing with people and you compete with them. The most important stuff having this feeling of competition because you always trying to be better and prove it to yourself in the first place. Also to connect with other people without leaving your place” (Respondent 2)

Nowadays, people trying to avoid communication with people in a real life and prefer to socialize with them in the virtual world. In psychology, there are many studies about the reasons of such behavior, which I recommend to read for people who are interested in this phenomena. In my opinion, young people do that because it is easier to express their thoughts, they can have a conversation and reply whenever they want, they can describe themselves as they want to and can immediately stop talking with a person if you do not want to continue. Actually this trend is quite negative as lack of communication in real life can lead people to become more closed from the others, do not share their fears and forgot about the beauty of a real life that is around them.

Interesting fact that one answer was completely different from the majority of respondents. He was not satisfied with the level of education in his city/university that is why he decided to spend his time playing computer games.

“Actually, in my city I have quite bad education that’s why I have a lot of free time to spend it on online games” (Respondent 1)

From my personal experience, I mentioned that teenagers often started to play games because of the provided bad education from their countries or lack of motivation to study.

5.2.2 Attitude of Players towards In-game Content

Next step was to discover attitude of players towards in-game content. Do they think that these days’ companies have to offer such opportunity to buy such content?

Respondents had different attitude towards in-game content in pay-to-pay games
and free-to-play games. Majority of respondents said that they do not want to see ingame content in pay-to-play games because you already paid a lot of money to purchase the game and you do not want to spend even more. Everything should be already included in the game. If it is free-to-play game, they have a positive attitude because they agree that it is acceptable for companies to get money from in-game purchases because it is the only source of profit for them. The entire respondents mentioned that they do not want to be forced to buy in-game content it should be voluntary. When they feel a pressure to buy it, they have a feeling that game developers trying to use them. Sometimes it influence them to change their attitude towards their brand new game because they feel that it is not fair to behave in such way.

“I have quite negative attitude towards that but I understand that companies are profit organizations and they want to squeeze as much money as they can out of their consumers which I can understand. From consumer point of view, I do not want to pay additional costs after purchasing the game. If it is free-to-play game I am completely okay with that” (Respondent 5)

“I don’t like people who buy in-game content that gives you competitive advantages. Also, when you buy a single player game for a full price of 40-50$ it is not fair to ask for buying more in-game content. In free-to-play game it is acceptable because it does not affect the balance” (Respondent 4)

During in-depth interviews, respondents were mentioning that all players have strong negative attitude towards in-game content that gives the players competitive advantages. They think that everyone have to be at the same position and should not use money to succeed faster than others. Players have to respect and protect the balance in the game. If we talk about cosmetics – items that are not giving any competitive advantage, they have positive attitude about them and using them a lot while playing. It refreshes the game for a player and make it more colorful, funny and brings the feeling of a new experience.

“Honestly, I think that games do not have to ask money from gamers in that way. They have to be motivated to develop the game without forcing to buy in game content. Especially, content that gives you advantages compared to other
gamers. Changing your character is one thing but have competitive advantage is too much” (Respondent 1)

“Depends on the type of content, if it’s does not influence the game then I have a good attitude. If it is giving you in-game privileges, it is not that good. In general, it does not hurt the game. Everyone have to have the same opportunities” (Respondent 2)

Personally for me, was interesting to see how players perceive intentions of game developers when they introducing new in-game content. Do they try to increase experience and enjoyment of the gamers while playing or just to make profit out of it? Majority of respondents said that they think that companies care about both sides but anyway making profit is the main one for them. I was surprised, that players understand position of companies and their willing to gain high revenues. No one tried to judge them or say that they should not behave in this way. Partially, they support introducing in-game content but more in free-to-play games and without forcing players to buy it.

“I would say 85% they try to make profit and in 15% they try to stay relevant because if the game does not change at all it can become boring they need to continue the development and engage players” (Respondent 2)

“Definitely both. This is one of the parts how you can monetize your business from the other side you give something to the players like new experience, showing off to your friends that you have something better” (Respondent 6)

Only one respondent stated that in his opinion and from his experience, he has a feeling those companies only trying to get money from them. They continue pushing players to buy this content even when they already paid for the full version of game.

“I would say only for a profit. Nowadays, companies introduce offline games that are literally designed that you can barely progress without paying extra” (Respondent 5)

Companies should start to pay attention to this issue because at the end it is possible that they will lose their loyal customers who were repeatedly buying their in-game content. They will switch to free-to-play games instead of pay-to-play where they see more reasons to pay extra money.
5.2.3 Influence of Enjoyment State on Players

During exploring relevant literature, we figured out that when a player experiencing a state of flow or pure pleasure while playing an online game his intent to purchase ingame content increases. According to Choi, Dongseong & Kim, Jinwoo (2004) people tend to play specific online games repeatedly because they have a high level of customer loyalty to the games. If the player is loyal towards your game, he will come back again and continue playing despite the releases of the new games. If the player enters the flow state during playing an online game, this means that the gamer is interested and curious about the game, experiencing full control over the game, and is ready to play the game with no other distraction. In their opinion, the optimal level of experience during play activity in this case defined as flow. They believe that if the player experiencing the flow state quite often while playing an online game, he or she would have higher customer loyalty to the game. He spends more time playing the game and attached to it more as usual. According to this, we created our first proposition: Experiencing enjoyment state while playing an online game increases the intent to purchase in-game content. To prove or disprove this proposition respondents were asked related questions during interview. Everyone mentioned that they have a feeling of enjoyment, pleasure while playing their favorite games. In most of the cases it depends on the personality exactly which aspect of the game brings them this feeling. For someone competitiveness plays the most important role and it is the main factor for him or her to continue playing online games. For others specific atmosphere and a story the main factor that influence them to continue playing and enjoying this process.

“I do enjoy the games in terms of their competitiveness. If the online game is not really, competitive I enjoy it but much less, it is the main point to play online to compete with other players. Which is the main source of enjoyment for me. In single player games I value more the atmosphere and the story and the opportunity to escape” (Respondent 5)

“Oh, yes I do. If it has an enjoyable storyline, gameplay and it’s works good it feels like a pure pleasure for me” (Respondent 7)

“While I am playing my favorite game at the moment called PUBG I definitely experience some kind of flow, like I want to try harder, have additional motivation and enjoy every minute of it” (Respondent 1)
During analyzing conducted in-depth interviews, we found a strong link between enjoyment of the game and intent of the players to buy in-game content in the future. By purchasing virtual content provided by their favorite game, they want to increase their enjoyment even more. In the same time, they want support the developers and show that they appreciate their hard work on developing the game. It is important in the case of free-to-play games, when you did not pay anything for the game. So, after you played the game for same time and have a feeling that you enjoy the game and see that developers try their best to improve that game continuously you want to buy ingame content in order to support the developers for their intentions and hard work. Of course, to continue enjoy the game you have to always buy something new to bring new experience to the game and do not get bored.

“I think, yes it is linked. The more I play then the more I want to buy in-game content to change something or improve and change the experience” (Respondent 4)

“Well, yes absolutely if I find the game astonishment and well-made I would personally want to support the developers even further and I would spend more money to greed them for creating such a good piece of art for me” (Respondent 5)

“If I like the game I will have more motivation to play and enjoy it more. I will start customizing my character for other people to enjoy it too” (Respondent 2)

Majority of respondents said that purchasing new in-game content makes them feel more comfortable, attached and experienced in the game. It helps them to find additional motivation to continue playing and engage with a game. In addition, they feel some advantages while playing with other players who does not have any additional content. They have the opportunity to express their social status, opportunity to lead the team and have more respect. The quality of their in game experience increasing. Some following quotations will support this statement:

“I would say yes, I perceive myself as more experienced player that I even have some advantages compared to other players” (Respondent 3)
“Yes, it attach you more because you spend real money and to make this spending worth you should engage more with a game otherwise it would seem pointless” (Respondent 4)

“In my opinion, in-game purchases is the easiest way to show my personality and differentiate me from other players. Show that I have more than they do. It makes me feel better and more comfortable” (Respondent 7)

Interesting moment that one of the respondents, mentioned that most of the time after purchasing in-game content he feel regret. At the beginning, he has a feeling close to gambling while buying randomized items when you do not know what exactly you will get at the end. After getting random item, he immediately loose this feeling of excitement and start to feel that he wasted his money without any sense.

“No, mostly it is just a regret. Especially, if it is randomized content and thrill at the beginning after all just the feeling of regret for spending real life money on something digital which is not real” (Respondent 5)

5.2.4 Factors That Influence Players to Buy In-game Content

It is highly important to understand which factors influence gamers to make a decision to purchase virtual content. To have a more clear picture and understanding of their behavior in general. In the most of the cases this factors depend on the personalities of gamers. You have to understand what they want to achieve or experience while playing video game. On the following figure represented main factors that have an influence on players to make a decision to purchase in-game content after conducting the interviews.
Mainly respondents were mentioning that they wanted to show off, to get some respect from others or to feel like they are better than others are. Some players wanted to support the developers for such an incredible game that brings them joy and happiness.

Another factor was influence from other players, for example professional players, streamers on Twitch or friends that are playing with you. Especially, people who you admire in this sphere or someone who is playing much better than you are. In addition, players mentioned that they wanted to get some new experience and emotions from purchasing in-game content. After playing too much time in the same game, they were tired of it and wanted to bring some innovations. Provided virtual content by game developers exactly something that will help them satisfy their needs.

Here is some quotes to support these factors:

“I would say the main goal was to show off and feel that I am better that other players and get some respect from others” (Respondent 1)

“First, to support the developers. Also, I wanted to experience something new and of course to show off” (Respondent 3)

“I would say if I see the streamer from Twitch playing with my favorite hero in some nice skins or friends I would try to buy it too but is also depends on the price” (Respondent 6)
“Competition—who gets more stuff and the better one. Some games based on these rules and make you feel like you better than others. Increase selfconfidence of the players” (Respondent 4)

All this insights are proving mentioned before facts and theories of related literature. That virtual items operate as a way of self-expression, allowing players to express their actual or ideal selves through their online characters (Lehdonvirta, 2005, 2009). Guitton (2011) finds that hedonic factors are important in digital environment to express social aspects. In addition, social motivations are relevant while players purchasing non-functional items. Such consumption can be motivated to show status in social settings, which can increase a consumer's self-esteem (Babin et al., 1994). In the same time, such consumption creates the sense of belonging or shared social identity within a group (Homburg, Wieseke, & Hoyer, 2009; Lehdonvirta, 2005) as well as creating a social distinction from other groups or players by showing ‘visual authority’ (Lehdonvirta, 2009).

5.2.5 Money Investment and Motivation

Mostly humans behave in a way that after spending money on something they value these things more. It works in this field also, probably after buying in-game content (new levels, skins of equipment or boosters) the player feels more motivated to continue playing. From this statement, we get our next proposition: Player find more reasons to play the game after spending money on in-game content. We asked our respondents related questions to this topic in order to get some insights from them to get deeper understanding of their behavior. Does real money investment increase importance of the game and brings additional motivation for gamers. Talking about importance respondents 2, 3 and 5 stated that money investment personally for them increasing importance of the game. In the same time, they have a feeling that it become more personal and build kind of special connection between them.

“Yeah, absolutely if you spend a lot of money for buying extra you probably have less chances of actually stop playing because you already feel that you have invested so much. Also if you spent money and a lot of your time playing this game it becomes really personal to you” (Respondent 5)

“Yes, after purchasing in-game contend I have a feeling that this game is more valuable for me” (Respondent 3)
Respondent 2 during answering related questions mentioned interesting moment that I want to highlight. He stated that when he has his favorite character he cares about him while buying special in-game content for him. It brings him a feeling that he is a daddy and should care about him. Exactly this feeling builds this close-knit connection between them.

“Yes, especially if it is the item for specific character not in general, you feeling like you have a special connection. It is like your creation and you feel like the daddy caring about him. Out of all the characters this is the one with which you have a connection” (Respondent 2)

One of the respondents mentioned that these factors does not increase importance of the game for him. The game is already important enough for him that is why he decided to make a purchase.

“I think no, these games were already very important for me that is why I decided to spend money on in-game purchase. Also, I wanted to support the developers of my favorite game” (Respondent 7)

Answers that related to additional motivation after investing money through in-game purchases were quite interesting. Some respondents said that investing money into your favorite game and additional motivation linked in their opinion. They had a feeling that after some purchases they wanted to spend more time in the game and continue playing more than before.

“Yes, I wanted to play more, to see what is new there. To get the new experience” (Respondent 3)

“Yes, exactly. I felt an extreme motivation to play more and also to show other player my new items” (Respondent 6)

“Yes, it is pretty linked the money and time investment which brings you additional motivation to play. I experienced such feeling a lot of times while playing my favorite games” (Respondent 5)

In the same time, one of the respondents mentioned that he had already enough motivation to play before making a purchase. It was the main reason why he decided to invest money to that particular game.
“It is a tough question, but I think it did not. I was quite a lot motivated even before spending money, so it does not influenced me” (Respondent 1)

One of the respondents mentioned his experience with purchasing in-game currency in the game GTA V. He wanted so hard to buy all the possible items in the game so he decided to invest real money in order to get it. Once everything was done and he get all the items that he dreamed of, he lost all the motivation to continue playing. Therefore, at the end, he stopped playing that game because he could not find any motivation of purpose for that.

“I remember one example that was in GTA V Online. When I bought a big amount of in-game currency and afterwards got everything I wanted, suddenly I realized that did not want to play anymore. I just lost the motivation” (Respondent 4)

It was interesting to hear an opinion of respondents about such question as “Does they feel more in common with a character or a game itself after in-game purchases related to their favorite hero to play?” Some respondents were not sure about it, they found this question tough for them. In the same time, some respondents stated that they definitely started to feel something in common with a character and their connection became closer.

“With a character yes, because I felt like now it looks more like me and with things that I like not with the basic outfit. But with the attitude towards the game did not change that much” (Respondent 1)

“I would say yes, somehow I felt more connection with a character or the game itself” (Respondent 3)

“Sure, I definitely experienced such thing after changing the look of my favorite character in Dota 2” (Respondent 5)

It is important for me to hear opinion of gamers about future trends in video gaming industry related to in-game purchases. At the end of each interview, I asked respondents about their opinion towards future in-game spending. Is it going to increase, remain the same or maybe even would go down. Majority of respondents stated that this trend would only go up in their opinion. The reason for that is community of gamers that is increasing every day and they always trying to find something new. Also, players
always want to increase quality of their in-game experience and to show other players that they are better.

“I would say that it is going to increase because gamer community increasing as a whole every year and the gaming industry in general is huge now” (Respondent 6)

“I think they would buy more in game content in the future maybe not clothing or boosters but to feel more comfortable inside the game and improve search of players to play with” (Respondent 1)

“They will definitely keep buying more and more. For example, Blizzard company is already having 56% more income from selling in-game content than just digital copies of games” (Respondent 5)

So, we can see that these days some companies in video gaming industry already making more profit of selling in-game content than just selling games. It could be one of the main factors that influence such companies to continue introducing new virtual content. One of the respondent mentioned that he believes that VR technologies would push this industry even further including selling in-game content. This technology becoming every day better and more affordable for people, so approximately in five-ten years majority of players would shift to playing using VR. This trend will also increase in-game purchases in the future according to growing community and desire to experience something new.

“Sure, such technologies like VR would increase to motivation and desire to buy even more. Every day new people entering this community and they all have intends to buy and experience something new” (Respondent 3)

In addition, companies should understand that these days amount of games on the market is enormous and the competition accordingly. Therefore, gamers do not have enough time to become attached to the game that much because they simply do not have enough time to build this connection due to big variety of new games. To survive and continue making profit out of selling virtual content they have to be more creative and find new ways to engage the players. Always keep their community updated and provide innovation in their games.
“Nowadays, it much more games on the market and people will not be attached to it and you will not have the opportunity to build this emotional link. This trend will definitely maintain for the future but they have to be more creative because competition is rising and the players are divided between major games”
(Respondent 2)

One of the respondents expressed his opinion that players are aware now that mostly companies are trying to squeeze as much money as possible so they would try to behave in a smart way and avoid in-game purchases. This opinion is interesting because during all of my interviews respondents were mentioning that they do not like the feeling that companies trying to push or force them to spend money on in-game content. Do not develop the game in a proper way just to introduce additional content in the future and make more money because of that. Therefore, companies are in a floating position to lose the trust of gamers to buy pay-to-play games because they do not want to be fooled.

They would try to buy free-to-play games and then decide on their own is it worth spending money on additional in-game content.

“Less likely that people will continue buy in-game content they would try to oppose it not to be disappointed afterwards” (Respondent 4)

“After my experience with the last chapter of Assassins Creed I will stop buying pay-to-play games, I am tired of paying additional money” (Respondent 7)

During conducting these interviews, we got some highly important and useful insights from gamers. It is interesting and useful experience to create all this criteria’s for respondents and then pick them accordingly. Is it very important to create the right questioner, which will help you to get all answers from respondents in order to prove or disprove created propositions based on the researched literature. All information that gathered from interviews explained in details in this chapter. In order to get and understand the meaning of it, this information would be analyzed and interpreted in the following chapter.

5.3 Autobiographical Narrative

“Life is more fun if you play games”
It took me some time to think about how I want to start this autobiographical narrative or essay; we can also call it subjective personal introspection but at the end, it all have the same meaning. While talking about my experience and relationships with such phenomena as games and in-game purchases I will open my heart and soul to show my personal experience. I have started playing video games at a very young age. As soon as my parents could afford a personal computer for their lovely daughter. Before that time, I was always playing table games or sports games of every type. I consider myself a person who likes the concept of games in general. I find it very interesting to interact with other people while playing, to set goals and achieve them; I like the spirit of competition and the taste when you win at the end. That is why even now at the age of twenty-three I still find it interesting and exciting to play video games and follow this industry daily. Games for me it is not just something to escape from reality or chill. For me, it is something that I have to think daily, train as much as possible to be the best and reach challenges that it gives me. For some people, it is hard to understand my passion for games. When I talk with people about games or video game industry, in general, they notice that my eyes starting to sparkle and I cannot stop talking and expressing my thoughts.

As I remember, I have started to play computer games at the age of 9 while I went to primary school. At that time mostly, I was playing girly games connected to such things as cooking, taking care of household or pets, family, etc. After some years, my cousin visited us from another city and get with him some video games, which he installed, to my computer and we started to play them together. This type of games I found much more interesting for me because it was related to racing, role-playing, shootings, strategies, etc. All my life I remember myself as a child that mostly enjoyed games that boys are playing more often than girls did. When my cousin has left I continued to play these games and then started even to buy the new ones. After sometime when I started to get older and kind of used to play the same games. In-game content started to pop-up almost in every game including offline and online games. Of course, as an intensive player, I wanted to experience something new in the game, to increase my results and to show others that I am the best. I must admit that last year’s mostly I played online games rather than offline. I think the reason for that is to socialize with people and my

— Roald Dahl, My Uncle Oswald
friends more and to feel all the time the spirit of competition. Slowly I started to buy different types of content: for unlocking new missions, buying battle passes (including seasonal, which is famous these days), clothes for my characters or weapons, boosters for getting to the new level faster, etc. After every purchase, I feel uplifted state and extreme motivation to continue playing and getting even better results.

While I am playing computer games, I mentioned that I feel enjoyment, excitement and sometimes I cannot even follow the time that I have spent in the game. I like to play team games where I can show my leadership skills and lead my team to the winning ending of the game. My friends often listen to advises that I give while we are playing and follow them because they know that I have a serious attitude towards games and will do everything to help my team to succeed. When my team is losing, I feel disappointed and sometimes take it too personally but in the end, I take this experience and try not to repeat the same mistakes in future battles. Interesting fact that sometimes I think about games while I am not playing and predict in my head in which game I will play today and how. With the help of my statistics from Steam account where I have the majority of my games and previously bought in-game purchases, I will show how seriously I am about my passion for games. On the following Table 3, mentioned four of my favorite games that I had recently and approximately how much time and money I have spent during the last 7 years on them.

**Table 3: Steam account statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the game:</th>
<th>Dota 2</th>
<th>Counter-Strike: Global Offensive</th>
<th>Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3</th>
<th>PLAYERUNKNOWN'S BATTLEGROUNDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time: (hours)</td>
<td>2,271</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money (USD):</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In my opinion, games were always playing such a huge role in my life that I had never regretted any dollar spent on it or time. I can mention some important factors which are forcing me to buy in-game content: 1) I want to make an impression of experienced player (to have an advantage compared to another player); 2) intention to enjoy the
game more; 3) having more of a new experience within the game that I like; 4) to make my character look in the way that I want; 5) to reach settled goals within the game faster; 6) to show and feel that I am a part of community. In my opinion, modern games have to offer for the players the opportunity to buy in-game content but not pushing or forcing, it should be voluntary. If game developers will push players to buy such content, they will start to fill like someone is trying to use them and it will only destroy the connection between the game and a player. Especially for me, owning such items make this game more valuable and important because I invested not only time but also real money. Like a result, while picking which game to play next time I would prefer the one that has my in-game purchases instead of another one that does not have them. For me, it feels like investing in my hobby, on the same level as a real-life hobby as sports, painting or snowboarding.

As far as I remember myself, the most incredible result for me was when I took the first place out of 99 players in the game called Playerunknown’s Battlegrounds. It take a huge amount of practicing, thinking, creating strategies in your head and motivation to win in this game. When I won the first place at this game while first 5 minutes, I just could not believe that it is possible. For me, it is a big achievement and proving that I am a good player for myself. I still have this memory in my head and a screen shoot on the computer as a reminder for me of my success.

At the times, when I cannot play but still have some free time I watch live streams of famous players called “streamers” or professional players. It gives me the feeling of continuous connection with the game, relevance and I believe that while I am watching these professionals playing I can get some insights and will better play in the future. Recently, most of the time I am watching such streamers as Alexandr “S1mple” Kostyiev, Michael “Shroud” Grzesiek and Arseniy “Ceh9” Trynozhenko. These players are important for me and have an influence on me because they all have high achievements in their eSports career and I feel some connection with them through the same interests, age and attitude towards games. Sometimes I am supporting such streamers by donating some money to them to keep them motivated to keep doing their job and show that I am appreciating them in general.

Another important thing for me is eSports competitions. I watch every important tournament that happening in this industry and which is connected to the game that I
play. It motivates me to play more to become closer to the level of these professionals and still makes me feel like a part of a community and I can discuss all the results afterward with my friends or social media. A few years ago, I even attended some of such tournaments, which were provided, in my country on major stadiums with a huge amount of people. It is hard to express my emotions at that time and excitement but I can say that it was unforgettable and I will continue to do it in the future. I am planning to attend Major Tournament of CS: GO which will take place in Berlin in 2019. I find it very motivating for me and inspirational. It is awesome to be surrounded at such events with people who have the same mindset and interests. The atmosphere where everyone cheering for his or her favorite team and watching them playing your favorite game is priceless.

In my family, I have a smaller brother who is 10 years old right now. Of course, he takes the pattern of my behavior and follows things that I am doing in my life. As a result, our family has two intensive players right now. We always discuss what is happening new in this industry, buying new games together. I must admit, that he is more seeking for new games that I am. As I get older, mostly I am playing my favorite games and rarely buying new ones. He has another behavior than me he tries new games almost every two-three weeks, which is shocking me sometimes. I have noticed that he is actively buying in-game content to look different from other players or to be more successful in the game. In my opinion, it is all because he is so called “Generation Z”. People who were born from the 1996 year and older. These people have different behavior in terms of life, purchases and the ways how and where to retrieve the information. They always are hungry for something new and trying to get fresh information by themselves not to rely on someone. His generation, not even that much reading news articles or famous websites. They always checking blogs of people who they can trust in their opinion or watching videos on YouTube. Literally, related to everything from how to pass specific mission in the game to best places on earth or how to survive in the forest if you get lost. That is the main reason for our a little bit different behavior connected to the games. Anyways, he always asking me for some advice on topics that are related to games because he finds me as a trustable, experienced and reliable expert in this field.
After all these years of my life playing, I understood that I see myself not only in a role of a player, I want more than that. That is why after the graduation, my goal is to find a position at a marketing department in one of the top companies that related to developing games and introducing afterwards them on this market. I want to put my impact there, to see how it all works and looks from inside. In my opinion, all these huge experience that I gain from all these years playing would only help me to succeed in these sphere.

5.4 Interpretation of Autobiographical Essay

As we used autobiographical research method, it is highly important to interpret the information from it, which we can use in the future. It will help us to find additional supportive material to prove or disprove our propositions in this thesis. According to Polkinghorne (2010), this method empowers researches to analyze events in the past and actions as a means to examine previous outcomes as well as to predict possible future outcomes. As we mentioned before the use of autobiographical narratives gives the researcher the opportunity to draw from questions that examine life experiences to analyze the self within the lens of the critical side.

We can clearly see from expressed experience from the author of before written autobiographical narrative that in his life games and in-game content plays an important role from the time of childhood. We can conclude that the main reason of playing games in this case is to socialize with people, to spend some time with friends in virtual life and possibly find new friends while plying online games. Another important moment is to show and practice leadership skills while interacting with other people and help chosen team to win the first place. This practice can help the player in the future and in real life to perform better on the workplace.

The author of this autobiographical narrative expressing his thoughts that game is something more than just a tool to have fun. When you think about the game while not playing meaning in the real life. It becomes more like a lifestyle than just a game. In his case, while setting particular goals in game after completing them, brings you a feeling of achievement, which is equal to real-life achievements. Sometimes in-game purchases helps the player to achieve these goals faster by spending money on virtual items. Ingame purchases also helping the author to experience something new in his favorite game when it becomes boring. We can see, that the author have his favorite characters
and by purchasing in-game items it helps to personalize it, to show other players that he is more experienced and have better experience and results than them. In addition, it builds special close-knit bond between them. When the player dresses the character in the way he likes and spending majority of time playing with him. Interesting fact that investing real money in the game make the player perceive the game more valuable compared to others. The author do not see that investing in his favorite thing to do is wasting of money. It feels like you investing in something that makes you feel better, happier and experience feelings of competition. In addition, there is a correlation between invested money and motivation to play more. The author finds more reasons to play the game, which has more in-game purchases compared to game without them.

Influencing factor also play an important factor in this case. The author mentioned that he is watching his favorite streamers when there is no enough free time or possibility to play games. In the meantime, all people who are professional streamers or gamers influence him at this time to buy new in-game content in the future or support them by donating money. Another factor, which is motivating to continue playing and investing is visiting big competitions in different cities and stadiums. The atmosphere on such events brings and people with the same mindset brings joy to the players and motivate to continue playing. To conclude, we can say that computer games are on the same level as hobbies or sports in the life of an intense player. All this previously mentioned insights would help us in proving propositions and describing results of the current research.
Chapter 6: Main Analysis and Results

In this chapter would be described analysis of all gathered data and presented the main results from it. After conducted seven in-depth interviews and autobiographical essay it is necessary to make an analysis of it and make a decision are the suggested propositions confirmed or rejected. In the same time, it is necessary to mention problems, possible limitations and things that could be improved in the future researches. Related literature that were reviewed during this particular research made a big impact on even better understanding how things are working in this field, which factors are influencing gamers in different situations and why they make decision to buy in-game content, doesn’t matter if it is functional items or non-functional. Let us get closer to suggested proposition and their analysis. After the examination of our formulated propositions that we held, it can be summarized in the following table 4.

Table 4: Consolidated analysis of propositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of proposition</th>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Experiencing enjoyment state while playing an online game increases the intent to purchase in-game content.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Unlocking of the new missions and personalization of a character through in-game purchases increase attachment of players towards the game.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We can start our analysis from the first proposition. Which is sounds in the following way. **Proposition 1: Experiencing enjoyment state while playing an online game increases the intent to purchase in-game content.** Analyzed related literature supported this statement. According to Choi, Dongseong & Kim, Jinwoo (2004) if the player enters the flow state during playing an online game, this means that the gamer is interested and curious about the game, experiencing full control over the game, and is ready to play the game with no other distraction. They believe that if the player experiencing the flow state quite often while playing an online game, he or she would have higher customer loyalty to the game. The same thing is with experiencing enjoyment state while playing games. During analyzing conducted in-depth interviews, we found a strong link between enjoyment of the game and intent of the players to buy in-game content in the future. Everyone mentioned that they have a feeling of flow, enjoyment, pleasure while playing their favorite games. In most of the cases it depends on the personality exactly which aspect of the game brings them this feeling. For someone competiveness plays the most important role and it is the main factor for him or her to continue playing online games. For others specific atmosphere and a story the main factor that influence them to continue playing and enjoying this process. By purchasing virtual content provided by their favorite game, they want to increase their enjoyment even more. Autobiographical research also confirmed this proposition saying that while the author playing video games he enjoys it and does not feel how the time flies. This feelings influence him in the future to purchase in-game content to increase his enjoyment even more. We can conclude that related literature, respondents from in-depth interviews and autobiographical narrative proves our first proposition.

Moving to analysis of the second proposition, which sounds in this way: **Unlocking of the new missions and personalization of a character through in-game purchases increase attachment of players towards the game.** In analyzing this proposition, we
are more focused on purchasing of non-functional items rather then functional. According to gained information through in-depth interviews, gamers have negative attitude towards purchasing functional virtual items, which give you some sort of competitive advantage in the game. According to reviewed literature, these items operate as a way of self-expression, allowing players to express their actual or ideal selves through their online characters (Lehdonvirta, 2005, 2009). Guitton (2011) finds these factors important in digital environment to express social aspects. Finally, social motivations are relevant while players purchasing non-functional items. Such consumption can be motivated to show status in social settings, which can increase a consumer's self-esteem (Babin et al., 1994). In the same time, such consumption creates the sense of belonging or shared social identity within a group (Homburg, Wieseke, & Hoyer, 2009; Lehdonvirta, 2005) as well as creating a social distinction from other groups or players. In-depth interviews helped to find the answer for this proposition. Majority of respondents said that after purchasing new in-game content, for example personalization of their character, purchase new missions or to have new achievements makes them feel more comfortable, attached and experienced in the game. It helps them to find additional motivation to continue playing and engage with a game. In addition, they feel some advantages while playing with other players who does not have any additional content. They stated that quality of their in game experience increasing. According to described experience in autobiographical essay, we can say that purchasing in-game content to personalize heroes increase their attachment and connection to the game. Some of respondents even have a feeling that this character is his creation and they have to take care of them. So, after analyzing all provided ways of research we can confirm this proposition.

The third proposition sounds in the following way: **Player finds more reasons to play the game after spending money on in-game content.** Mostly humans behave in a way that after spending money on something they value these things more. It works in this field also, that after buying in-game content (new levels, skins of equipment or boosters) the player will feel more motivated to continue playing. Respondents stated that money investment personally for them increasing importance of the game. In the same time, they have a feeling that it become more personal and build kind of special connection between them. Some respondents said that investing money into your favorite game and additional motivation are linked in their opinion. They had a feeling
that after some purchases they wanted to spend more time in the game and continue playing more than before. On the other hand, one of the respondents mentioned that these factors does not increase importance of the game for him. The game is already important enough for him that is why he decided to make a purchase. One of the respondents mentioned that after he bought everything that he wanted in the game, he lost all the motivation to continue playing. Therefore, at the end, he stopped playing that game because he could not find any motivation of purpose for that. According to autobiographical narrative investing real money in the game make the author perceive the game more valuable compared to others. The author do not see that investing in his favorite thing to do is wasting of money. In his opinion, it feels like you investing in something that makes you feel better, happier and experience feelings of competition. In addition, there is a correlation between invested money and motivation to play more.

The author finds more reasons to play the game, which has more in-game purchases compared to game without them. Therefore, based on the results gathered from all methods we can only partly confirm this statement. The main reason for that is available different answers from asked respondents. Because of that, we cannot completely approve this statement. In order to find one concrete answer we recommend continuing discovering this particular question possibly from different angles.

The fourth proposition that we have created in the research sounds in the following way: After buying in-game content, the player feels more involved and connected to the game. First of all, studied literature mentioned that increased involvement builds more personal connections of consumer towards a product. In the same time, involvement linked to the buying process and marketers are forced to use different marketing strategies to influence their consumers. After analyzing answers from respondents on questions related to fourth proposition we can say that gamers after making the purchase of in-game content have a feeling of increased involvement and connection to the game. They value the game more and find more motivation to continue playing. After buying personalization content personal relevance to a product which is based on some individual’s needs, interests and values increasing. This relevance is expressed how much the product is interesting and important for the consumer. Autobiographical research showed that the gamer could easily find more touchpoints between him as a player and the game itself. Therefore, after analyzing all
gathered information from all sources of research we can confirm our fourth proposition.

After analyzing and proving our propositions, we can answer stated earlier Research Question “How in-game purchases influence on involvement of the gamers?” Players experience the feeling of increasing attachment towards the game. In the same time, the particular game where they have in-game purchases begins to be more valuable for them compared to others. We can conclude that after some purchases of virtual content players find more motivation to play the game and as the result of that enjoy this process more.

6.1 Limitations and Further Examinations

Thus, having analyzed the outcomes, we can outline a number of limitations which are present in the current work:

- First, the sample size, which is collected, is rather small as only 7 respondents were examined by in-depth interviews. It cannot fully represent the behavior of the whole population.
- There are many different types of games on the market. Different types of games attract different types of game users, which accordingly have different preferences, values and financial opportunities.
- We exclude professional gamers from our survey because according to Roger Caillois (1961) they are rather workers then players because they are paid for playing games and they do not feel enjoyment that much in this position. Also mostly, they forced to buy in-game content to entertain the whole community. Professional players already highly involved in the game so the additional purchase will not have a significant effect on them.
- Similar to other methodological approaches, autobiographical research, while reflective of a single researcher’s thoughts and perspectives, are not free from bias; Given the role of researcher as participant, autobiographical research is subject to bias due to the various statuses, influences, and teachings of the researcher.
- Trustworthiness of autobiographical research. The researcher is responsible of communicating the methodological patterns used
throughout the study and report what, and how, ethical considerations guided the process.

- It is also important to mention that autobiographical narratives reflect the values and norms present in an individuals’ life. Although situated within similar cultural frames, memories and meaning may differ from person to person.

It is important to understand that all the players have different attitude towards pay-to-play and free-to-play games. From the experience of this research, it is necessary to mention that for future examinations of this topic it is recommended to divide the questions or the studies in general into two parts. Separated P2P and F2P games will give you more reliable and trustworthy results. It would bring much more clear and deep understanding of a behavior of gamers. The same advice is appropriate for future studies related to in-game purchases to separate functional and non-functional items.

From gained experience of this study it is visible that gamers have different attitude towards this concepts.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

A significant number of internet users play games on the daily basis. Nowadays, people using video games to have a closer connection with their friends and family. Video gaming industry is continually growing and expends in different directions. All these factors motivate scientists from different spheres to continue research this area. Virtual goods have become a major source of income for online game suppliers that is why it is important to study the motivation and influence of it. This study identifies influence of in-game purchases on involvement of the gamers. To conclude our study we have to summarize our findings. In general, it can be noted that according to the results of the study, we turn to our main research question and created propositions so we can draw the key outcomes are presented as follows:

- There is a strong link between enjoyment of the game and intent of the players to buy in-game content in the future;
- One of the factors that influence a player to make an in-game purchase is intention to have a new experience;
- One of the reasons to make an in-game purchase is personalization which provides to player the opportunity to show status in social settings, which can increase a consumer's self-esteem;
- Revealed a positive correlation between spending money on in-game content and additional motivation to play;
- In-game purchases have a positive influence on involvement of the gamers.
The present study investigated that if the player experiencing the flow state quite often while playing an online game, he or she would have higher customer loyalty to the game. The same thing is with experiencing enjoyment state while playing different types of games. Consequences of it is increasing intentions from players to purchase ingame content. This study identified that after purchasing new in-game content, for example personalization of their character, purchase new missions or to have new achievements makes them feel more comfortable, attached and experienced in the game.

It helps them to find additional motivation to continue playing and engage with a game. In addition, they feel some advantages while playing with other players who does not have any additional content. From this insight it is logical to recommend game developers to be more focused on introducing non-functional virtual items via games rather than functional. As we discovered negative attitude from players towards virtual items that provide competitive advantage and make the game unbalanced. In addition, players do not want to pay extra money after buying pay-to-play games because they already paid a lot to get these games. Players in this case have a feeling that companies want just to get as much money as possible and in future, it can lead to decreasing loyalty and enjoyment of the game. As a consequence of it less intentions to purchase in-game content.

Research results show that money investment for players increasing importance of the game. In the same time, it brings a feeling that it become more personal and build kind of special connection between them. Investing money into favorite game brings additional motivation for gamers to continue playing. This study revealed that increased involvement builds more personal connections of consumer towards a product. Results of this research showed that gamers after making the purchase of in-game content have a feeling of increased involvement and connection to the game. They value the game more and find more motivation to continue playing. During conducted study, research question “How in-game purchases influence on involvement of the gamers?” was answered and investigated from different perspectives.

This field is relatively new and is not considered as well research. It is necessarily to continue discovering this industry and the game phenomena in general. Due to fact, that this industry is fast growing worldwide, community is increasing daily and new
technologies entering this sphere, for example Virtual Reality. For companies it is the opportunity to expend their markets and increase incomes. Games for Virtual Reality technology considered as one of potential sources for selling even more in-game content. From perspectives of scientists, it is important to uncover new insights and apply existing theories to have a better picture of consumer behavior on this market.

It is important to mention some predictions of possible evolution in video gaming industry. By the year 2021, it is predicted to be around $180.1 billion. Around 2021 year, mobile gaming segment expected to be larger than combined PC games and console games. All companies will continue to rely on in-game micro-transactions even more. Others will surely follow examples of such companies and implement in their strategies monetization through in-game purchases. In the near future, companies would try to use alternative revenue-generating methods like playable/interactive ads which becoming more popular in mobile games these days. In this industry influencer marketing is also have its place to be. Gaming companies begin to hire an increasing number of well-known people from other entertainment industries as ambassadors for gaming brands.
Chapter 8: References


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Chapter 9: Appendices

In-Depth Interview

Aims, research problem:
To understand how in-game purchases influence on involvement of the gamers towards the game. Match Up Validity of Propositions

SCREENING QUESTIONS

1. Where are you originally from?

2. Name:
3. Gender
   □ Male  □ Female
4. Age: _____
5. How many days per week you play games including online games?
6. Which age you have started playing games?
7. What type of game is your favorite?
8. You usually play online or offline games?
9. Did you ever buy in-game content?

PREAMBLE (3 minutes)

Thanks and welcome
Explain the nature of an in-depth interview (informal, all views acceptable)
There are no right or wrong answers – it is all about finding out what people think Make sure you ask permission for audio recording, for research purposes.

Confidentiality reassurance:
“We audio record the interviews and listen to the recordings at a later stage because, although we take notes, we might miss some important details throughout the interview. However, we assure you of full confidentiality, as the recording is for our use only.”

Interviewer: Do you have any questions or concerns?

INTRODUCTION and WARM-UP (2 minutes)

1. Please introduce yourself! (Interviewer can ask first name, family status, hobbies, interest)
2. Do you like games in general also an online games? Would you say you keep up with what is happening in the game industry today?
3. Can you tell me “what are games in general means to you”, “why in your opinion you spent your free time playing online games”?

General questions about the games: attitude towards in-game content

1. What do you think about in-game content for purchasing inside games? (positive, negative etc.)
2. Can you recall your feelings after purchasing it?
3. Do you think that nowadays-modern games have to offer the opportunity to buy such content? To personalize your skins, character, unlock new levels or help to boost your experience in game itself foe some rewards.
4. When game developers introduce new in-game content for purchasing, do you think they try to increase experience and enjoyment of their players or only to make profit?

Enjoyment & in-game purchases part

1. Describe your feelings while playing games? Do you feel the flow enjoyment, pleasure or maybe excitement?
2. If yes, does it increase your intend in the future to buy some additional in game content?
3. Do you feel more comfortable, experienced or attached to the game after buying it?

Unlocking of the new mission, personalization & in game purchases part

1. Did you ever buy in-game content, which unlocks new missions, maps, levels or items that personalize your avatar or character? For example, special event pass (Christmas, Easter), new haircut, clothes, skins for equipment.
2. If yes, did it somehow changed your attitude towards the game? For example, you wanted to spend more time playing the game, felt like part of the community, your connection with particular game increased.
3. In your opinion, what influenced you to buy this virtual content?

Money investment & in-game content part

1. Do owning some virtual items (in game content) increase importance of particular game for you? Did you feel like it is more valuable for you?
2. Do you have additional motivation to play particular game after purchasing ingame items?
3. Do you feel more in common afterwards with a character or game in general?

Closing question

Would people buy more content in the future or would lower their amount of spending?

Do you want to add something at the end?