MA, Magdalena Hofman-Kohlmeyer [A B D E F]
Business and Consumer Relationship Management Department
University of Economics in Katowice
ORCID 0000-0001-9201-3308

CREATING BRANDED COMPUTER GAME ELEMENTS AS A FORM OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

KREOWANIE MARKOWYCH ELEMENTÓW GIER KOMPUTEROWYCH JAKO FORMA ZAANGAŻOWANIA KLIENTA

Abstract: Nowadays companies want to engage customers in all possible ways to better meeting their needs. New media gave managers opportunities to interact with people and establish cooperation. Present paper is aimed to give an outlook on creating branded computer game elements as a customer engagement behavior. The author carried out 20 in-depth inte-

rviews with users of three computer games: The Sims, Second Life and Euro Truck Simulator 2. The results show that players create branded game modifications with interference only into audiovisual presentation and interference in the game code. Inside the games, it can be find also a wide range of fictitious brands that replace the real one, among others for legal reason. The authors tried to answer the question why people engage in creating branded game elements. Based on some players statement during the interviews it can be assumed that players create branded elements for few reasons. They want to diversify the game, create some items as an entertainment activities, want to raise the realism of the game, need to belong to some community and also create add-ons to earn money.

Keywords: game modding, customer engagement, branded modds

Streszczenie: Obecnie przedsiębiorstwa angażują klientów na wszystkie dostępne sposoby. Nowe media umożliwiły menedżerom nawiązywanie kontaktów oraz rozpoczynanie współpracy z ludźmi. Celem niniejszego opracowania jest charakterystyka aktywności graczy, jaką jest tworzenie markowych elementów gier komputerowych jako formy zaangażowania klienta. Autorka przeprowadziła 20 wywiadów pogłębionych z użytkownikami trzech gier komputerowych: The Sims, Second Life and Euro Truck Simulator 2. Zgodnie z wynikami użytkownicy tworzą markowe elementy gier, zarówno te wymagające, jak i niewymagające zmian w kodzie gry. Wewnątrz gier można również spotkać szeroki wybór marek fikcyjnych, które mają zastępować te prawdziwe, między innymi ze względu na kwestie prawne. Autorka podjęła również próbę odpowiedzi na pytanie, dlaczego użytkownicy angażują się w tworzenie markowych elementów gry. W oparciu o wypowiedzi uczestników wywiadów ustalono, że może dziać się tak ze względu na kilka powodów. Użytkownicy gier chcą zróżnicować grę, tworzą modyfikacje dla rozrywki, jaką jest tworzenie samo w sobie, chcą podnieść realizm gry, wykazują potrzebę przynależności do pewnej społeczności i tworzą markowe dodatki do gier dla celów zarobkowych.

Słowa kluczowe: modowanie gry, zaangażowanie klienta, markowe mody

Introduction

Contemporary organizations develop a variety of methods to build a strong brand as part of their business strategy[1]. The customer who is loyal to the brand may be willing to pay more for the product with brand's logotype because they perceive some unique value. The uniqueness may be caused by grater trust in the reliability of a brand or from more favorable affect when customers use a brand[2]. There is an approach to creating value that assumed that product or service are deprived value

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[1] A. Wallström, T. Karlsson, E. Salehi-Sangari, *Building a corporate brand: The internal brand building process in Swedish service firms*, "Journal of Brand Management" 2008, 16(1-2), p. 40.

[2]   A. Chaudhuri, M.B. Holbrook, *The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance: the role of brand loyalty*, "Journal of Marketing" 2001, 65(2), p. 81; M. Hofman-Kohlmeyer, *The Role of Storytelling in Building a Brand*, "Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Humanitas. Zarządzanie" 2017, (3), p. 131.

as long as customer appreciate it and start to use it. Value is co-created by sellers as well as consumers and demands constant cooperation[3].

In the late 1990s and the early 2000s, companies started to forget about transaction-based perspective and the core objective of relationship marketing was to provide better products and services that satisfy customers and make them loyal. As Pansari and Kumar (2017) noticed, the next step was evolution of organizations goals to engaging customers in all possible ways[4]. Customer engagement is behavioral manifestation toward the brand (or firm) that express by word-of-mouth activity, recommendations, customer-to-customer interactions, blogging, writing reviews[5] (e. g. writing a review on TripAdvisor), participating in a brand community and other similar activities[6]. Parallel with growing interest in customer engagement it can be observed the evolution of Internet and the role of social media like wikis, blogs, micro blogging (e. g. Twitter), video sites like YouTube, social networking sites (e. g. Facebook) and virtual worlds like Second Life. Social media allow internet users interact with each other's and establish communities. Marketers in short time saw the opportunity to involve customers in content generation and value creation in order to better meeting their needs[7].

Present paper is aimed to give an outlook on creating branded computer game elements as a customer engagement behavior. The author carried out a research oriented on types of brand placement in computer games. During the in-depth interviews the issue of modifying the game content by players has emerged. In broad sense, game modding is related to the changing the game content by game players' that used their skills to alter various dimensions of the game, from less time-consuming changes in graphic to more advanced changes. Historically, modding was treated as a form of hacking, where computer savvy individuals modified code of existing game without the company's consent. The first game that included modding with featured supplementary software was "Doom", developed by John Carmack and John Romero, launched in 1993. Using sophisticated software called the "toolkit" or "editor" players could create or modify parts of the game for example levels, graphic design or storylines[8]. In terms of conducted interviews, game modding was analyzed from marketing perspective. The results show that respondents engage in producing diversi-

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[3]   J. Laskowska-Witek, M. Mitręga, *Brand Promotion Throught Computer Games on the Example of Second Life*, "Studia Ekonomiczne" 2014, 205, p. 26.
[4]   A. Pansari, V. Kumar, *Customer engagement: the construct, antecedents, and consequences*, "Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science" 2017, 45(3), p. 294-295.
[5]   K.K.F. So, C. King, B.A. Sparks, Y. Wang, *Enhancing customer relationships with retail service brands: The role of customer engagement*, "Journal of Service Management" 2016, 27(2), p. 175.
[6]   S.F. Beckers, J. Van Doorn, P.C. Verhoef, *Good, better, engaged? The effect of company-initiated customer engagement behavior on shareholder value*, "Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science" 2018, p. 367.
[7]   C.M. Sashi, *Customer engagement, buyer-seller relationships, and social media*, "Management Decision" 2012, 50(2), p. 254.
[8]   R. Hong, *Game modding, prosumerism and neoliberal labor practices*, "International Journal of Communication" 2013, 7, p. 985.

fied game elements stamped with brand logotypes. The engagement behaviors takes various forms from simple placing branded product that can be used in games (for example clothes or accessories for avatars) to creating whole extensive add-on.

An article is organized as follows. First part consider the customer engagement concept. In second part, the author describe the phenomenon of game modding. The third part constitutes research method and characterization of the sample. Thereafter, the results of this study are presented. The paper is ended with final conclusions.

1. Customer engagement

The concept of engagement has received many meanings in marketing literature. Is perceived as a prerequisite for positive effects of relationships such as cooperation or constructive resolution of conflicts between seller and customer[9]. Practitioners define customer engagement from the perspective of the organization as "activities facilitating repeated interactions that strengthen the emotional, psychological or physical investment a customer has in a brand". In terms of academics in information systems, customer engagement is "an intensity of customer participation with both representatives of the organization and with other customers in a collaborative knowledge exchange process". In addition, customer-brand relationships and strategies for engaging customers might be different depending on whether the customers purchase first time or it is repeat purchase[10]. Some authors investigate engagement in the context of a psychological state, while others focus on its behavioral expression toward a brand or a company[11]. Committed customers' are convinced that the functional and affective benefits from maintaining a relationship with the companies are greater than the benefits from ending them[12]. There is an approach to customer engagement that assumes that engagement is a tendency to maintain a relationship with a partner, even when the delivered value does not meet expectations and there is small prospect of any change in the future[13]. A customer which is loyal to the brand may be willing to pay more for the product with the brand's logotype because they perceive some unique value, for example in reliability of a brand[14].

Sashi (2012) formulated a customer engagement cycle with the following stages: connection, interaction, satisfaction, retention, commitment, advocacy and engage-

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[9]　M. Mitręga, *Pomiar relacji pomiędzy przedsiębiorstwem a konsumentem*, „Marketing i Rynek" 2005 (2), p. 2-7.
[10]　S.D. Vivek, S.E. Beatty, R.M. Morgan, *Customer engagement: exploring customer relationships beyond purchase*, "Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice" 2012, 20(2), p. 128.
[11]　F. Cabiddu, M. De Carlo, G. Piccoli, *Social media affordances: Enabling customer engagement*, "Annals of Tourism Research" 2014, 48, p. 176.
[12]　W.M. Hur, K.H. Ahn, M. Kim, *Building brand loyalty through managing brand community commitment*, "Management Decision" 2011, 49(7), p. 1197.
[13]　M. Mitręga, *Pomiar relacji pomiędzy…*, p. 2-7.
[14]　A. Chaudhuri, M.B. Holbrook, *The chain of effects from brand trust…*, p. 81.

ment. He presented approach from the point of view of the practitioners[15]. The cycle is presented in figure 1.
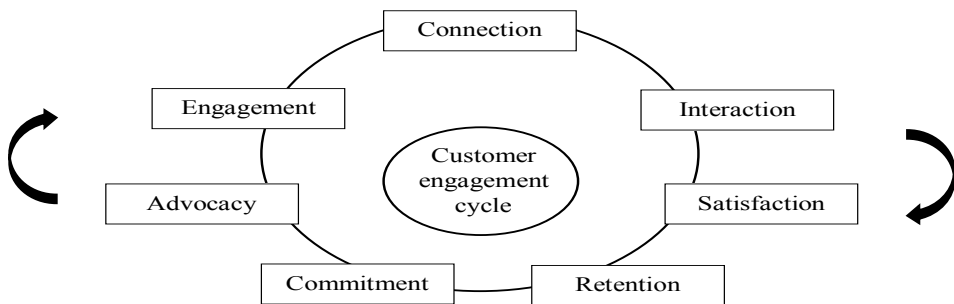

Figure 1. Customer engagement cycle
Rysunek 1. Cykl angażowania klienta
Source: C.M. Sashi, *Customer engagement, buyer-seller relationships and social media*, "Management Decision" 2012, 50(2), p. 261.

Connection is the first step to establish emotional bonds between sellers and buyers. To connect with the buyers, a company can use simultaneously traditional offline methods (e. g. a salesperson) as well as new digital online methods (e. g. social networking).

The second stage in the cycle is interaction. The growth of the internet mitigated the restrictions in communication like space and time. Worldwide interactions among people at real time have become possible through social networking, virtual worlds or instant messaging. Interactions between companies and their customers can improve the understanding of customer needs and help upgrade existing products or develop new products to better meet these needs. The Internet allows marketers to maintain a dialogue with customers and involve them in new product development especially in market testing stages. Customers can collaborate with marketers and participate in the value adding process.

Satisfaction is necessary to maintain connection between a company and its customer and to make progress towards engagement. Satisfaction is an intermediate step to achieve the goals of an organization and can be defined as an overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience of goods or services over time. Satisfaction is achieved at a high level when the company exceeds the customer's expectation and the customer's emotions are highly positive.

Customer retention is an expected result from satisfaction and positive emotions. Retention leads to repurchases and implies a long-term relationship between customers and a brand.

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[15] M. Hofman-Kohlmeyer, *Customer engagement with a brand in the context of social media*, "CBU International Conference Proceedings" 2017, Vol. 5, p. 173.

Commitment in a relationship can be consider in two dimensions: affective commitment and calculative commitment. Calculative commitment is rather rational and often is caused by a lack of another choice or switching costs. Affective commitment is rather emotional and is the effect of the trust and reciprocity in a relationship.

Advocacy occur when satisfied customers spread the world about their positive experiences with a product, brand or company. Customers offer some recommendations to another using word-of-mouth communication. Affective commitment is positively related with advocacy and calculative commitment is not. Companies can play advocacy roles as well as customers by acting in the customers' best interest. Engagement can happen when customers are loyal and delighted, share their experiences with other's in their social networks and become advocates for a product, brand or company. To achieve customer engagement, a company need to create strong emotional bonds with customers. Customer engagement includes customers in the creation of value, enhances their satisfaction and turns customers into fans. Companies want to have many customers who are fans and also delighted, loyal and transactional customers who can be future fans[16].

Van Doorn, Lemon, Mittal, Nass, Pick, Pirner and Verhoef (2010) stated that engagement behaviors transcend a transactions, and define them as customer's behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers. The behavioral manifestations do not contain purchases and can be positive such as posting a positive brand message on a blog or negative like organizing public actions against a   firm. Customer engagement also contains customer co-creation. Co-creation take place when the customer participates in spontaneous, discretionary behaviors that uniquely customize the customer and brand experience. It can be listed behaviors such as making suggestions to improve the product or consumption experience, helping and coaching service providers, blogging, helping other customers to consume better[17]. Particular ways to engage both firms and customers with each other is a brand community with large number of users[18].

2. The issue of game modding

According to Wallace (2014), game modding or modifying is a process of changing, adding or removing game code that changes the way the game is played. This process includes many different actions, such as changing the graphic layout (so-

[16] C.M. Sashi, *Customer engagement, buyer-seller relationships…*, p. 173-174; M. Hofman-Kohlmeyer, *Customer engagement with a brand...*, p. 173-175.

[17] J. Van Doorn, K.N. Lemon, V. Mittal, S. Nass, D. Pick, P. Pirner, P.C. Verhoef, *Customer engagement behavior: theoretical foundations and research directions*, "Journal of Service Research" 2010, 13(3), p. 254.

[18] J. Gummerus, V. Liljander, E. Weman, M. Pihlström, *Customer engagement in a Facebook brand community*, "Management Research Review" 2012, 35(9), p. 857-858.

called "reskinning") or creating new characters and objects. It happens in extreme cases that the moderator removes almost the entire original content of the game and turns it into a completely new one and consequently creates a virtually different game. This action is known as "total conversion modding"[19]. Poor (2014) defines the game modding as an act of changing the game, usually through programming and using tools that are not part of the game. It does not take place on the initiative of the game producer, only its users and fans. It happens that some companies support modders, for example by providing them discussion forums. Poor distinguishes modifying the game and game modding as separate two initiatives. Users modding the content of the game show a large belongingness to a certain society and take pleasure in helping each other. Many modders have a certain contribution to what another author has created. It is also many co-authoring modes. The achievements of modders many times give them employment opportunities in the gaming industry, but for most of them it is not a motive for undertaking their activities[20].

An example of game modding is Half-Life 2, published in 2004. The game enjoyed longer period of strong sales because of an avid modding community that developed new content for players[21]. Half-Life 2 is continuation of blockbuster from 1998, produced by Valve Software. The action of this part takes place in "City 17" located somewhere in Eastern Europe. The city was invaded by extraterrestrial monsters and aliens. The player impersonate of Gordon Freeman working for a secret government agency and his task is to oppose to aggressors. The action of the game guide the player through 12 extended stages in various locations, including in the suburbs of "City 17", in the prison and in the harbor. It was estimated that the single player version of game guarantees 40 hours of play, approximately 3-4 hours for each level[22]. Currently, numerous modifications of the game can be found on the network. For example, on the www.moddb.com portal players can choose from a collection of more than 1 100 different game add-ons produced by users[23].

In the history of games, the first episode of game modification can be find yet in 1976, when Don Woods created game Adventure, variation of Colossal Cafe developed between 1975-1977 by Will Crowther. The player controls the character using simple text commands. The goal of the game is to search the cave where the treasure was hidden[24]. The next example is the simple game Pac-man. Students Doug Macrae, Kevin Curran and Jihn Tylko changed the gender of main character, the

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[19] R. Wallace, *Modding: Amateur authorship and how the video game industry is actually getting it right*, "BYU L. Rev" 2014, p. 220-221.

[20] N. Poor, *Computer game modders' motivations and sense of community: A mixed-methods approach*, "New Media & Society" 2014, 16(8), p. 1249-1250.

[21] R. Hong, *Game modding, prosumerism…*, s. 987.

[22] www.gry-online.pl/gry/half-life-2/zc81c, retrieved 4.04.2019.

[23] www.moddb.com/games/half-life-2/mods, retrieved 4.04.2019.

[24] M. Filiciak, *Modyfikacje gier komputerowych przez użytkowników*, „Kultura Popularna" 2003, p. 68; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colossal_Cave_Adventure, retrieved 8.04.2019.

yellow dot. They changed their appearance by adding bow and lips. In the middle of 80's game modding gain popularity amongst programmers who created applications dedicated for Apple computer. Then the game Castle Smurfenstein appeared, modification of Castle Wolfenstein, where Nazis were replaced with Smurfs.

In the following years, the process of creating games has changed and the games themselves has changed. It can be observed the emergence of trend of modifying the game content amongst players. The breakthrough took place in 1993, when ID Software released the game Doom, with an open structure. The core of the game was isolated from the map, graphics and sound, which facilitated players making their own modifications. The company also provided toolkit for players to create new levels of the game[25].

Game modifications can be divided on two types. First type encompass interference into audiovisual presentation, change of scenery, modification and/or addition of graphic elements and sound. The changes are "cosmetic", e.g. creating characters or houses used in The Sims, changing the appearance of the players in sports games, changing the designation of cars in races games. Second type contain changes at the level of game mechanics that are the most complicated from the technological point of view. It require changes in graphic and sound elements and primarily interference in the game code. This type of modifications are almost unfeasible for the average player[26].

In literature frequently appear the question why players engage in time consuming modding activities. For example Sotamaa (2010) analyzed the case of modder community of shooter-game Operation Flashpoint developed by Bohemia Interactive, small Czech studio. Sotamaa invited participants from official game's forum, where he placed hyperlink to the website with basic information about researcher and questions for users who create game's content. The author also contacted with a local mod team. Finally, he conducted 29 online interviews with moders. The participants were male from different countries, at the age between 15 and 40. Sotamaa mentioned three players' reasons for engaging in modding the game from previous research. First, hobbyists treat modding as an artistic endeavor. Second, modding activities allows people to identify with the games and enhance their enjoyment with the game. Third, game modding allow players' acquiring a job in the game industry. The results show that the most common way to begin modding was fiddling with the in-game editor. The combinations created in the in-game editor are unique, but this creation consist of pre-existing elements. This important limitation frequently inspires gamers to experiment with add-ons.

Based on conducted interviews, Sotamaa introduced following different modders' motivations identified in the interviews: playing, hacking, researching, artistic expression, co-operation. The first motives, playing, is quite obvious and is related to individual enjoyment from creating new playgrounds and play-objects.

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[25] M. Filiciak, *Modyfikacje gier komputerowych…*, p. 68, 69.
[26] Ibidem, p. 71-72.

Self-made game environments is extended and also personalized. Second motives appear when modding is seen as a contemporary game cultural manifestation of the "hacker legacy". Researchers enthusiastically examine the details of the code, they wants to clarify the background and the details of the subject matter. Moreover, some modder uses the game as a medium of expression. There are also people that visit the forums and participate the mod projects to find other similar minded people. The author emphasized that motivations and roles can change with the time spent on playing and modifying the game items[27].

3. Research method and characterization of the sample

The research outcome that will be consider in present paper is a part of broader research on brand placement in virtual worlds. The author carried out a 20 in-depth interviews amongst polish players, according to a previously prepared scenario. Interviews took place from 2018 August 21 to 2018 December 5. The participants of the study were adult users of computer games based on simulation of real life and strolling virtual world, namely The Sims, Second Life and Euro Track Simulator 2. Second Life is a diversified space divided into regions[28], containing geographic forms from the real world such as islands, buildings or institutions[29]. The players which takes the form of an avatars with appearance that can be freely modified[30] can communicate with others via chat, chat voice and video conferences[31]. Euro Truck Simulator 2 allow players to impersonate a truck driver and the game environment reflects the real world in way that the player has the impression that he really moves with the truck on the real roads of Europe[32]. The Sims is real life simulation and users can create and control virtual people, place them in the houses they have designed and lead a life in the Sim community, residents of the virtual world[33].

Respondents need to had contact with game at least six months before the research. They were invited to study from social groups created on social networking site Facebook by game's fans. Before the study, the composition of the respondents' group was not known yet. Participants were invited systematically depending on which player was needed.

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[27] O. Sotamaa, *When the game is not enough: Motivations and practices among computer game modding culture*, "Games and Culture" 2010, *5*(3), s. 3-9.

[28] J. Laskowska-Witek, M. Mitręga, *Brand Promotion…*, p. 36-37.

[29] L. Dethridge, B. Quinn, *Realtime emergency communication in virtual worlds*, "International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment" 2016, 7(1), p. 32.

[30] S. Papagiannidis, M. Bourlakis, F. Li, *Making real money in virtual worlds: MMORPGs and emerging business opportunities, challenges and ethical implications in metaverses*, "Technological Forecasting and Social Change" 2008, 75(5), p. 612.

[31] J. Laskowska-Witek, M. Mitręga, *Brand Promotion…*, p. 38-39.

[32] www.eurotrucksimulator2.com, retrieved 6.01.2019.

[33] www.thesims.com, 4.04.2017.

The majority of participants were men (12 players), had higher education (12 players) and belonged to the age range between 20 and 30 (17 players). All respondents were Poles and one person was a polish currently living in London. Large variations can be seen in the respondents' place of residence and occupations. Among the 20 participants, were residents of small and large cities, blue-collar workers (e. g. production worker, mechanic), white-collar workers (e. g. IT specialists) as well as students. Amongst respondents, 6 persons play less than 5 years, 7 persons at least five years but less than 10, and 7 persons play more than 10 years. Respondents they were asked why they decided to join virtual worlds. They most frequently mentioned consecutively: curiosity (caused by TV series, TV programme, newspaper or advertisement), interact with others, interest in topic of a game, enjoyment from playing, opportunity to see or do things unattainable in real life, exploring virtual world, spending free time.

Participants were asked where they met real life brands inside the game environment, namely where the bands were placed and how can be use inside the game. They talked about the brands featured by game developers and brands that were placed by players (game modds).

4. Results

The research outcome that will be consider in present paper is a part of broader research on brand placement in virtual worlds so investigating the modding issue was not a primary goal of a research. Phenomenon of modifying the game by players was additional topic brought up by respondents.

Respondents listed and described game modifications both types, interference only into audiovisual presentation and interference in the game code.

First type encompass change of scenery, modification and/or addition of graphic elements and sound. For example, players of The Sims can establish own virtual shop inside the game (*"You could also create your own H&M store in this game"*). Tools used to build the store were placed in game by game developers: "*it were like all, with all the accessories came to create this store, or hangers with clothes, just the H&M logotype, some such white colors characteristic for the brand, yes, these are H&M colors. It was also... I don't know, covering walls in this colors, etc. So that this store really looked like H&M*". Similar example represent IKEA also brand that appear inside The Sims: "*with this add-on, you could open your own IKEA store and sell IKEA furniture there*", "*you could buy for your house, sit down on it, on these furniture*".

Second type contain changes at the level of game mechanics and require changes in the game code. As an example it can be listed the McDonalds and KFC restaurants appearing inside the Euro Truck Simulator 2: „*Generally in the game as such there are only restaurants or buildings of type with fictitious names, however, modifications released by game fans add real names*", "*As modification, for example, I saw*

McDonalds restaurants, I saw KFC". Another example that players mentioned during the interview was creating petrol station well-known brands: "*Orlen, Shell, BP, what else is there ... Lotos too, yes, Lotos is either*". The way of placing this brands depicted real world petrol stations: "*It is also as petrol stations, usually on highways, that you can meet these stations*".

Users of Euro Truck Simulator 2 frequently place various kinds of ads on trucks in a similar way to the real world: "*there is on truck, e. g. a lot of real life brands exactly, is there Lidl, Biedronka, is also e. g. CCC*". There are also trucks converted to trucks belonging to particular companies, for instance DHL: "*we can have for example, instead of English companies, there are Polish companies, e.g. DHL*". This add-on allow players can drive a truck of DHL company.

Individual creators often belong to certain communities that support each other in different ways *("there is a huge community of this, where people, where people do such things, share, others download and test", "such a workshop where you can throw your own things, there are also unofficial forums where there is plenty of it")*. Users who download add-ons created by other players have the opportunity to support their activities financially *("you can send them some cash for downloading and you can download it for free")*. Most often respondent listed an example of Steam platform: "*This is a steam platform, on which there are different types of games, (...) add-ons for games of all kinds, such accessories, such gaming items can be bought and bought for real money, and for real money this things can be sold*".

Many statements suggest that users are uncertain about the legality of such add-ons: "*they are partially doing it illegally, but it is illegal, the guys are doing a good job*". In terms of using logotype of real life brands, creators often ask real companies about consent: „*Usually, people do it so that they are able to write to real companies that are, for example, in Poland, yes, and they, these companies allow something like that and there are people who can modify various types of truck or truck in the way that this tractor looks like the same in real life*".

Inside the games, it can be find a wide range of brands that replicate real life brands. For example in Second Life: "*there are many products of this type here, everything that looks very similar, but Armani is not Armani. There are a lot of such products, clothes or other accessories that really resemble those real accessories*", "*Just like in the real world, there are some counterfeit Adidas*". Users of Second Life often described product with logotype similar to real life brands like cars: "*there are a lot of looking cars, for example, Audi or Mercedes, but it is not the same Audi, only Saudi, for example*", "*it resemble very much real ones, but it have removed brand stamps*". Avatar in Second Life can also encounter restaurants that depicted those from real world: "*Generally, in the game as such, there are only restaurants or buildings of this type with fictitious names*", "*so instead of McDonalds it would be McRonalds*". McDonalds restaurant can be also found in Euro Truck Simulator 2: "*Yes, they are retail chains. They resemble McDonald's*

*shape, for example, they have such characteristic big letters above the ground as for ex-
ample M from McDonald's but this is not real McDonald's just something similar, a ficti-
tious name*". Euro Truck Simulator 2 users characterized cars with imitative brands
appearing in the game: "*And when it comes to ordinary cars there, it can be seen that it
is Skoda, Volkswagen, because there models are really well-made, but unfortunately they
did not get a license so these stamps are covered*", "*by the contour, so to speak, by the grill,
by the lamps, yes, it's to know exactly. Skoda, Audi, Volkswagen too, what else was there,
all in all, this three most often appear*". Another example form Euro Truck Simulator
2 are buildings IKEA near the highway: "*whereas it is not, it is not some real brand, for
example, instead of IKEA, IKA logotype is used, a very similar, identical to IKEA, only
IKA is*", "*you often enter some cities, you can often see something like that*".

When it comes to phenomenon of game modding, scholars frequently ask a ques-
tion why players engage in this kind of activities. In present research the question was
not directly asked. Based on some players statement during the interview it can be
assumed that players create branded elements for few reasons. They want to diversify
the game, create some items on entertainment purposes, want to raise the realism of
the game, need to belong to some community and also create add-ons to earn money.

At first, players want to diversify the game. One of the Second Life users sees
the introduction of real brands into the game as a chance for game development.
Ha was ask if brand in games are something negative and answered: "*rather a very
positive one. Let's just say that the whole Second Life would go from there*". Many Euro
Truck Simulator 2 players also perceive branded add-ons as elements that make the
game more attractive: „*It really gives it such a nice atmosphere, and so to speak, you
want to make those miles, in my case I really like it, I always like it*", „*the same basic
version of game, it does not cost a lot, it does not give such fun as the add-ons that are
available to this game. Because there are extensions of the map, there are, for example,
some painting and such things, and it is really fun, but when it comes to the basic ver-
sion of the game, I would be bored, so to speak, after a month*".

Second, players create some items on entertainment purposes, for example in
Second Life: "*I'm closing on my island and just building there, creating*", "*I generally
like to fiddling in a Photoshop, and it's nice coincidence, that graphics and so on, it
placed in with what I like*".

Third, users want to raise the realism of the game. There are a lot of statements
from interviews, for example with Euro Truck Simulator 2 players: "*Another thing
are the modifications of the game, which strongly expand the game. They allow game
be more complete and more real*", "*And the most attractive thing for people is more
and more realism of an entertainment and more and more things that are used by real
drivers, such as the axle lift in the truck, the physics of the whole vehicle. Recently, the
functionality of buying own trailers has been added*". In can be also observed in terms
of The Sims ("*in the second part of the game they were a nice reference to this real life,*

especially since we could go to IKEA and buy a sofa, the same as in Sims and it was so funny") and Second Life (*"people are copying, what they are in the real world, they are just copying, yes. Because they want to give some reality, reality in this world, that it would be the most real", "it's nice to have something branded, just in Second Life the same, it was great to have something branded").*

Moreover, players need to belong to some community. Most often users of Euro Truck Simulator 2 talk about it: „*Yes, there is a huge community of this, where people, where people do such things, share, the others download it, test", "there is special, such a workshop where you can throw your stuff, there are unofficial forums, where there is plenty of this stuff", „There is a steam platform with various types of games (...), game add-ons of various kinds, such as accessories, such gaming items, can be bought", "you can even download Jacek Daniels, because there is really a lot of it (...) it is usually done by some single users who are fans and they are able to do something like that".*

Users also create add-ons to earn money. For instance in Second Life players frequently establish a virtual shops in order to sell own virtual product that they made themselves. Vast majority of this virtual items are accessory for changing appearance of avatars, e. g. virtual clothes (*"a lot of people made big money on designing clothes, for example, which could be dressed in a virtual store").*

Investigating the modding issue was not a primary goal of a research therefore is still a need for further research. The results do not describe sufficiently why players creating a modds of particular brand. Future research should explore how companies can enhance modders to engage in creating elements stamped with their logotypes. It is also lack of knowledge how the process of creating branded add-ons goes, especially if players ask companies about consent of using their logotypes and if they consider legitimacy of changing game code of particular game. What are the consequences and possible benefits of using a branded add-ones for companies? Another important issue is how branded add-ons impact on players brand attitudes, the authors of mods as well as those who only use or met the mods inside the game. We also do not know how brad attitude is moderate by factors such as brand visibility or brand and game congruence. Brand visibility (prominence and proximity) and congruence between product category and game plot were frequently investigated in terms of product placement in computer games[34]. Perhaps this factors ant the others can influence on reception of brand used in game add-ons.

Conclusion

The primary aim of present paper was to give an outlook on creating branded computer game elements as a customer engagement behavior. The author carried out

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[34] M. Hofman-Kohlmeyer, M. Mitręga, *Widoczność produktu oraz zgodność z wątkiem gry a skuteczność lokowania marek w grach komputerowych*, „Przedsiębiorczość i Zarządzanie" 2018, XIX (5), p. 139-140.

20 in-depth interview with users of three computer games: The Sims, Second Life and Euro Track Simulator 2. Participants were asked where they met real life brands inside the game environment, namely where the bands were placed and how can be use inside the game. They talked about the brands featured by game developers and brands that were placed by players. Respondents listed and described game modifications with interference only into audiovisual presentation (e. g. establishing virtual H&M shop in The Sims) and interference in the game code (e. g. BP petrol station and DHL trucks in Euro Truck Simulator 2). Inside the games, it can be find a wide range of brands that replicate real life brands. For example Saudi and McRonalds instead of Audi or McDonalds in Second Life and IKA instead of IKEA in Euro Track Simulator 2. Probably real brand are replaced by fictitious one when it can be used real name, for example for legal reason. The need of possession real life brand is so much that players create similar product with the same traits like the real one. However this product have changes the name, everybody know what brand it replaced.

The authors tried to answer the question why people engage in creating branded game elements. Based on some players statement during the interview it can be assumed that players create branded elements for few reasons. They want to diversify the game, create some items on entertainment purposes, want to raise the realism of the game, need to belong to some community and also create add-ons to earn money.

There is a still limited knowledge about creating branded game modds and modders' communities. Presented analysis is an introduction to future research.

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Author's resume:
Magdalena Hofman-Kohlmeyer, MA,PH.D. Student, Business and Consumer Relationship Management Department, University of Economics in Katowice.

Nota o Autorze:
Magdalena Hofman-Kohlmeyer – *mgr, Katedra Zarządzania Relacjami Organizacji, Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Katowicach.*

Contact/Kontakt
Magdalena Hofman-Kohlmeyer
e-mail: magda-hofman@o2.pl