BACHELOR OF ARTS IN MULTIMEDIA STUDIES

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BACHELOR OF ARTS IN MULTIMEDIA STUDIES

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DEVELOPING THE GRAPHICAL ELEMENTS OF AN IDEAL VIDEO GAME
CHARACTER

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Day Month Year

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This paper prepared by **PAULINE IAN B. DE VERA** with the title **"DEVELOPING AN IDEAL VIDEO GAME CHARACTER THAT APPEALS TO THE CURRENT VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY"** is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Information and Communication Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Multimedia Studies.

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Biographical Sketch

On July 13, 2000, the researcher Pauline Ian B. de Vera was born to a small family consisting of her mother, father, and older brother. After 9 years of being the youngest and only daughter, a younger brother was born followed by a younger sister. Since then her life as a pampered youngest turned into the responsible eldest sister.

Since the beginning, the researcher has always been creative, from drawing fun characters for her friends to creating play-doh models of her favorite characters. Though initially, she wanted to be a stem student because of her upbringing in a competitive school, she soon realized that it would make her happiest if she followed her natural creative drive.

In the year 2018, after graduating under the Music, Arts, and Design Strand at the University of Sto. Tomas, Pauline Ian B. de Vera set her sights on Multimedia or Mass Communication at the University of the Philippines which led her to be a full-time online student at the University of the Philippines Open University under the BA in Multimedia Studies course.

Acknowledgment

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Figures

Abstract

      The purpose of this paper is to create a character that best fits the ideals and goals of the current video game industry. Video games have become a form of entertainment, for the young and elderly on mobile games, and adults and adolescents on their personal computers and consoles. However, not all video games are played and not all characters are well received, this is where the paper focuses on. It is a study on what is valuable in terms of characters in the current video game industry and its market.

      The study discusses the current state of the video game industry and the current studies that are available in this field. The researcher studies these factors to develop phases that have to be followed to create the ideal character for the current video game industry. These phases are first the Reference Research which includes researching the company and the video game that would best represent the current video game industry. Market Research focuses on gathering market preferences. Drafting and Creation Process that records the process of the researcher developing the details that would represent the video game industry and its market's preference in a character. Lastly, the Pre-finalization of Character and Character Illustration records the final touches of the researcher to the final product.

      The study ends with a comparison of the final character design to the recently released characters from the companies and video games that were determined in the Reference Research. This is done to determine whether the process that the researcher has taken resulted in a similar thought process and result that the current video game industry took with their official characters. This paper and its conclusion

defined a process that many independent illustrators could take in making a

character that appeals to the current video game industry.

I. INTRODUCTION

Rationale and Background of the Study

Video games are electronic games played on various gadgets such as mobile phones and tablets, personal computers, and gaming consoles. The video games that many currently know with elaborate plot lines, visual design, characters, and mechanics differ vastly from their origins.

The first video game recorded according to StashLearn was "Nim", a computer made to play an algorithm-based game by Edward U. Condon in 1940. The next notable milestone in video game records was the Atari 2600 that introduced consoles with video games, it was also here that characters emerged with the games like Donkey Kong and Pac-man. (StashLearn, 2018) After 1985, the creation of the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), allowed video game creators a console to introduce interesting plotlines for characters within the digital screens that were available during the time. (StashLearn, 2018) The most notable games from this time are Final Fantasy and Zelda.

During the NES era, video games were made with consideration of the capabilities of the console. The NES's specifications, according to Console Database, have a random access memory (RAM) and video RAM of 16Kbit, a picture resolution of 256 x 240 pixels, and a maximum sprite size of 8 x 8 pixels or 8 x 16 pixels. (Console Database, 2021) Because of these limited specifications, video game creators had to lower the visual design of their games in priority of the plot that they wanted to deliver. For example: according to GAMERANT, the original Final Fantasy released on the NES

had 17.5 hours of game time for the main story, while the latest Final Fantasy has 28 hours of game time for the main story. (Solar, 2021) The original Final Fantasy game's game time is close to the latest Final Fantasy game, the creators prioritized delivering the plot to the players rather than heavily focusing on visual design. To clarify, here is the comparison of the cover art of the first game versus the gameplay, a clear distinction of the creators' visual design capabilities with the limits they had to compromise with the NES:

Figure 1 Final Fantasy Cover and Gameplay (Final Fantasy Wiki, 2021)

The following games and consoles after the NES were mainly stepping stones to create a stronger console that can hold more pixels and data. On the video game side of development were video game creators producing their vision. By 1994, the PlayStation series finally began, followed by one of its now competitors, the Xbox series, in 2001. (StashLearn, 2018) By this time video games are being properly produced with big budgets, some reaching up to $500 million. (StashLearn, 2018) Video games are no longer limited by console specifications with the first Xbox released in 2001 having a memory of 64MB of RAM and a resolution of 1920 x 1080 pixels and the PlayStation 2 released in 1999 with a system memory of 32 MB, both a far cry from the 16Kbit of RAM from the NES. (Console Database, 2021) During the era of these two

consoles, the following games were the top 5 video games for both the PlayStation and the Xbox in 2001: Halo: Combat Evolved, Grand Theft Auto III, Max Payne, Final Fantasy X, and Silent Hill 2. (IMDb, 2021) These 5 games, compared to the first Final Fantasy, are no longer restrained in a 2d plane with pixel sprites for characters but are now 3d models interacting in a 3d plane.

Statement of the Problem

With the improvement of video game consoles and video game production, video games have become more elaborate in terms of plot, visual design, and production value compared to the beginning. As of writing this paper in 2021, the current consoles mainly used for video games are PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X, Personal Computers (PC), and mobile phones and tablets. These following consoles generally have more than 8GB of RAM and a standard resolution of 1080p, some could also change resolutions if the user desires. Thus, video game creators have few visual restrictions to create the vision they have for their games. However, not all video games have reached success even without the visual restriction the NES had and the budget restriction.

As of writing this paper, the top 5 video games by its popularity in 2021 according to IMDb are Halo Infinite, The Matrix Awakens: An Unreal Engine 5 Experience, Marvel's Guardians of the Galaxy, Five Nights at Freddy's: Security Breach, and It Takes Two; and the bottom 5 video games by its popularity in 2021 (disregarding pre-production and expansion games, and short videos in the form of a video game) being: Dekasugikun, Tokyo Run, Youtubers Life 2, Manta, and The Ratchelor: A Rat Dating

Sim. (IMDb, 2021) The top 5 video games from this list most have dedicated fans that have supported the series; however, fans' support of the series was not the only factor for the success of the game. Compared to the bottom 5 list, the top 5 list has developed plots and characters that have intrigued players to speak about the game. It Takes Two, for example, is a title that has no plot or character connection with a popular video game series or movie series and yet is in the top 5. (HAZELIGHT, 2021) The bottom 5 on the other hand, have the following overviews from videos of the gameplay and descriptions from Steam, a distribution platform: Dekasugikun, a video game where players balance as a giant; Tokyo Run, temple run but in Tokyo; Youtubers Life 2, a Youtuber life simulator; Manta, a flight-simulator to win a war while mining resources on a spacecraft; and The Ratchelor: A Rat Dating Sim, where the players date rat characters.

The importance of an intriguing plot and characters along with a visually stunning and coherent visual design brings a video game to its best potential. The top 5 video games from 2021 in the list earlier all have elaborate plots and characters with a visually stunning and coherent visual design that emphasizes and stays on track with what the video game is supposed to be and what the fans have wanted it to be like.

According to Felipe Lara from New York Film Academy Game Design, there are 4 steps needed to do to have a successful game: 1. Stand Out, 2. Connect, 3. Engage, and 4. Grow. (Lara, 2017) For this study, the most valuable step of these 4 is step 3. Engage, this stage emphasizes keeping the players engaged to play the game. Steps 1 and 2 are marketing stages announcing that you are creating a unique or new game for the market while step 3 involves ensuring that the game is intriguing enough that players will start and continuously engage with the game. According to Felipe Lara, to

ensure player engagement, there are four ingredients: Art, Fun, Story, and Community; Felipe Lara states that Art is what first captures the players' eye and intrigues them to play the game, and Fun ensures that the players continue to play because they are having fun, Story adds meaning to the fun activities, therefore, Fun does not become senseless, and lastly, Community is for developers to ensure that the players who've played their game have ways to connect with them for future projects. (Lara, 2017)

Objectives of the Study

For this research, the end goal is to develop a character that appeals to the current video game industry by creating a character that can help in forming successful player engagement. To appeal to the current video game industry, the characters cannot be like the characters from the bottom 5 video games of 2021. The characters from the bottom 5 video games of 2021 have no plot that encourages connections with the player nor do they have visually appealing features that match with the current trend in character design. The character is an integral part of a video game, a study by Narnia Worth tackles the connection of players with their avatars in-game, the results of Worth's study show that players' personality and in-game behavior are often consistent with the character that they customize. In this study, it was concluded that players represent their characters in-game. (Worth, 2015) This study was for video games within the genre of a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG), video game character designers for this genre mainly design customizable characters for players to fit the plot of the race or the plot of the story in general.

Significance of the Study

It is no doubt that players relate to the characters they make, having a character they enjoy using as a medium to interact with the fictional world relates to how much they play a certain video game, this is one way to form an engagement with the player and the video game that one has created. Another study by Marika Nieminen discusses that there have been characters in media that have resonated with players because of the realistic representation of attributes like Joel from "The Last of Us" a video game released in 2013 and was top 3 according to IMDb's rating in 2013. In this study, Nieminen writes about various visual aspects and how they can be relayed to psychologically impact an audience: such as color, first impression and stereotypes, nonverbal communication (body language and appearance), and dialogue and subtext, all of these having their varying impacts on an audience's psychological connection with a character. (Nieminen, 2017)

Video games have come a long way from pixelated games to a new world similar to the beauty of the world everyone currently lives in. Various aspects are needed to be considered to create a successful video game. This paper aims to create one aspect, a character, that can help in creating successful engagement with players and video games. It aims to record the process of creating an ideal video game character, its plot, origin setting, and demographic, that can become a valuable asset to a video game by becoming a character that users can emphasize and engage with. This paper will allow the researcher to experience first-hand how it is to independently develop a character that achieves being a character that users can emphasize and engage with. This paper can also have the capability to be a guide for aspiring character illustrators, creators,

and video game developers that are in a similar situation as the researcher as an independent character illustrator from the Philippines. The paper can serve as a guide on creating an engaging plot, character, and background that will successfully support a video game. Lastly, the paper can indirectly serve as market research on the current trends of character creation for video games, thus it can serve as market research that current video game creators upon finishing the paper to further improve their game.

Limitations of the Study

The study focuses on creating an ideal character for the current video game industry. Therefore, the study only focused on referring to the current video game industry while writing the paper. Throughout the process of this study, the researcher refers to specific moments in the industry at specific phases of the writing process and creation process of this paper. Along with this limitation, the paper also uses references to current top video game companies, developers, artists, and the video game and its characters themselves. Further down the paper shows the researcher's thought process on how video game companies, developers, etc. are chosen to be part of the research as reference.

It must also be noted that the research includes market research to develop a character design that is influenced by the referenced video game community. This is done to provide a reason as to how the final character design would be valuable to the current video game industry. However, the study is limited to respondents in terms of location. Ideally, the top video game companies would have resources to determine what their market desires, for this study the researcher can only reach respondents

within Southeast Asia. Lastly, the research solely focuses on creating a video game

character design. In-depth lore and skills of the character are not as researched deeply

for the researcher aims to portray these through the final character design and

illustration.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Video Games on History and Medical Health

Video games have only recently been studied academically within academic studies for Computer Programming, Information Technology, and Multimedia courses and professional fields. Current existing academic studies on video games express exploration of genres, cause and effect relation of video games and other aspects, and ways to inform and teach others.

A study by Abbie Hartman, Rowan Tulloch, and Helen Young at the Macquarie University in Australia tackled determining video games as a medium for public history. Their study listed various qualities of the game "Valiant Hearts: The Great War" which provided proof that video games can be used as a medium for public history. (Hartman, Tulloch, & Young, 2021) This study is one of the recently published academic research on video games and how they can be related to fields that influence society more than just for entertainment. Another case that allows video games to be used for other purposes was the situation with Blizzard's "World of Warcraft" Corrupted Blood Plague. An educational video by The Game Theorists tackled a discussion of the in-game plague and relate it to the situation of the current pandemic caused by Covid-19. In summary, the video discussed how World of Warcraft had an in-game pandemic called the Corrupted Blood Plague and many educational groups wanted to study the video game and the simulation data to plan for similar plague cases in the future. (The Game Theorists, 2020)

Video Game Industry Market and Video Game Immersion and Representation

The potential of video games for various purposes other than entertainment is being explored vastly by many studies. Exciting as it is, video games are still meant to be for entertainment. Video games are being produced because consumers invest in these industries for their entertainment. Market research is required for any industry; according to Video Game Industry, market research for the gaming industry is segmented the same way traditional market research for other industries works, along with an addition of gaming industry-specific segments such as game genre, types of player, art style, game themes, etc. (Video Game Industry, 2021) The Video Game Industry also states that only 2.2% of players ever contribute to a video game's revenue and that "Types of players are also important for other business models—keeping fans engaged increases the likelihood of them purchasing sequels or other games developed by the same developer." (Video Game Industry, 2021)

Research on video game markets often revolves around those core segments to learn about the market and to learn how to keep engagement with the market. Some market studies for video games tackle information on representation, from Video Game Industry's article representation, refers to the value of players' representation in-game: for these types of market studies, the end goal of these studies is to bring attention to a lack or surplus of specific groups for representation. One such study is by Rachael Hutchinson from the University of Delaware: "Gender Stereotypes in Japanese Fighting Games: effects on identification and immersion". The study resulted in females being concerned about the dominance of males in the industry, and males concerned with the idea of the "perfect" body affecting their self-confidence, with 14% of students listing

unrealistic and sexualized bodies as an element detracting from identification. (Hutchinson, 2015)

Although identification with characters in Japanese fighting games may be a small percentage, Video Game Industry's Video Game segments for market research will still value these types of players that express these reactions to a developer's game.

Video Game Creation: Creating Video Games and its important elements

Video games are also being studied in terms of the process of creation. The De La Salle University (DLSU) in the Philippines offers an undergraduate degree for students under the Bachelor of Science in Interactive Entertainment Major in Game Development (De La Salle University, 2017). The course aims to prepare their students for the gaming industry in creating games and everything else that is needed to know to do so. Many more colleges offer full college courses that academically study the process and the technical requirements for game design. The University of Southern California (USC) offers the course Master of Fine Arts in Interactive Media. The course offers practical courses in experimenting with interactivity, writing, and design by the first year. By the second and third years, the students are already creating game projects. (University of Southern California, 2020)

Colleges like DLSU and USC are one way for learners to improve, study, and research video game creation. Another way is through other published studies of video game creation written by video game creators themselves, one such material is "The Art of Game Design" by Jesse Schell. Jesse Schell is the founder and CEO of Schell Games with games varying from different genres, "Among Us VR" being one of its

popular titles to have worked on. The book discusses basic elements of a video game based on examining best practices from other popular games, these elements being: the mechanics, the story, the aesthetics, and the technology. (Schell, 2015) These basic elements, according to Schell, are best visually explained through the figure below:
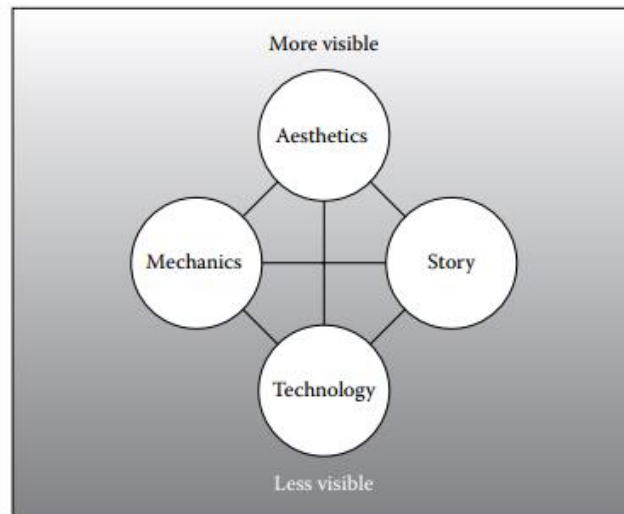
Figure 2 Basic Elements of a Video Game: Elemental Tetrad (Schell, 2015)

The technology element of a video game pertains to the technology that developers think would support the aim of their video game, with the chosen technologies decided the medium for the mechanics, aesthetics, and story is now accessible. The mechanical element of a video game comprises the rules and boundaries that a video game has, this will reinforce the other elements to become immersive to the goal of the video game. The story is the set of sequences that places players in the story that you are telling accompanied by the aesthetic element of video games that reinforces this story. According to Schell, aesthetics is the most direct basic element of the player's experience. (Schell, 2015)

Video Game Creation: Character Importance and Character Design

Those are the basic elements of a video game, underneath these are smaller, but still important, elements. For mechanics, there is the element of balance to ensure that all key items within the game are not too powerful or not too difficult to solve. For story and aesthetics, there are world-building and character-building. In Schell's book he states "If we were to create games that have great stories in them, these stories must contain memorable characters.". (Schell, 2015) The book elaborates on the importance of the avatar, in Sanskrit avatar refers to a god magically taking a physical form. Schell writes this as a wonderful description of a character players play in video games because he states: "…a similarly magical transformation takes place when players use their avatar to enter the world of the game." (Schell, 2015)

That statement has been studied by Marika Nieminen and Narnia Worth. Nieminen studied existing psychological theories and formulated character designs that would enhance consideration and understanding of internal aspects of a character. The study showed how a character's internal aspects had varying impacts on an audience's psychological connection with a character. (Nieminen, 2017) On the other hand, Worth studied the connection of players' personalities and behavior with the personality and behavior of their avatars in-game.

Worth's study resulted in the confirmation that players often behave and have the same personality as they would in the real world when they are in the game world. (Worth, 2015) As if the players themselves were using their avatars to mentally enter the world of the game. Another study that expressed a feeling of mentally entering the world of the game is Hannah Ekström's paper on "How Can a Character's Personality

be Conveyed Visually, through Shape". In this paper, Ekström developed four character designs that "represented" a specific personality trait and wanted to determine if the character design's silhouette implied the character's good or bad personality. (Ekström, 2013)

For this study, characters or avatars are the focus, the importance of characters based on the studies mentioned so far is the immersion of the players that enables engagement that further increases the interaction of the players to the video game thus providing more benefits for the developers and the future of their games.

Besides studying the correlation of players' reactions and behaviors to character design, materials on character creation is another means to study characters for video games. Going back to Schell's book "The Art of Game Design" Chapter 20 elaborates on topics that teach aspiring game designers what to focus on in character creation. The first tip Schell's book lists are to determine what the character's function is supposed to be. These functions are the standard hero, boss, hostage, mentor, etc. these functions do not necessarily mean to stick to stereotypes of a man with a cape as the hero, but these functions serve as a determinating factor of what purpose your character is regardless of the physique. The next tip was to define and use character traits; in the book, these traits are not just there for decors, the very traits were applied to a situation where it was clearly shown how the traits were portrayed through colorful dialogue. (Schell, 2015) There are many more tips in the book that helps game designers to create an engaging character for the players.

Lastly, for this portion of the paper, existing studies on video games, creating video games, and their characters have been discussed but there is also the knowledge

and process of existing game illustrators on how they illustrate and create video game assets, specifically characters. A video by Insider shows the process of thinking and illustrating that Chengwei Pan, a principal illustrator at Riot, has while creating splash art for a champion for one of Riot's games "League of Legends". (Insider, 2020) The company Riot Games' developer notes are also a great source of studies for character creation. Riot Games provides developer notes that narrate the creation process of each of their characters, one character they made was one character for two of their games. This developer note was for the character Neon/Zeri, in this developer note we were shown how two sister video game artists came up with the character, developed the character, and more importantly why they want to develop a character. (Riot Developer, 2022) Developer notes like these are counted as existing studies because they show the process of thinking that professionals go through. Videos, articles, and events where professionals in the field share their process and input on character design contribute greatly to the existing body of knowledge in character design for video games.

Conceptual Framework

Earlier in this chapter, it was expressed that representation and identification with in-game characters are one topic that is often used as a market research topic to increase market interaction. This chapter also discussed that the way players interact with a video game more is through valuable experiences through the game's properly executed basic elements. The figure below shows the conceptual framework that illustrates the concepts discussed in this chapter, it influenced the researcher in determining the features and characteristics of the ideal character for the paper.
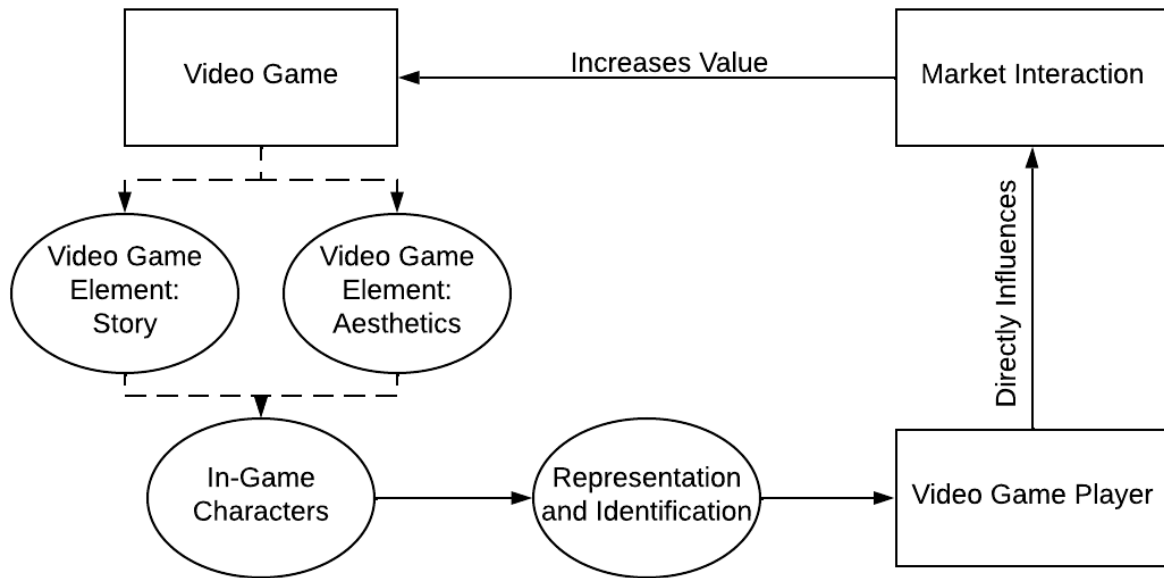
Figure 3 Conceptual Framework

The video game elements, story, and aesthetics are the most direct experience a player can have in terms of representation and identification. These elements are conjoined to be the in-game character due to their direct application to the story and the aesthetics of the game that the player acts as in-game. As discussed earlier in this chapter, characters are one of the important ways to ensure that players continue to engage with the video game. Current studies on video games allow future developers to know what it takes to create a successful video game. With this information creating meaningful characters will be a step to creating a successful asset to appeal to the current video game industry.

III. PROCESS OF CREATION

The purpose of the paper is to develop a character that appeals to the current video game industry by creating a character that can help to form successful player engagement. As discussed in the first chapter of the paper, one other significance of pursuing this study and creating the final product is to provide a guide for independent character illustrators to create the ideal video game character. To do so this chapter will discuss the factors that led to the creation of the final product that provides the two purposes of the paper.

Phase 1: Reference Research

A. Company Preference and Video Game Reference

Before the researcher started to construct the character details, the researcher first needed to determine which specific companies and their video games will the character be potentially presented. According to Companies Market Cap, the current top video game companies by market cap is Microsoft, Tencent, Sony, Sea (Garena), NetEase, Activision Blizzard, Nintendo, EA, Roblox, and Unity. (Companies Market Cap, 2022) The researcher looks to these companies' popular games to have a general idea of what the video game industry currently prefers based on these companies.

Microsoft currently has its application store on any console, this application store has millions of video games from mobile game developers to big company mobile games like Genshin Impact. However, Microsoft does not technically own these video games and has no target market for the games they put on their application store, thus

the researcher has decided to omit Microsoft in the list of company preferences' for video game characters.

To narrow the research references down, the researcher lastly looks at Tencent. Tencent is a massive conglomerate and holding company, according to The Business of Business, which holds some of the largest games being played today such as Call of Duty: Warfare, Fortnite, League of Legends (LoL), and Valorant. (Honstantinovic, 2020) League of Legends (LoL) and Valorant are video game titles rich with lore and heavily focuses on immersing their players with the character they play and the mechanics these characters reside in. According to Chapter two of this paper, characters and avatars are the focus of the paper; Worth's study and Schell's book both value the characters due to the immersion and engagement it provides for the players. Therefore Tencent and the games League of Legends (LoL) and Valorant are listed as the main company preference reference for the researcher.

B. Character Reference

Tencent's League of Legends (LoL) and Valorant are created by the video game developer company, Riot Games. Riot Games have been detailed with their characters for so long. The game League of Legends (LoL) features 159 champions, champions are characters that players can choose to play as in a game. These 159 champions all have individual lore and goals for being a part of League of Legends (LoL), their official website Universe.LeagueofLegends.com has a whole catalog of the game's characters, their lore, concept art, storyboard animations, etc. Along with these characters, the

creators of League of Legends (LoL) creates various skins, outfits, or change in visual design, for the characters that the players enjoy using.

A user from the League of Legends (LoL) Reddit, raikaria2, made a document listing the champions, the release date, skin count, and notes on these champions; the characters with the most skins, 16 skins for each, are the champions named Lux and Ezreal. (Raikaria2, r/leagueoflegends, 2022)
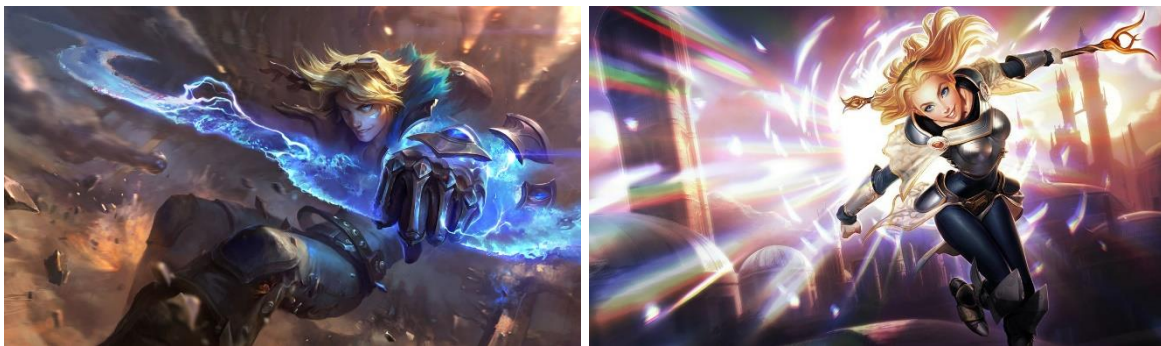
Figure 4 Ezreal and Lux: First Splash Art for League of Legends (LoL)

There have been theories that the reasoning for this is because players play Lux and/or Ezreal the most and thus League of Legends (LoL) creators have been monetizing this by creating more skins for champions that players preferred to play the most. According to an article by Spezzy on LeagueFeed, Ezreal is the 1st, and Lux is the 5th most played champion for League of Legends (LoL). (Spezzy, 2021) Despite this reasoning being theorized by fans, the researcher still looked to these character designs as a reference for popular character lore, and visual design for League of Legends (LoL).

Valorant creators, on the other hand, have 18 agents currently, these agents are the characters that players can play during a game. Compared to League of Legends (LoL), these characters' lore is not explicitly discussed through writing or storyboard

animations; the agents' lore is hinted at through voice lines in-game, banners for players' accounts in-game, and other miscellaneous features within the game and its maps. The researcher decided to look at Valorant artists for how they create the agents for the game because the agents' lore is still well-known and enjoyed by the players of the game. An article posted by a developer on Valorant's official website goes in-depth on how they created the recent champion and agent, Zeri (for LoL) and Neon (for Valorant). (Riot Developer, 2022)

C. Artist Reference

Riot Games has hired many artists for various projects of the company. Finding a single lead artist as an artist reference for the researcher is an impossible task. However, the researcher decided to refer to at least 2 artists that created splash arts for League of Legends (LoL) for the champions Ezreal and Lux, and at least 2 artists that were a part of the illustration team for Valorant. The researcher has listed the following artist referenced for the final project for this paper:

For League of Legends (LoL) splash artists: Alvin Lee (Alvinlee) and Kat C.K.Y. (Suqling)

For Valorant: Ke Su (Sukeart) and Devon Fay (Devon Fay)

The researcher decided on these four as artist references because of the difference in their work to allow the researcher to analyze the best visual approach for various assets.

Phase 2: Market Research

To ensure that the character fits within the game, market research of the market of the League of Legends (LoL) and Valorant needed to be conducted. This was to ensure that the character can provide representation and immersion that is deemed important from earlier studies and readings. The researcher conducted online market research that was distributed to players of both Valorant and League of Legends (LoL).

The market research had 55 (fifty-five) respondents 54 (fifty-four) of which were respondents from South East Asia, and 1 (one) respondent from Europe. 18 (eighteen) respondents play Valorant solely, 6 (six) play League of Legends (LoL) solely, and 31 (thirty-one) play both Valorant and League of Legends (LoL). 19 (nineteen) of the respondents have played the respective video games they are playing for more than 5 years; 9 (nine) of the respondents have played the video games for 3-4 years; 27 (twenty-seven) of the respondents have played the video games for 1-2 years.

The respondents were asked which characters from the respective video game they played were their favorite in terms of design and lore along with what type of personality and character design the next character should be for the video games they respectively played. Valorant respondents were asked to include the next agent's nationality since Valorant agent's character designs are highly linked to their nationality. Their answer to these questions will serve as an additional reference for the researcher to ensure that the character created will be ideal for Riot's market. Below is a list of their responses to A. favorite character design, B. favorite character lore, C. next character personality, D. next character design, and E. (For Valorant respondents) next agent's nationality.

Table 1 Market Research: favorite character design, favorite character lore, next character personality, next character design, and (For Valorant respondents) next agent's nationality

A. Favorite Character Design	B. Favorite Character Lore	C. Next Character Personality (keywords)	D. Next Character Design (keywords)	E. Next Agent's Nationality (by most repetition)
Ahri	Aatrox	Wholesome	Wholesome	India
Aphelios	Ahri	Calm	Tank	Philippines
Astra	Ashe	Crazed	Jade	Greek
Aurelion	Brimstone	Mischievious	Red Colored	Africa
Blitzcrank	Camille	Aggressive	Steampunk	Germany
Breach	Chamber	Rebellious	Unique	Italian
Caitlyn	Cypher	Lazy	Pirate	Mexico
Camille	Kay/o	Self-Centered	Conservative	Russia
Chamber	Killjoy	Feared	Secret Agent	Singapore
Evelynn	Kindred	Evil	Similar to Poppy (LoL)	South Asian
Jett	Fizz	Shy	Villain	Spanish
Jhin	Fiddlesticks	Logical	Lax	America
Jinx	Twisted Fate	Chaotic	Medieval	Brazil
Kaisa	Jett	Laid-back	Introverted	Cambodia
Kay/o	Jhin	Edgy	Soldier	China

Kayn	Jinx	Funny	Futuristic	Europe
Killjoy	Lissandra	Cold Blooded	Bare	Jamaica
Kindred	Morgana	Meek	Monster	Japan
Mordekaiser	Nasus	Skittish	Malnourished	Scandanavia
Nautilus	Neon	Empathetic	Water Agent	Scotland
Neon	Omen	Ambitious	Unique Hitbox (shorter, taller)	South Korea
Omen	Pantheon	Destructive	Similar to D.Va (Overwatch)	Switzerland
Phoenix	Phoenix	Anti-hero	Tribal	Thailand
Poppy	Poppy	Childish	Assassin	United Kingdom
Raze	Pyke	Introvert	Bird-like	
Reyna	Raze	Timid	Ice and Snow	
Ryze	Reyna	Assassin	Ghostly	
Sage	Ryze	Goofy	Drip (High Swag)	
Senna	Sage	Sporty	Old Aged	
Sett	Skye	Arrogant	Chef	
Sona	Sona	Opposite Personality to Jett	Mafia	
Sova	Tahm Kench	Scientific	Cowboy	

Thresh	Thresh	Foody	Feminine	
Viper	Viktor	Serious	Pastel	
Warwick	Viper	Anxious	Sleek	
Yone	Yasuo	Smart	Free	
Yoru	Zed	Free	Muscular	
		Cautious	Monster	
		Emo	Robotic	
		Weak	Fallen God	
		Explosive like Jinx	Non-muscular	
		Psychological	Colorful	
		Villainous	Undead	
		Psychopathic	Similar to Jhin (LoL)	
		Agreeable	Female without skin-tight outfit	
		Tactful	Sleepy	
		Ghostly	Glasses	
		Cool		
		Hyper		
		Fiery		
		Strong		
		Lore Important		

		Sleepy		

These results will not all be used to create the final character for this paper, however, the researcher found the common factor from all the information and formed the character lore and design for the final character. The common factors from all this information will be discussed even further in the next phase of this chapter of the paper.

Phase 3. Drafting and Creation Process

The first thing the researcher did in plotting the final character, was to determine the common factor from Table 1 in Phase 2: Market Research. From the table, the researcher saw that most of the respondents wanted an evil, antagonistic, or at least anti-hero character personality, and yet most of the respondents preferred a character that had good intentions for the world that they reside in. From this, the researcher decided that the personality of the character should be an anti-hero that is cunning and destructive in both power and emotion.

In terms of character lore, the researcher looked into all characters that were mentioned in the column "Favorite Character Lore" in Table 1. The researcher noticed that the respondents preferred characters that have undergone a transformation plot where the character goes from being good to being bad or vice versa due to unforeseen events.

Lastly, for the market research, the researcher decided it would be a good option to make the characters' physical appearance and nationality influenced by Indian culture to meet the most popular nationality chosen by Valorant player respondents.

Valorant has yet to introduce an Indian agent, thus opening the opportunity to bring something new for Riot's Valorant.

A. *Physical Appearance and Skills Inspirations*

Some public figures that can fit this description and be inspirations are Maitreyi Ramakrishnan's Devi Vishnakumar from Netflix's "Never Have I Ever" and the female Indian Rapper, Raja Kumar. The researcher saw fit for the character to be female due to the majority of characters favored for their character design were females.

Figure 5 Devi Vishnakumar from "Never Have I Ever" and Rapper Raja Kumar

Some fictional inspirations are Karma, an existing character from League of Legends (LoL), and the Indian Goddess the Tridevi: the Goddesses Saraswati (Goddess of Learning and Arts), Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth and Fertility), and Parvati (Goddess of Power and Love). (Bahubali, 2015)

Figure 6 Karma, Champion from League of Legends (LoL)

Figure 7 The Tridevi: Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Parvati

B. Character Lore

With the physical appearance and personalities plotted out, the researcher now looks to writing the character's lore. It was written earlier that the respondents preferred characters that have undergone transformation lore. Below is a written summary that the researcher has formed for the character's plot, influenced by existing plots from the characters in Valorant and League of Legends:

For the Valorant lore summary:

"Chariot is the daughter of a middle-class father and mother in Himachal Pradesh, India, and is a devotee to Hinduism, one day as she decided not to go to the temple to worship and instead worship with her family at their home shrine. A flash of light wrapped the entire globe, as they were in the process of prayer and worship; she started to glow, the ground started shaking, the trees started shaking and growing and the animals started running away. By the time the flash of light was finished, everywhere around her was lush and green including her family."

For the League of Legends (LoL) lore summary:

"Amid war, the people of Ionia assumed this has to be enough… Using newfound powers of death, life, and a sense of intensified peace, Akshara marches forward eradicating those inflicting pain with the reason of war. Some people call her unjust for killing their heroes, some people call her their hero for killing the enemy. For her, she's simply pursuing balance and peace."

The researcher saw it best to have two different lore and names for the final character for the two video games. The reasoning behind this was the vast difference in lore that the two video games have. Riot Games has already done the same in recent times, mentioned earlier in this chapter, with their recent characters for the two video games: Neon and Zeri. Both Valorant and League of Legends (LoL) creators collaborated on creating two stories and linking them by design and characteristics. (Riot Developer, 2022) The researcher took inspiration for the final character's lore with the same view the creators of Neon and Zeri had.

C. Character Skills

The character is inspired by the Tridevi, a Hindu Goddess often divided into many variations, the three listed earlier in the paper being: Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Parvati. The Saraswati is the Goddess of Learning and Culture, the Lakshmi is the Goddess of Wealth and Fertility, and the Parvati is the Goddess of Power and Love. (Bahubali, 2015) The Tridevi is also a Goddess that represents life in some variations. From this, the researcher saw a skill set of transformation to any of the three Goddesses.

In the state of Saraswati, Goddess of Learning and Arts, the character deals with a damage-per-second type of skill. In the case of Valorant, this would be a grenade or Molotov type of skill, this skill would visually appear as a thorned vine that plants itself down to grow into a beautiful yet deadly area; in the case of League of Legends (LoL) this would be a repeatable one hit damage, this skill would visually appear as a thorn.

In the state of Lakshmi, Goddess of Wealth and Fertility, the character initiates a self-defense skill. In Valorant and League of Legends (LoL) this would be a shield that prevents damage from enemy characters over a short period, this skill would visually appear as a red aura surrounding the character with flower elements around it.

Lastly, in the state of Parvati, Goddess of Power and Love, the character initiates a destructive and more powerful state. In League of Legends (LoL), this would be the ultimate skill wherein the character changes her form into the four-armed blue Goddess itself; each prior skill increases its damage or its defense. In Valorant, this would also be the ultimate skill, the difference being, that it would not increase the character's damage but it will inflict damage around a nearby area upon enemies every time the character

gets a kill with thorn-like ammunition, once the ultimate is triggered within a small area the character is notified of nearby enemies location to represent God-like omniscience.

D. Character Appearance

With the character's physical appearance inspiration laid out, the researcher proceeded with creating drafts and sketches of what the actual character looks like. The researcher created two final products: the final character design, and the final character splash art. The reason for having these two as the final output for this study is due to the main artworks that characters from Valorant and League of Legends (LoL) often have. The artists that are used as artist references for the study also create these two types of character artwork.

For the facial features, below is an image of the draft of the researcher. The aim of the researcher for drafting the facial features first was to determine what features should be accentuated based on the nationality of the character. The researcher identified that accentuating the nose, the eye shape, and the eyebrows were key points based on the actress Maitreyi Ramakrishnan, and the rapper Raja Kumar.

Figure 8 Researcher Draft on Character's Facial Features

The next focus of the researcher was to determine the character's stance for the final character design. The researcher had to ensure that the draft for the character's

final character design visualizes the personality of the character: aggressive and explosive, yet smart. Three variations were made to see how it would be best to visualize these key personalities for the character, these three variations are what will be used as the draft for the final character design.
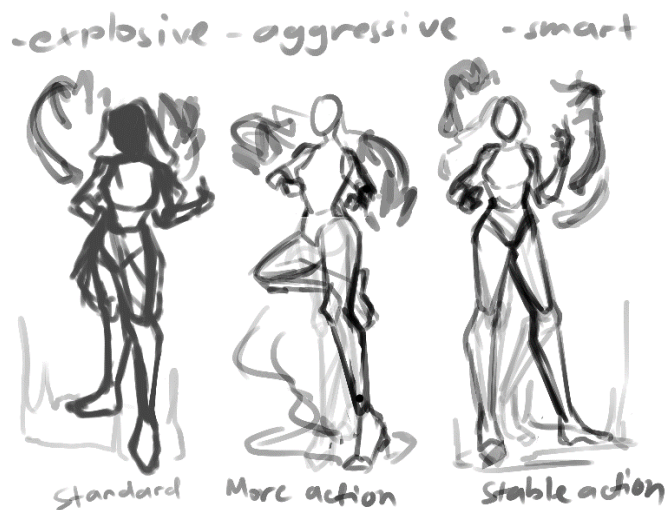

Figure 9 Researcher Draft on Character Stance

After finishing the final character design, the next important to finish is the final character splash art. To do so the researcher drafts six variations to ensure that the artwork represents features gathered from phases one and two: these features being the character's personality, the character's lore, and the character's design. The researcher looks to the artist references from phase one of this chapter, wherein the artists' artworks for the company Riot determine how the researcher should deliver the said features.
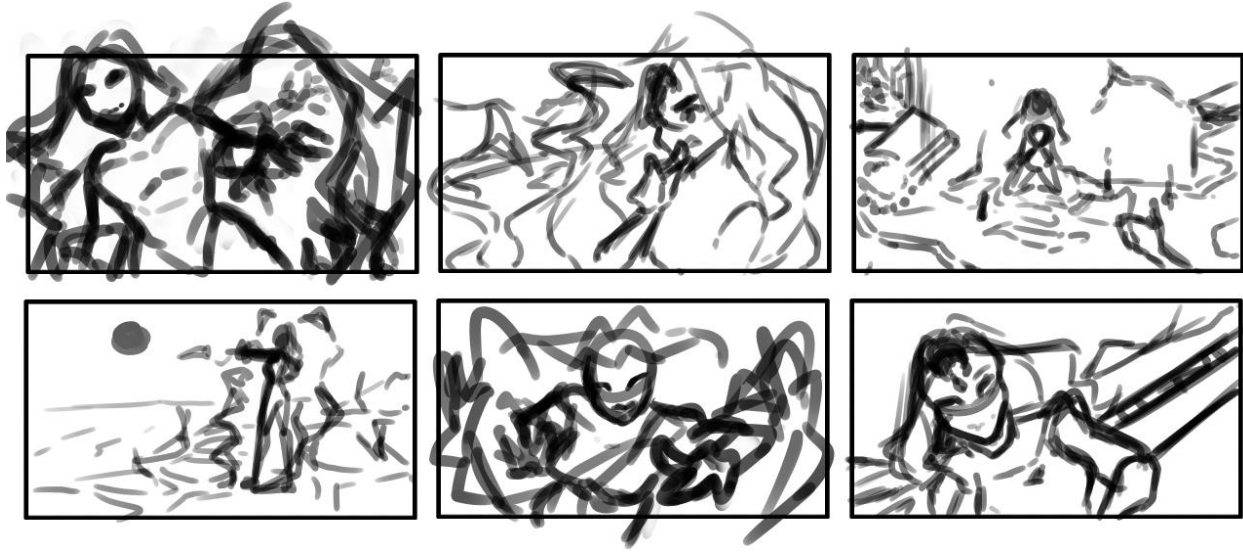
Figure 10 Researcher Draft on Character Splash Art

Phase 4: Pre-Finalization of Character and Character Illustrations

With the details of the character all laid out along with the drafts of the final illustrations for the character. The researcher now looks to utilize all these to develop the final products.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After undergoing the process of creation, the researcher has developed two final products: the first being the final character design, and the second being the final character splash art of the character Chariot (Valorant) or Akshara (League of Legends (LoL)).

Final Products: Final Character Design and Final Character Splash Art

With all the information gathered in this study, the researcher's final product is this character design:

Figure 11 Final Character Design: Chariot/Akshara

The final character design shows the physical appearance of the character which is heavily influenced by the market research results that showed that the preferred nationality is Indian with a feminine appearance. The facial features of Chariot/Akshara are modeled to represent common Indian women's features, inspired by real-life Indian figures: Maitreyi Ramakrishnan, the actress, and Rapper Raja Kumar. The final character design also implemented modern fashion for Indian women. It shows the use of the saree or sari, an outer garment meant to wrap around the body with the end hanging, and maang tikkas, headdresses worn by Indian brides but can be worn as an accessory by women of all ages.

The character design is made to make Chariot/Akshara look smart, aggressive, and explosive to ensure that the personality and skills of the character can be seen at first glance. The researcher decided to illustrate Chariot/Akshara in a reserved, yet open stance to showcase aggressiveness and intelligence. Explosive, on the other hand, is implemented with the illustration of her skills by making it scattered and spread in comparison to her tight and centered body stance.

The intention of the researcher with the backdrop of the character is meant to appeal to the company and the video game reference chosen in the third chapter. On the official website of Riot Games' Valorant Agents, each agent is illuminated by the backdrop of the official video games' appearance. The backdrop created by the researcher is inspired by this method of showcasing the characters' design.

Figure 12 Riot Games' Valorant Website

With the final character design finished, the researcher proceeded to make the final character splash art. Character splash arts are often used by the company reference to promote and showcase League of Legends (LoL) the lore, personality, and skills of the champion. The researcher created this artwork as the final character splash art:

Figure 13 Final Character Splash Art: Chariot/Akshara

For the character splash art, the researcher looked into the environmental artist and character splash art artist of Riot Games, referenced in chapter three. These artists are Alvin Lee and Devon Fay:
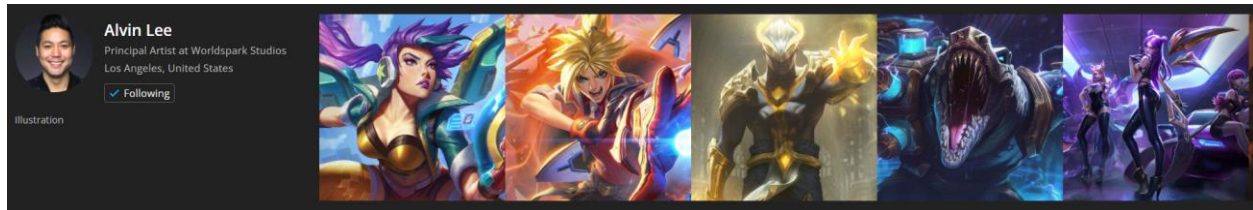

Figure 14 Alvin Lee, Riot Games' Principal Artist

Figure 15 Devon Fay, Riot Games' Associate Art Director

The researcher wanted to showcase the lore created for Chariot/Akshara because story or lore is one of the important factors in creating a game according to Jesse Schell in The Art of Game Design. (Schell, 2015) Based on the artist references in chapter three: Alvin Lee's character splash art always shows how powerful the characters are by putting them centered and focused in the whole piece. Devon Fay's environment art made for Valorant always portrays the story that the plot of the video game requires. For example, one of the maps Devon Fay created the official environment artwork for is "Icebox", "Icebox" is not simply an icy environment but it includes story-driven elements like the wrecked boat that seemed so out of place due to the lore of time-warped objects to different eras and locations.

In the character lore made by the researcher in chapter three phase three: Character Lore, Akshara is based in Ionia and is seeking out a means to end bloodshed everywhere by eradicating heroes and villains. Ionia in League of Legends (LoL) is a magical region, in the final character splash art the researcher wanted to showcase where she is, hence the unnatural color of the environment. The artwork also shows how she is in an overpowering situation over Ionian guards with the fallen Ionian guards behind her and in front of her as well as the havoc she unleashed in the area. This factor allowed the researcher to also portray her power just as Alvin Lee created his splash art and showcased the power of the characters.

Comparisons with Recent Official Release

As of writing this portion of the study, the video game reference and the company reference have already made progress to the characters and the lore of the video games referred to for this study.

For Riot Games' Valorant, recent updates on the agents and lore include the addition of the character Fade in April 2022. (HAAS, 2022) Fade is an Initiator, a character that gathers intel and stuns enemy players; in terms of lore, Fade is an intimidating character that does not trust her teammates but knows that she has to fight alongside them to defeat a greater evil. The character's physical appearance and skills were made to portray a bounty hunter. (HAAS, 2022) A terrifying character because of her dark palette and her use of literal nightmares for her skills.

For Riot Games' League of Legends (LoL), recent updates on the champions and lore include the addition of the character Bel'Veth in June 2022. (Riot Games, 2022) Bel'Veth is also an intimidating character and is often used as a champion that ambushes from the jungles of the game. Bel'Veth comes from "The Void" and is described as a "nightmarish empress". (Riot Games, 2022) Bel'Veth's purpose in League of Legends (LoL) is to seek thrill, wreaking havoc wherever she goes. Similar to Fade from Valorant, her design also makes her physically appear dark and uses dark magic for her skill, the difference being that Bel'Veth is more of an evil empress.

Determining the results and final product of the study requires comparison with the official released characters Fade and Bel'Veth to the final product character Chariot/Akshara.

One thing for certain among these characters is the similarity of having an intimidating aggressive character. This intimidating and aggressive personality is also embedded in the skills that the character uses as well as the lore and the official artworks that these characters have.

To further dive into the similarities of the two officially released characters to the developed character for this study, we first look into the similarities of Fade and Chariot/Akshara:

Fade and Chariot/Akshara are more closely similar in terms of design, specifically in terms of body type and outfit. Some similarities are the implementation of their nationality's traditional features. For example the adoration of henna to both characters:

Figure 16 Valorant's Fade, character design details

Another similar design choices made were the similarities of the material of the skills these two characters have:
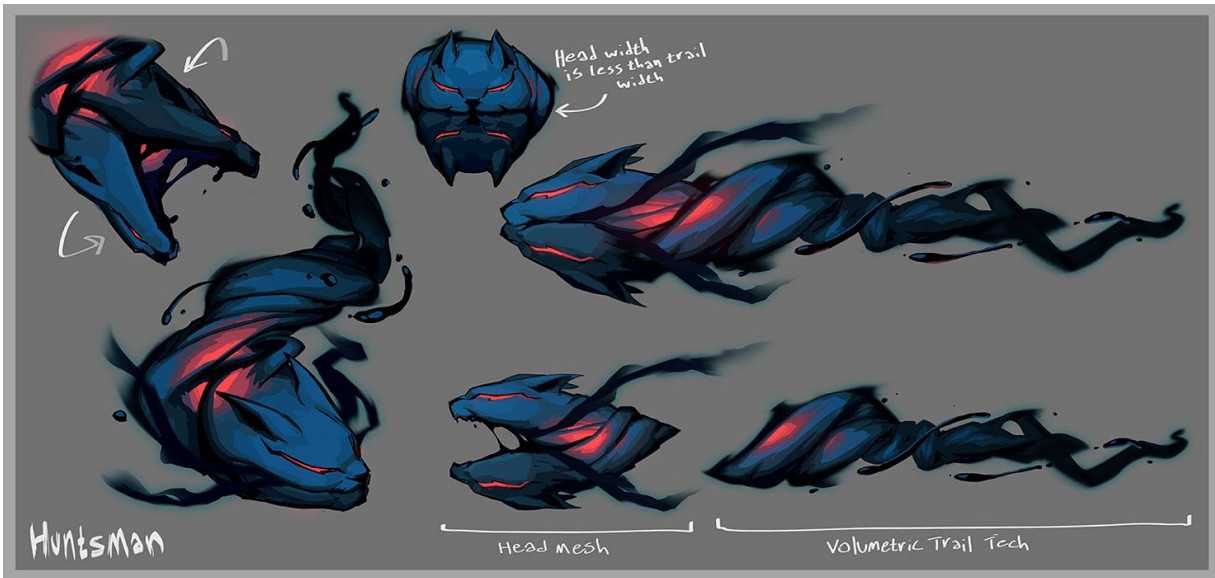

Figure 17 Valorant's Fade, character skill design

Both characters had skills that seemed to be alive on their own, flowing and floating by their own decision. Both skills also appear to be of the same "material" a liquid materialization of something that charges at its victims to inflict dangerous harm.

For Bel'Veth and Chariot/Akshara, their similarities are more in the concept of the character. According to Riot Games' official description of Bel'Veth, she is a nightmarish empress. (Riot Games, 2022) Chariot/Akshara, though not official empresses if included in the official games, her powers are based on a figure that is given respect and adoration in real life just as an empress would. In chapter three of this study, the researcher looked to real-life Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu religion, to be specific the Tridevi: the Goddesses Saraswati, Laksha, and Parvati. (Bahubali, 2015)

There are still differences between these three characters. Despite the similarities in character design choices between Fade and Chariot/Akshara, they are still vastly different in terms of their facial appearance. Riot Games decided to make Fade's nationality Turkish, thus designing her to ensure that she appears Turkish. For Bel'Veth,

her appearance takes the figure of a monster, unhuman, and alien-like, vastly different from Chariot/Akshara.

The video game in this study that was to be focused on according to the research made in chapter three is Riot Games' Valorant and League of Legends (LoL), the researcher looked into the lore of these two games from the perspective of the characters within the game. It was important for the researcher to ensure that the character made for this study can fit with the other characters. In terms of the video game element story, the researcher gave focus to this by ensuring that the character can fit in any point of the lore of the video game. In comparison to Fade and Bel'Vath, the creators of Riot Games already knew what important role these characters should be in the progression of the video game. The researcher on the other hand does not have access to what the creators wanted the direction of the lore to be. This resulted in the difference in the roles of the officially released characters with the character made for this study.

For the video game element aesthetics, the researcher once again had to ensure that the character visually fits in any narrative, in terms of sales of the company and the existing lore. Once again, Riot Games have chosen different visual choices for the officially released characters. For this aspect, the researcher was heavily influenced by market research to satisfy the requirement of ensuring that the character can spark player engagement to improve market sales. According to Erika Haas' article on the creation process of the agent Fade, the reasoning of the creative team for making Fade Turkish is due to the "HUGE amount" of Turkish Valorant players and that they wanted to make sure that Valorant appeals to its global community. (HAAS, 2022)

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

In the first chapter of this study the researcher introduced video games and how video games came to be a world that people can go to as a form of escape and entertainment in their lives. The first chapter also elaborated on how some video games can have an impact and how some do not by discussing what professionals creating video games deem as important elements in creating video games. According to Felipe Lara, there are 4 steps needed to do to have a successful game: 1. Stand Out, 2. Connect, 3. Engage, and 4. Grow. (Lara, 2017) These are what some video games, like the video games under the bottom 5 Video Games according to popularity on IMDb, failed to do. The researcher aimed to develop a character that appeals to the current video game industry by creating a character that can help in forming successful player engagement because characters are the main ways that players can interact with the video game.

In chapter two of this study, the researcher laid out a framework to best guide the study. The framework is made based on existing studies about video games: existing studies on video games for historical and medical purposes, marketing and immersion and representation, and studies on video game creation. Below is the said framework:
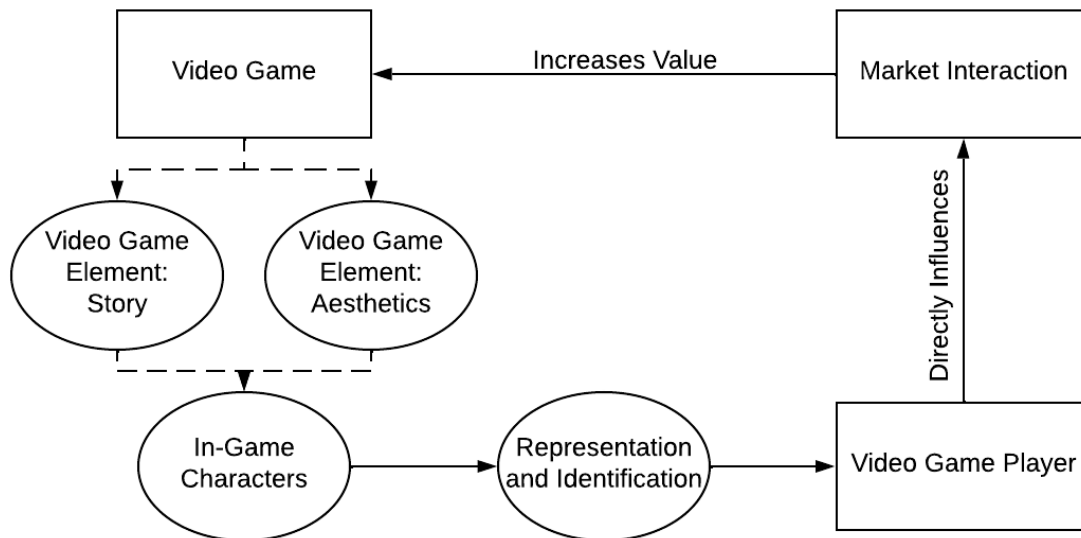
Figure 19 Conceptual Framework

The framework guided the researcher through the writing of the next chapters. In chapter three the framework was used to first determine the video game that was to be focused on which resulted in it being Tencent's Riot Games' Valorant and League of Legends (LoL). By determining the video games to be focused on, both the video game elements story, and aesthetics, were made clear to the researcher. It was also in chapter three that the researcher conducted a small market study to appeal to the players that directly impact the market of the video game and the company that owned it.

In chapter four the researcher showed the final project of the study, a character named Chariot for the game Valorant, and Akshara for the game League of Legends (LoL):

Figure 20 Final Character Design and Splash Art: Chariot/Akshara

The design choices and story choices made for this character are based on the market research done and knowledge of existing characters in both games. For Valorant, it was common for them to create characters influenced by a specific nationality, thus the researcher had to determine what nationality the next character could be. Results from the market research showed that 9 out of 49 Valorant players among 55 respondents collectively wrote that they would like to see an Indian character in the game, meanwhile, the rest of those 40 respondents all chose other nationalities, the second most common nationality being Greek with 3 responses, and Filipino with 2 responses. Other details that come with the character were decided based on traditional clothing, religious stories, and beliefs of Indian nationality.

Chapter four of the study is where the study comes to its final phase. By the time the researcher was writing chapter four, the latest characters for the referenced video games which were planned for earlier than the start of this paper were finally released.

It is in this chapter that the researcher compared and contrast the character made with

the study and the characters that the official company released. There were many visual

and character mechanics differences but the main similarity that the characters had

were their aggressive personalities, and their nightmare-inducing lore and skills.

Conclusion

It was in chapter four that the researcher discussed that the main differences

among the characters were due to a lack of knowledge on the direction of the video

game that the companies wanted to point it towards. According to Erika Haas, the

reasoning for the Turkish nationality of the recent character for Valorant, Fade, was due

to the "HUGE amount" of Turkish Valorant players. (HAAS, 2022) While the recent

character for League of Legends (LoL), Bel'Vath, was made to create a character that

represented a nightmarish empress. (Riot Games, 2022)

Though the decision of the researcher was in the right place to look at the market

research and existing and available lore of the video games, however, it was not in line

with what the company itself wanted to appeal to at the time which was inclusivity over

sales. The researcher knew according to the market research and research on the

existing lore that existing characters had, resulted in the conclusion that

Chariot/Akshara should be a character that is morally blind in pursuit of "justice" hence,

the similarities of Chariot/Akshara to Fade and Bel'Veth in terms of their nightmarish

approach towards their goals as well as the appearance of their skills.

Conducting this study and creating the final product, despite the missing elements that could have gone into the final design, indirectly showed and taught the researcher the process of creation by Riot Games themselves. Designing the character itself was the enjoyable portion of the process that the researcher partook in. It was the lore research and market research that caused doubts on whether the researcher could develop a character that, ideally, the current video game industry would create. However, even with those doubts, the researcher managed to create a character that was closely similar to the characters released after the researcher had made her final design. For the researcher, this final product that was made can be considered a strong candidate for Riot Games' official list of characters for their video games.

Recommendation

The research focused on available information on video games, their creators, and the market research that the researcher could attain to develop the final product of the paper. However, there are more ways to determine a new character in a video game that is fully developed, which is to study existing lore even deeper to determine a theory on what the next character should be like. It is also possible to create a character that appeals more to the players by focusing on a smaller game and a smaller niche fanbase to ensure that the character is made specifically for them. Other topics that were not heavily discussed in the paper that could be further discussed in new research with a different approach are a. the possibility of creating a video game based on existing studies on video game creation, b. focusing on environmental art instead of character

art, or c. determining if specific characters in an existing game enable representation

and immersion to the players.

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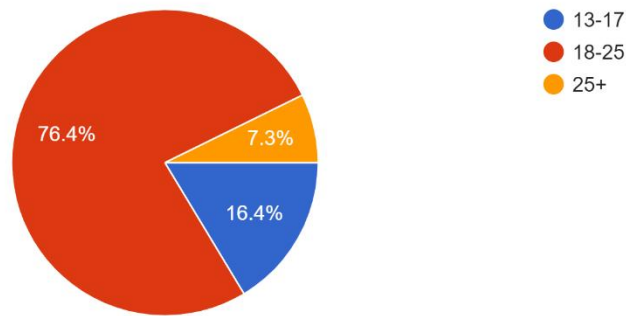
APPENDICES

Market Research on Character Design and Plot Preferences

Spreadsheet Results: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1_ouZPOjETF-jOoRen2gR28dhLja8OMCS8j8lDAIM2rA/edit?usp=sharing
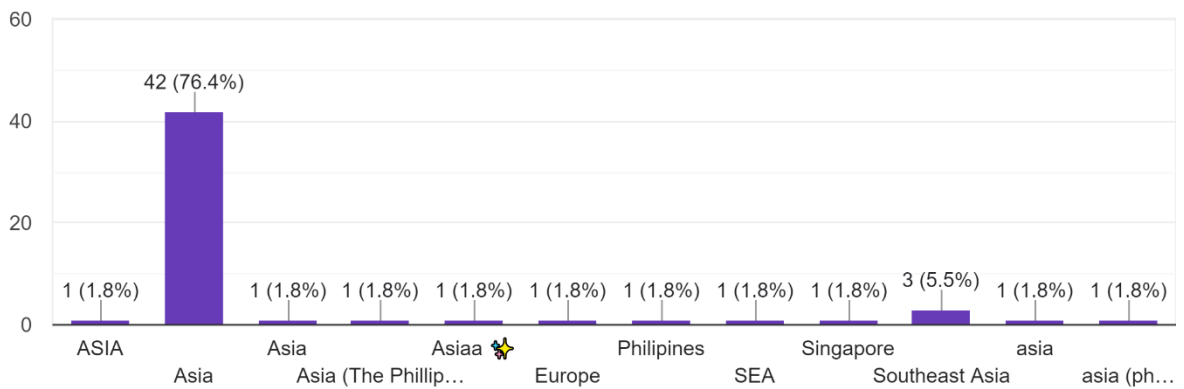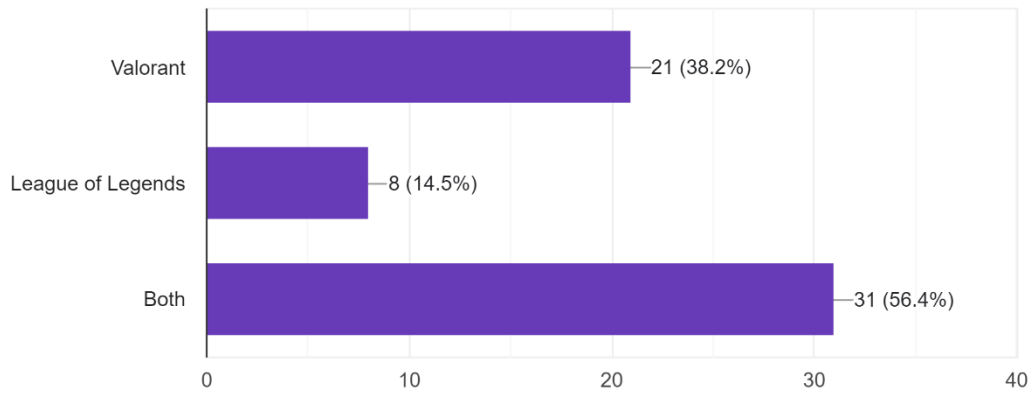
What is your age?

55 responses

- 13-17
- 18-25
- 25+

76.4%
7.3%
16.4%

What continent are you from?

55 responses

Which of the two video games have you played?

55 responses

Category	Value
Valorant	21 (38.2%)
League of Legends	8 (14.5%)
Both	31 (56.4%)

How long have you played the video game

55 responses

- 1-2 years — 49.1%
- 3-4 years — 16.4%
- more than 5 years — 34.5%