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# A Study of Community Engagement on Discord for Game Marketing- Case TJR Games Oy

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## ABSTRACT

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**Keywords:** direct marketing, online community lifecycle, community engagement framework, Discord, game

This thesis was commissioned by Team Jolly Roger (TJR), which is a game development company based in Kajaani, Finland. TJR has released several PC, mobile and consoles games. The most popular games are Interplanetary, an award-winning game and Worbital.

Social media exchange is unequal. It becomes evident that people are shifting into more community-centric platforms. Therefore, Discord has become a popular platform for game marketing and companies.

The purpose of this study was to examine community engagement on Discord platform. The theoretical background of the study was based on the concepts of direct marketing, online community lifecycle and direct community engagement.

The empirical part of the study was implemented by a quantitative research method. The data collection was conducted through a structured online questionnaire that was designed in order to analyse what drives engagement on Discord.

The research findings demonstrate that both Facebook and Discord are mainly used as community platforms, indicating that there is a transition to Discord while slow. Achieving engagement is difficult, and companies use multi-platforms to accomplish that goal.

Due to limitations in the researched sample among game professionals and geographical location, there are other possibilities to study the examined topic with future implementations of the research.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the statement of the problem, purpose and limitations of the study.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Social media is irrelevant to the younger generation due to an uneven exchange (Strauß, 2016). An unequal exchange occurs when companies talk on social media platforms; however, the customers do not interact with them directly. Therefore, there is a growing demand for a more targeted tool to establish deeper engagement and trust between consumers and companies. This study aims to explore whether Discord platform is the new solution.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Study

This thesis aims to discover the reasons for the high community engagement on Discord platform. Therefore, research questions must be formulated.

1. What are the main factors for Discord engagement?
2. What are the reasons to engage with players on Discord?
3. How to turn Discord members into game advocates?
4. How does Discord achieves engagement with social media?

The first question is a general question exploring what contributes to the engagement on Discord. Exploring this question may reveal what drives engagement and how developers can utilise that knowledge. The second question is from the community manager's perspective exploring the reasons, benefits and disadvantages of engaging with players; what are the possible pitfalls, and what are the best practices. The third question aims to provide specific actions which turn Discord members into game advocates or fans. The last question explores the interaction between social media and Discord; is the interaction on social media different from the one on Discord?

### 1.3 Limitations of the Study

This research was conducted from the game industry professionals perspective. It can also be researched from the gamers perspective to discover their preferences and reasons to engage on Discord. Due to limitations of time and resources, the research was conducted in a small sample size.

## 2 GAME INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

### 2.1 The Development of the Industry

The first video game was developed by nuclear physicist Dr Edward Condon which was based on a mathematical game *Nim*. This game was displayed at New York World's Fair and was played by approximately 50 000 people for six months while on display. However, *Brown box*, the first video game system designed for commercial home use, was released in 1967 by engineer Ralph Baer. *Brown box* was a multiplayer, multiprogram video game system which could be used for a variety of games. (Rogers, 2016) (Aditya, n.d.).

In 1972 Atari and arcade gaming came into the market. Atari, founded by Nolan Bushnell, turned into the first gaming company to set a benchmark for a large-scale gaming community. In 1973 retailing at \$1095, Atari started selling their first game *Pong*, and arcade machines started appearing in bars, bowling alleys and shopping malls around the world. People noticed the emerging market and more than 15 game studios started to develop video games (Chikhani, 2015).

In addition to gaming consoles becoming popular in commercial centres and chain restaurants, the appearance of personal computers in households and the technological advancements such as Intel's invention of the microprocessor created a new sector for game production. With the integration of the microprocessor, the *Space Invaders* for the Atari VCS was released in 1980. This microprocessor and the subsequent release of new consoles by too many game companies has resulted in a market saturation, and simultaneously home computers started growing in popularity due to more powerful processors than the previous generation of consoles; consoles started receiving bad press. In the late 1987 computers and consoles allowed users to connect their devices with other players. The possibility to connect with others was the first step towards the idea of deathmatch <sup>1</sup>, and it exploded in popularity when *Doom* was released in 1993. (Chikhani, 2015).

The real revolution in gaming occurred when LAN <sup>2</sup> networks and the Internet created multiplayer gaming. 1993-1996, Sega, Nintendo and Atari tried to break into online gaming by using cable

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<sup>1</sup> Deathmatch is a mode of play in which the aim is to kill the characters controlled by other players.

<sup>2</sup> Local area network (LAN) is a computer network of interconnected computers within a proximity.



providers, but neither worked because of the slow Internet and problems with the cable providers. Sega Dreamcast, the world's first-ready console released in 2000, made advances in online gaming.

Sega Dreamcast was a revolutionary system and was the first net-centric console to gain popularity. However, it also was a massive failure due to the market switching towards DVD and the emergence of PlayStation2. (Bryce & Rutter, 2006). Despite the failure, Dreamcast led the way towards the next generation of consoles, such as the Xbox and PlayStation. (Chikhani, 2015).

The release of *Runescape* in 2001 was a game-changer. MMORPG<sup>3</sup> games allowed millions of players worldwide to play and compete against each other on the same platform. Since the early 2000s, Internet capabilities and computer technology have improved at an incredibly fast rate enabling games to develop better graphics and destroy the previous generation. (Chikhani, 2015).

The game *Snake* was the first significant mobile game launched for mobile. It was released in 1997 for Nokia 6610 and is still considered the most famous mobile game of all time. The first generation of mobile games included games like *Tetris* and *Snake*. The second generation was WAP<sup>4</sup> games. WAP was a technology enabling mobile devices to connect to the Internet. The first two generations of mobile games were primitive but together created a basic ecosystem that allowed developers to make games and sell them to willing mobile players. (Wright, 2016).

After smartphones were introduced to the market, the game industry experienced another revolution, which completely changed the way people play games. The first iPhone was released in June 2007 by Steve Jobs, while HTC released its first Android phone in October 2008.

Mobile technology has rapidly developed an explosion of mobile gaming, which has already overtaken revenue from the PC and consoles. (Newzoo, 2016) (Duncan, 2008).

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<sup>3</sup> MMORPG- massively multiplayer online role-playing games are played with a very large number of players who interact with one another within a virtual world.

<sup>4</sup> WAP- Wireless Application Protocol - a device that allows wireless devices to connect to a wired network and to each other

## 2.2 The Industry's Market Segments

Games can be split into three major categories – PC, mobile, and console. In early 2012, Newzoo introduced the consumer-centric Screen Segmentation as an alternative for the traditional game segmentation. (Wijman, 2018).

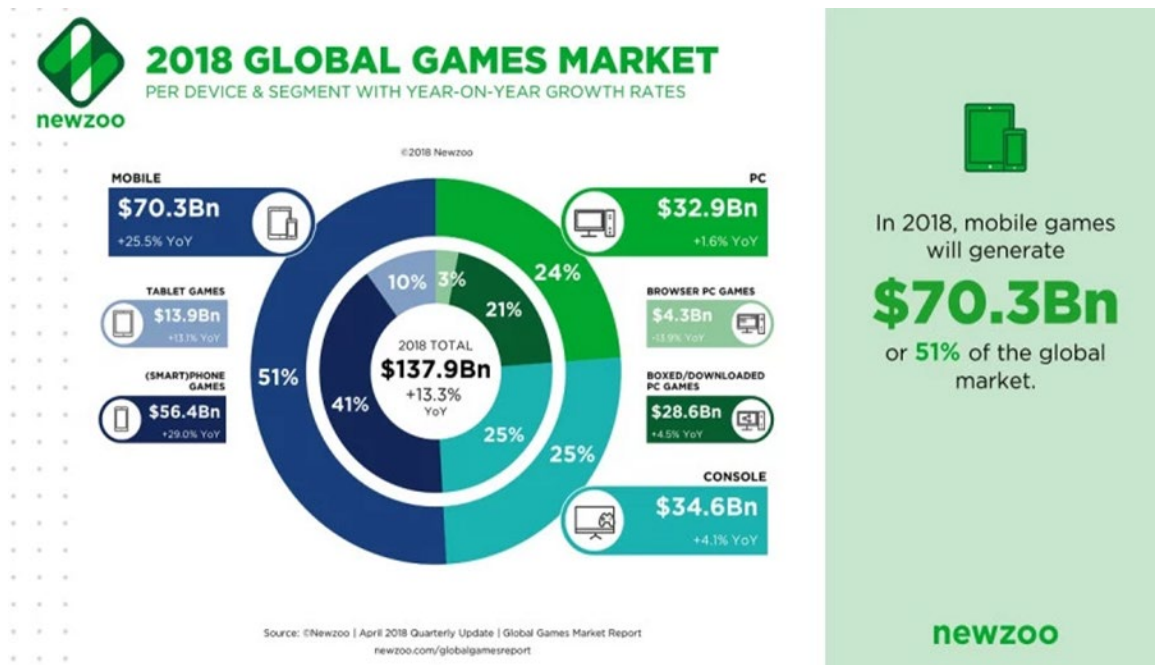


Figure 1. Global Games Market by segment. Newzoo (2018)

The screen segmentation model distinguishes three screens: mobile, PC and console. As seen in Figure 1, the mobile screen is the most lucrative. The console screen is followed closely by the PC screen. The mobile games market will generate \$70.3 billion in 2018– 51 per cent of the global market. The total revenue in 2018 is \$137.9 billion- with a year-over-year (YoY) (Majaski, 2019) growth of 13.3 per cent. (Wijman, 2018).

## 2.3 The Industry's Region Segmentation

The Global Games Market is divided into four regions: Europe, Middle East & Africa, Latin America, North America and Asia-Pacific.

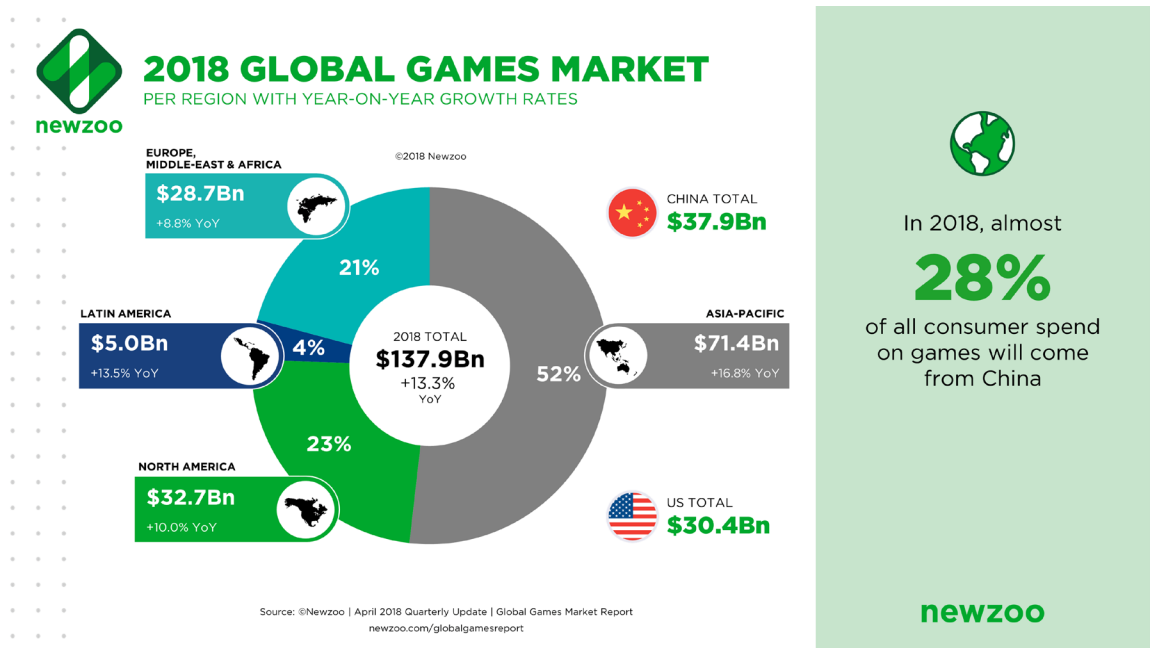


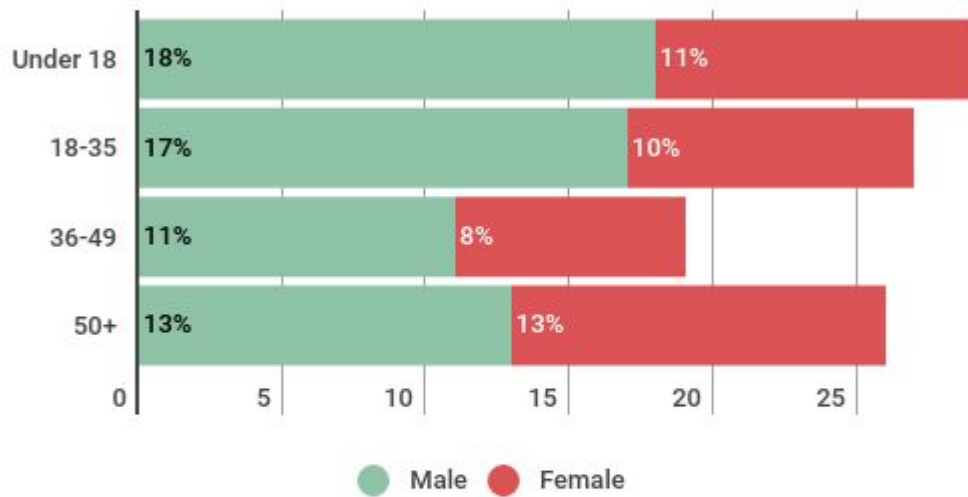
Figure 2. The Global Games Market regions. Newzoo (2018)

As seen in Figure 2, the most lucrative region is Asia-Pacific, then North America, followed by Europe, Middle East & Africa and lastly Latin America. Asia-Pacific \$71.4 billion in 2018 – which accounts for 52 per cent of the entire global market for games. This is attributed to smartphone games which is the largest audience of any gaming platforms. The total revenue in 2018 is \$137.9 billion with a year-over-year growth of 13.3 per cent. (Wijman, 2018).

#### 2.4 The Industry’s Players Demographics

The average male gamer is 33 years old while the average female gamer is 37 years old. Under 18-year-old male gamers are 18 per cent while female gamers are 11 per cent. Male gamers between the ages of 18 to 35 are 17 per cent while female gamers are 10 per cent. Male gamers between the ages of 36 to 49 are 11 per cent while females are 10 per cent. Male and female gamers over the age of 50 are 13 per cent. (2019 Video Game Industry Statistics, Trends & Data, 2019).

# Video Game Players by Gender and Age in the United States



The average male gamer is 33 years old.

The average female gamer is 37 years old.

Source: Entertainment Software Association (ESA)

Created by WePC.com

Figure 3. Players Demographics. Entertainment Software Association (ESA). WePC.com

## 2.5 The Entertainment Industry

The entertainment industry consists of music, film box office, television and gaming. Gaming is now the world's favourite form of entertainment, as the gaming industry generated more revenue in 2018 than television, movies, and music did.



Figure 4. The Entertainment Industry revenue. Sources: Newzoo forecast for gaming revenue, Statista forecast for TV and global box office revenue, IFPI actual data for global digital music revenue. Newzoo (2018)

As seen in Figure 4 other forms of entertainment are in decline – Television revenue was down by 8 per cent in 2018 – the gaming sector’s sales are increasing at an annual rate of 10.7 per cent. Some of this growth is attributed to China (37.9 Billion), where game sales are growing 14 per cent annually. The Gaming sector revenue was \$116 billion, followed by Television with \$105 billion in 2018.

2.6 The Finnish Game Industry

The popularity of personal computers in the 1980s expedited the development of the game industry in Finland. The first Finnish game was released in 1979: *Chesmac*, a chess simulation game developed by Raimo Suonio. In the beginning, game development was a hobby until the mid-1980s, when the first commercial games were released. These games were targeted to Finland’s domestic market. In 1986 Finland released *Sanxion*, the first game to be distributed internationally being a significant milestone in the Finnish game industry.

In 1999, a professional game industry was born in Finland. There was a dozen of game studios and the industry employed approximately 200 people. At that time, the mobile games market was undeveloped; therefore, most of the games were designed for PC and consoles. In 2003, Nokia released its N-Gage gaming platform, which paved the way for mobile games.

(NeoGames,2015). It was the late 2000's when digital distribution revolutionised the Finnish game industry. Formerly, game developers earned only 15–25 per cent, but with digital distribution, they started earning 70 per cent of the profits. The digital distribution was a significant factor, and Rovio Entertainment was among the first to benefit from these new opportunities.

The success story of Rovio Entertainment's *Angry Birds* started in 2009, and it is still the most popular game in the world. The game has been downloaded more than a billion times, which makes it also the most downloaded game of all time. Rovio's success inspired others to start their game companies. In 2012 Fingersoft released *Hill Climb Racing* which has been downloaded from the iOS app store and Play store over a billion times. At the same time, Supercell launched *Hay Day* and *Clash of Clans* to the market, and they remain the most downloaded games for Android and iOS. (NeoGames, 2015).

By the end of 2014, Finland had 260 fully operational game studios. 91 companies out of 260 said that iOS is their primary platform for games development, followed by 78 companies who focused mainly on Android and 49 who developed for the PC. (NeoGames, 2015). The digital distribution model, the advancements, the availability and the price reduction of development tools have made the entry barriers much smaller. The mobile platform enabled more people to start companies as game developers than on any other platform.

The year 2017 was a year of stabilisation for the Finnish game industry. A key milestone was the listing of four Finnish game companies into the stock exchange. In 2017 the middle class of gaming companies grew significantly. In 2018 around 100 new games were published. This growth is an outcome of the games as service model popularity. Game development companies focus on developing their existing games rather than developing new ones. 2017 was the third consecutive year when the turnover of the industry surpassed €2 Billion. The number of companies that employ more than 50 people and have a turnover of more than 10 million continued to increase. The number of employees in the industry grew to 3,000 at the end of 2018. Finland was placed within the top-three game developer countries (United Kingdom 1<sup>st</sup>, Sweden 2<sup>nd</sup>) in Europe by turnover. (NeoGames, 2018).

## 2.7 The Most Successful Game Companies in Finland

### Supercell

Supercell has the highest revenue with \$1.6 billion in 2018 with games such as *Clash of Clans*, *Heyday* and *Clash Royal*. (Takahashi, 2019) Supercell is the most successful gaming company in Finland. Supercell's games remained top downloaded games on App Store and Google Play for several years and even earned the company \$1,5 million a day. In 2017 Supercell made €521 million in profits with a revenue of €1,8 billion. Supercell was acquired by Chinese Internet giant Tencent in June 21, 2016, for \$8.6 billion, considered one of the world's biggest gaming deals but its headquarters remain in Helsinki. (Kostner, 2019).

### Rovio

The gaming company who created the *Angry Birds* series phenomenon, Rovio started to produce animation movies based on the same characters. Rovio made a profit of 19,6 million Euros with a turnover of €260 mil. in 2017. In 2018 Rovio's revenue was €71.8 million. Rovio Entertainment Oyj is listed on Nasdaq Helsinki stock exchange. (Kostner, 2019).

### Remedy Entertainment

Remedy is the company who published the games, *Alan Wake*, *Death Rally* and *Max Payne*. Remedy's winning of the BAFTA award of "PC game of the year" for *Max Payne* in 2001 has brought Finland's gaming industry to international fame. In 2017 Remedy's revenue was €17,2 million and a profit of €1,5 million. Remedy Entertainment Oyj is a publicly listed company on Nasdaq First North. (Kostner, 2019) (Rovio Entertainment Debuts on Nasdaq Helsinki, 2017).

### RedLynx

Founded by Yves Guillemot, Redlynx is the developer behind the motorcycle game *Trials Frontier*, *South Park: Phone Destroyer* and *Trials Rising*. In 2018 Redlynx had a turnover of €9,8 million and a profit of €579k. (Kostner, 2019).

### Housemarque

Housemarque developed *Alianation*, an isometric shooter and role-playing game released in 2016 exclusively for PlayStation 4. The game can be played both in single or multiplayer modes. Housemarque revenue amounted to €4,2 million in 2017. (Kostner, 2019).

## Frozenbyte

Frozenbyte is the creator of the *Trine series* and the Enchanted Edition. Frozenbyte had revenue of €3,4 million in 2017. (Kostner, 2019).

## Fingersoft

Fingersoft constant revenue and new platform expansion such as Apple TV is credited to its classic *Hill Climb Racing*. The first version of the game was downloaded 200 million times, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> version was released in 2016. Fingersoft made an €11,7 million in profit with a revenue of €29,6 mil. in 2017. (Kostner, 2019).



### 3 COMMUNITY PLATFORMS

This chapter introduces four community platforms: Discord, Mumble, TeamSpeak and Skype and compares their differences.

#### 3.1 Discord

Discord is a free messaging platform designed for videogaming communities specialising in text, image, video, voice communication between users via chat channels. It was founded in May 2015 by Jason Citron (CEO) and Stanislav Vishnevskiy(CTO). Discord was initially developed as a sideline project for a free-to-play iPad game, *Fates Forever* which did not do well in revenues. When Stanislav Vishnevskiy noticed that gamers had difficulties with other chat programs such as Skype and Team Speak which were resource-heavy and known for their security problems, he decided to develop a friendlier chat program for gamers. (Rioja, 2019) Discord runs on Windows, macOS, Android, iOS, Linux, and in web browsers (Wikipedia: Discord (software), n.d.).

Discord is the world's largest chat platform for gaming, with 250 million users and market valuation of 2.1 Billion with total funding of \$271,3 million (Discord Stock / Share Price, Funding Rounds, Valuation and financials, 2018). It has become one of the premier places for online communities to gather. (Webb, 2018) Discord represents a sizable platform that marketers and developers can utilise.

The program's interface is user-friendly and offers many unique features for customising own text- chat channels. It uses private servers which can be easily created. Discord facilitates direct communication between its members and companies by allowing them to have private conversations. Moreover, server owners have many privacy settings and permissions for managing their server.

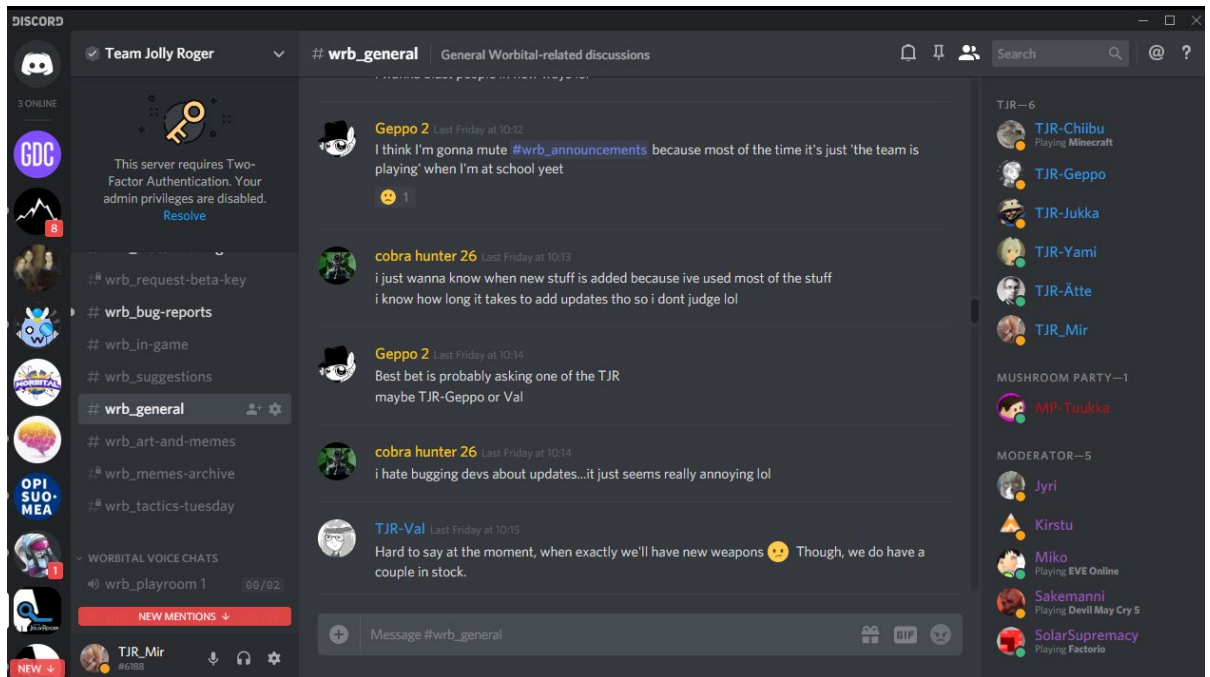


Figure 5. Server@ Team Jolly Roger. Discord interface. Retrieved April 11, 2019, from <https://discordapp.com/invite/kYYcrQu>. Screenshot by Author.

The first step is creating a server, which is Discord’s term for a “community of people”. (Neal, 2019). As seen in Figure 5, on the left side are the servers and channels, in the middle is the chat, the right side is the members colour coded by roles. In this example, blue colour signifies TJR employees, purple colour is the moderators, and yellow are the beta testers.

Discord role system allows users to create a hierarchy within the server, separating between developers, moderators and members. For example, moderators are assigned a role and given permissions which other members do not have. Another example is in the *Descenders* Discord server. Members are divided according to factions as within the game (*Descenders*) and assigned a colour and specific role. This way, competition can be formed between those factions. The servers on the left, include GDC- Game Developers Conference, *Descenders* and *Worbital* (games). The channels are #wrb\_request-beta-key, bug reports, in-game, art and <sup>5</sup>memes, memes archives, tactics Tuesday. Members can join multiple servers with one username.

The channels are used to engage with members on various levels. For example, the bug reporting channel is the place to report any bugs within the game. Suggestions and artwork are channels

<sup>5</sup> Meme- a cultural item in the form of an image, video, phrase that is spread via the Internet and often altered in a creative or humorous way. (Dictionary.com,n.d.)

created to gather user-generated content from the members. The announcement channel is where the companies can announce news.

Discord can be used as a direct communication channel with potential customers. First, companies create a server for a specific product, for example, a game. Then they attract their potential target market to the server, for example, by offering a free trial of the game. Thus, a Discord community is formed around the game.

Kimball (Kimball, 2018) defines Discord adoption rate as the rate of which Discord has grown and been embraced by members over the years. It has grown from 45 million registered users to 130 million in just the last year and sends 15 billion messages per month.

#### Discord monetisation strategies

Discord does not use any advertisements on their chat app and is against selling user's data to third parties. These are their monetisation strategies:

1. Optional Items

Discord app offers additional items for purchase, such as sound and sticker packs, skins<sup>6</sup>, and custom emojis<sup>7</sup>. These items are optional for users to purchase; however, they do not have significant advantages as a player. (Business Strategy Hub, How-does-Discord-make-money/).

2. Discord Merchandise Store

Discord offers a variety of branded merchandise, including hoodies, hats, t-shirts and sweatshirts. The company employs this marketing strategy as an effective way of promoting their products while encouraging their user base to purchase merchandise to support their operating costs.

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<sup>6</sup> Skins- A "skin" is a type of aesthetic item that players can acquire in games. They change the appearance of the players avatar (the character on the screen that represents the player).

<sup>7</sup> Emojis- An emoji is a visual representation of an emotion, object or symbol. Emoji faces are used on SMS and social media apps.

### 3. Game subscription Service – Discord Nitro

Discord offers a premium option called the Discord Nitro. Discord launched its subscription plan for users worth for \$9.99 per month or 99.99 per year. (Business Strategy Hub, How-does-Discord-make-money/).

### 4. Discord Game Store

Discord launched a game store globally in August 2018. The store allows game developers to self-publish and sell their games on the Discord store. For distribution of the game, Discord charges 10 per cent of revenue, which helps Discord to cover their operating cost. This 90/10 revenue split is a win-win situation for developers community and Discord. (Business Strategy Hub, How-does-Discord-make-money/).

### 5. Funding from Venture Capitalists<sup>8</sup>

Discord had five rounds of funding to raise money from investors. The first round was between 2012-2015 when Discord raised just under \$10 million for their Seed Round, Series A and B funding. In 2016, the second round was when Discord raised \$20 million through Greylock Partners. This money was used for staff expansion and salaries. The third round in 2017, Discord raised an additional \$50 million through Index Ventures. The fourth round was in 2018, raising another \$50 million from investors. During that round of funding, Discord was valued at \$1.65 billion, doubling their previous valuation. The fifth round of funding was in December 2018, Discord raised \$150 million, with a \$2.05 billion valuation led by Greenoaks Capital and included several companies. At the start of 2019, Discord raised around 280 million dollars from investors. (How-Does-Discord-Make-Money, 2019).

## 3.2 Mumble

Mumble is a free, open-source<sup>9</sup> VOIP app for groups that features in-game overlay, skins, noise suppression, low latency<sup>10</sup>, conversation recording and voice activity detection. Thorvald Natvig

---

<sup>8</sup> A venture capitalist (VC) is an investor that provides capital to firms exhibiting high growth potential in exchange for an equity stake. This could be funding startup ventures or supporting small companies that wish to expand but do not have access to equities markets- (Ganti, 2019)

<sup>9</sup> Open source- The term "open source" refers to software that people can modify and share because its code is publicly accessible.

<sup>10</sup> Low latency- Low latency describes a computer network that is optimized to process a very high volume of data messages with minimal delay (latency).

founded mumble in August 2005. Mumble's main purpose is to be used while gaming. Mumble runs on Linux, macOS, iOS, Windows and Android. (Mumble info, n.d.)Mumble provides positional audio, the option to hear the other players from the direction they stand in in-game, and louder the closer they are.

A Mumble server (called Murmur) has a root channel and a hierarchical list of channels beneath it. Users can temporarily connect channels to create larger channels. (Mumble, n.d.)

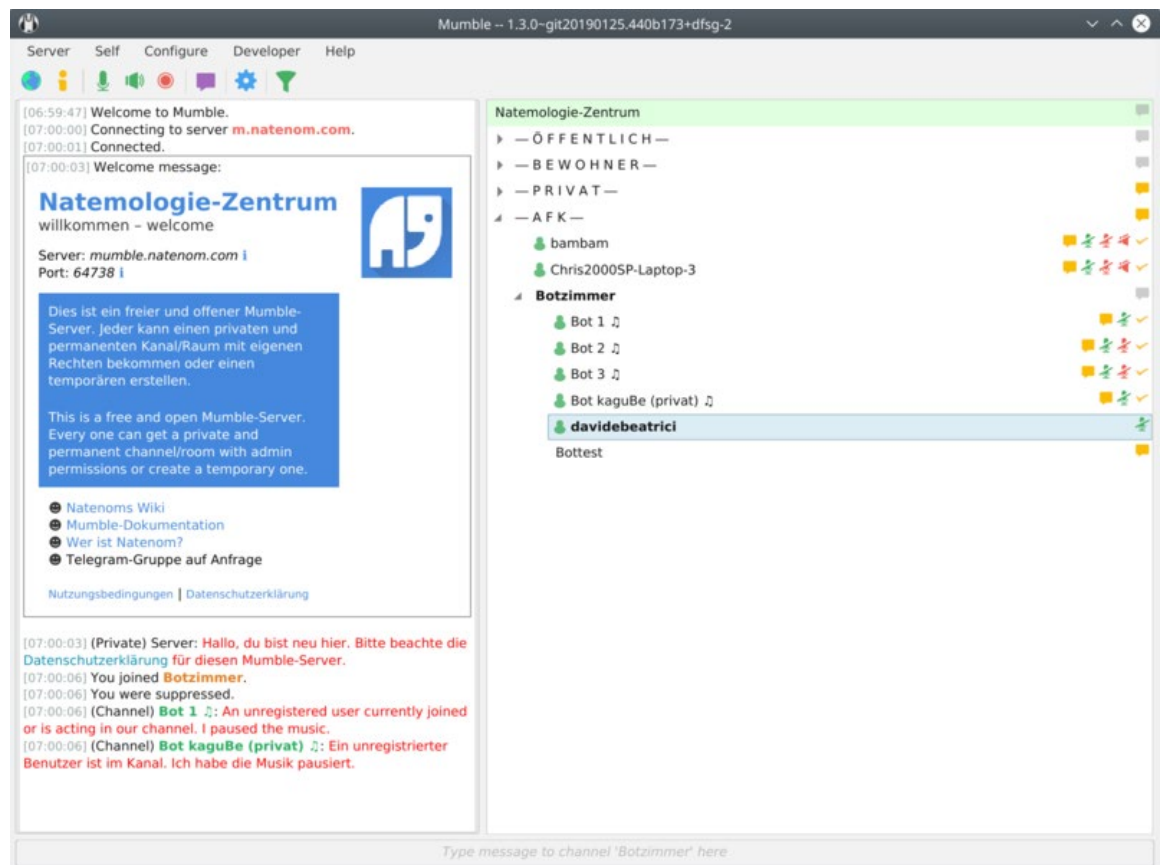


Figure 6. Mumble server @ Davide Beatrici

### 3.3 TeamSpeak 3

TeamSpeak 3 is a leading VOIP<sup>11</sup> tool for online gaming due to its voice quality. It was developed in 2004. It is available for Windows, Macs, Linux and a small fee for iOS and Android devices.

<sup>11</sup> VOIP refers to Voice Over Internet Protocol enables phone communication over the Internet.

Similarly to Discord, it has many free servers dispersed around the world. As a result, users can host servers and create groups of thousands of people. (TeamSpeak, 2017).

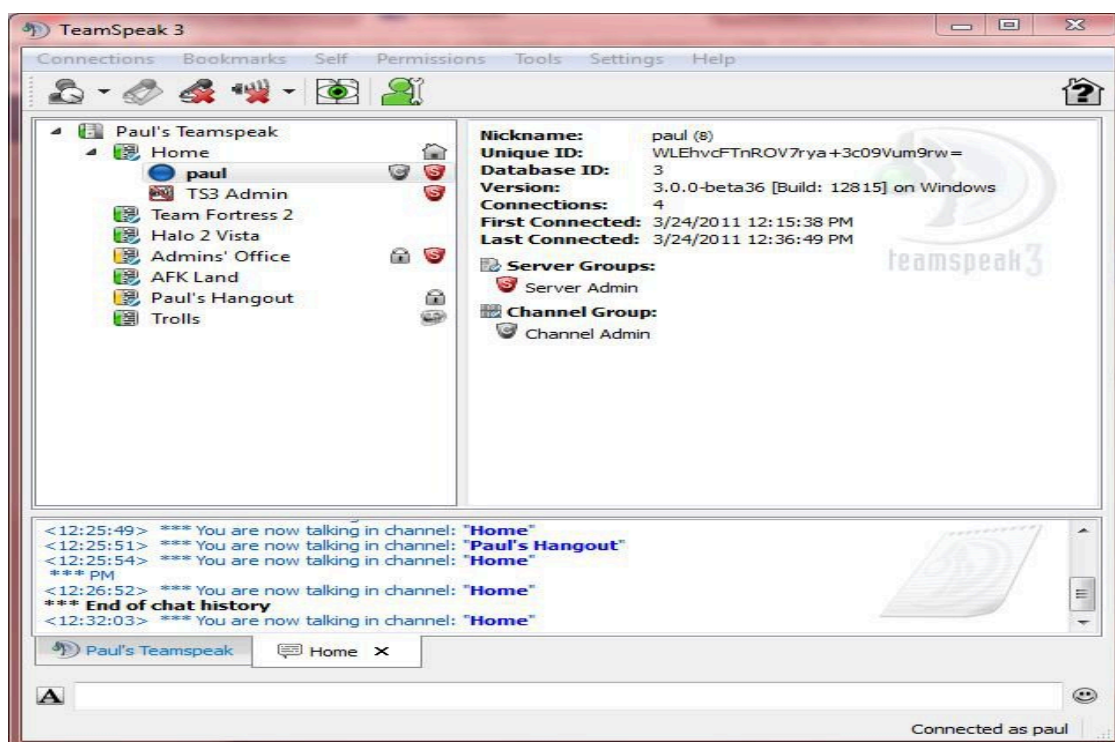


Figure 7. Server D IP 69 245 203 74 Port 9987 @Shirey, Paul. TeamSpeak 3 interface. Screenshot by Shirey, Paul(2011).

### 3.4 Skype

Skype is a VOIP application combining messaging, video, voice chats and images between computers, tablets, mobile devices, Xbox One console via the Internet. It was founded in August 2003 by Niklas Zennström and Janus Friis. The software was developed by Ahti Heinla, Priit Kasesalu, and Jaan Tallinn. Two years later, eBay acquired Skype for \$2.6 billion. Microsoft purchased Skype in May 2011 for \$8.5 billion. Skype headquarters are located in Luxembourg, but the development teams are situated in Tallinn and Tartu, Estonia. (Skype, n.d.).

Skype users can communicate by microphone, web camera and instant messaging. Skype can be used for conference calling too.

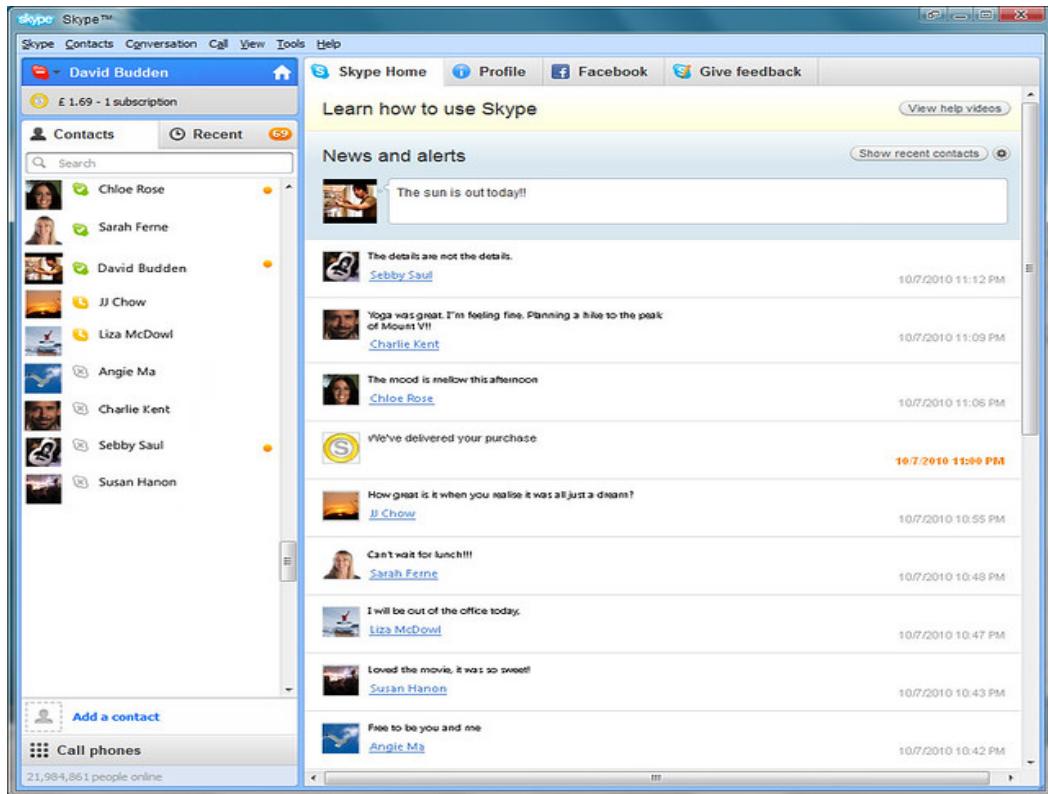


Figure 8. @ Taehyun Kim. Skype interface. Screenshot by Taehyun Kim(2010)

## 4 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical background of the study is collected from a wide range of various source material such as literature, correlated articles, books, journals and reports. The main concepts of online communities, online community lifecycle, community management, direct marketing are explained in the theoretical background.

### 4.1 Online Communities

In 1985 the first online community -Well (Whole Earth L'ctronic Link) was established (Rheingold, 1993), since then hundreds other online communities began to emerge. Many of those communities continue to exist today, and some thrive while others have little activity or disappeared entirely.

(Blanchard & Markus, 2004) defined the concept of "sense of community" as "groups of people who interact primarily through computer-mediated communication and who identify with and have developed feelings of belonging and attachment to each other." Blanchard and Markus research focused on members' perception regarding the community and their feelings toward other members.

An online community consists of a group of people who share common interests, feelings or ideas or pursue similar goals over the Internet. An online community can be a small group or have millions of members. A small community is very different from a community with millions of members. All communities have three features in common: purpose, supported by technology and guided by norms and policies (Preece, J., Maloney-Krichmar, D., & Abras, C. (2003). The purpose of online communities is to provide its members with information exchange, companionship, entertainment or social support. Sociability is a concept related to the social interactions of the members of an online community. Sociability can contribute to the ambience of an online community. Communities which interact via chat have a different ambience from those who communicate via message board. (Preece, 2003).

Benefits of online communities are many. The first benefit is a geographical one. Online community members, unlike offline, can interact with anyone in the world without leaving their own home. The second benefit is the ability of online communities to offer emotional support, advice and friendship. (Preece, 2003)



## 4.2 The Online Community Lifecycle

The Online community lifecycle concept is based on Iriberry and Leroy's initial work (Iriberry & Leroy, 2009) and rooted in software development lifecycle, a term from software development. The online community lifecycle consists of five stages: inception, establishment, maturity, saturation and mitosis. Each stage requires various strategies and actions to sustain the community. (Feverbee, 2013).

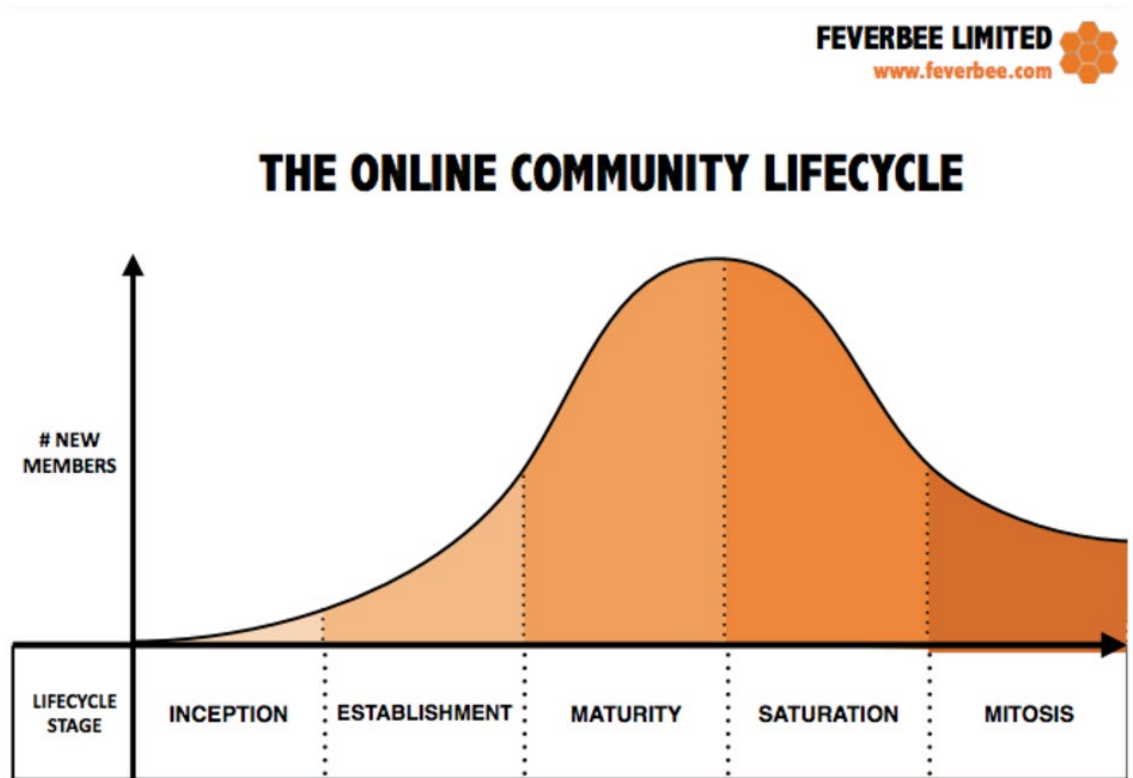


Figure 9. Online Community Lifecycle@ Richard Millington. Source: [www.feverbee.com](http://www.feverbee.com)

The inception stage begins with the interaction of audience members and ends when the community reaches its critical mass. Critical mass is a term from nuclear physics defining the minimum amount of fissile material to sustain a nuclear reaction. The critical mass is achieved when the community can function and grow without a community manager's direct involvement. This growth can be accomplished by nurturing a small group of highly engaged members of the community. These members form the foundations of the community. The numerical value is 50 per cent of growth and activity is accomplished by community members. The actions at this stage are: inviting new members, generate and maintain discussions and building relationships. (Feverbee, 2013).

The establishment stage begins when the community reached 50 per cent of growth and ends when the community reaches 90 per cent of growth and activity. This phase can last up to 0-9

months. In this stage, the actions are: encouraging members to refer others and promotional growth, scaling activity to accommodate a big community such as: recruiting volunteers, moderation, platform development and increasing sense of community amongst members by introducing events, community constitution promotion in other media and documentation of community history all as shared experiences. (Feverbee, 2013).

The maturity stage begins when the community reached 90 per cent of growth and have a limited sense of community and ends when the sense of community is highly developed amongst the members. There is a plateau of growth. The saturation stage begins when a community developed its sense of identity and become self-sustaining without external stimuli. That is the stage when the community becomes the expert on a specific topic such as TechCrunch is the leading community for start-up companies. (Feverbee, 2013).

The mitosis stage of the online community lifecycle begins when the community is almost entirely self-sustaining. Mitosis is a concept from cell biology defining a cell division method in which a cell divides and produces identical copies of itself (Vidyasagar, 2018). Similarly to a cell dividing and replicating itself, so does a community. A community replicates and creates subgroups. The growth of the sub-groups is identical to the inception stage. In this stage, the community manager role is to sustain the existing community while developing self-sustaining sub-groups. These sub-groups should arrange their events, regular content and function independently. (Feverbee, 2013).

#### 4.3 Competence, Relatedness, Autonomy

Competence, Relatedness, Autonomy is a self-determination human motivation theory. It identifies two types of motivation: extrinsic and intrinsic. The extrinsic motivation is achieved by external stimuli such as benefits, promotions, prizes while the intrinsic motivation is generated by internal desire, interest and does not require external stimulation. (Feverbee.com/stay-engaged, 2017).

The Community member motivation model consists of three phases: amotivated, extrinsically motivated and intrinsically motivated. As seen in Figure 10, The amotivated phase explores the question of why people do not join the community. There are four reasons for this: lack of awareness, low-value perception, trust and competitor's groups. The first reason is when people have a lack of awareness that the community exists. The second reason is that people have a low-

value perception- people are aware of the community but believe that it has nothing valuable to offer them. The third reason is trust when people understand the value but do not trust that the community can deliver that value. The fourth reason is competitor groups- people find value in other competitor groups. This requires to differentiate the community by focusing on a big growing niche. (Feverbee.com/stay-engaged, 2017).

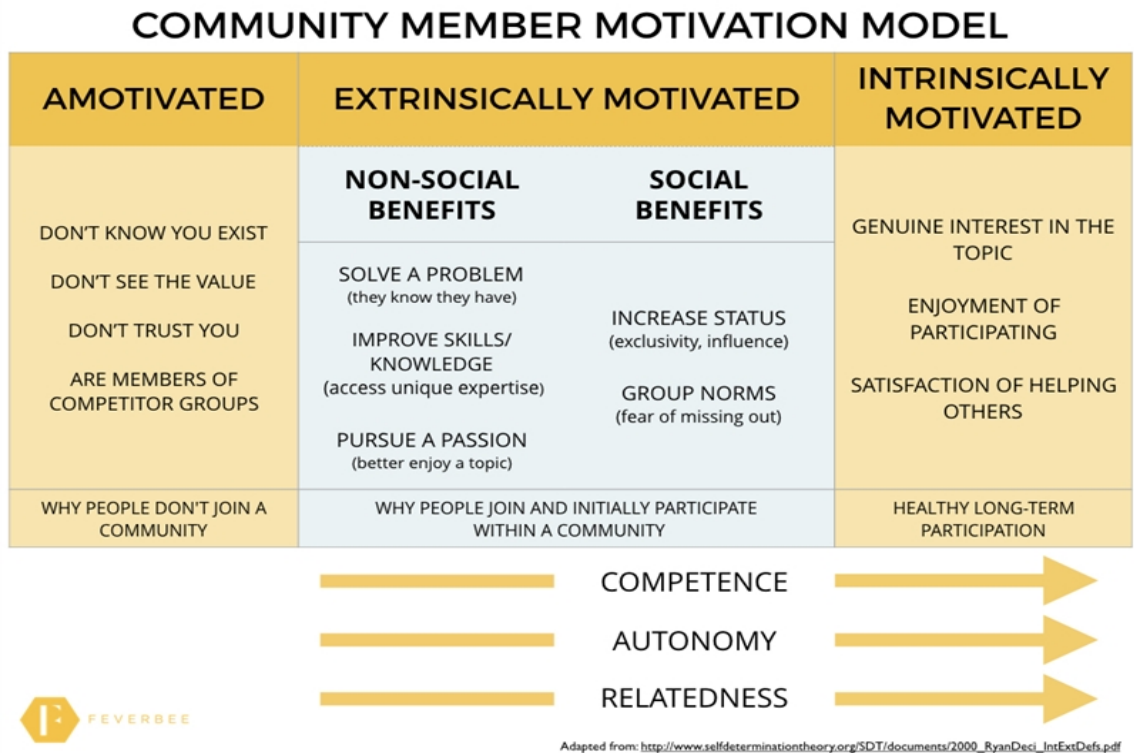


Figure 10. Community member motivation model. Adapted from [https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/2000\\_RyanDeci\\_SDT.pdf](https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/2000_RyanDeci_SDT.pdf)

The extrinsically motivated phase deals with why people join and initially participate in a community. These reasons can be divided into two sections: non-social and social benefits. The non-social benefits are subdivided into three parts: problem seeking, skill improvement, or pursuing a passion. The motivation of people looking for non-social benefits is a specific problem for which they search a solution within the community or a desire to improving their skills and knowledge or pursue a passion. The social benefits include increasing status and group norms. (Feverbee.com/stay-engaged, 2017).

The intrinsically motivated phase deals with healthy long-term participation. It consists of genuine interest, participation enjoyment and satisfaction of helping others. Intrinsic motivation is the inherent tendency to seek challenges, novelty, exploration and learning. This motivation can diminish when external benefits, deadlines, pressure and evaluation are introduced. (Feverbee.com/stay-engaged, 2017).

Competence, autonomy and relatedness are the three root causes that can help to diagnose the reasons for low or no community engagement. With a limited level of competence, members do not have the opportunity to express their skills and abilities. A limited level of autonomy occurs when members do not have the freedom to demonstrate and participate in the community. With a limited level of relatedness is when members feel disconnected or disrespected from the community. (Feverbee.com/stay-engaged, 2017).

#### 4.4 Community Management

A community manager is hired to be the brand ambassador of a company and is in charge of social media communities. A community manager has various roles such as moderation, content creation, brand ambassador, creating community strategy, reports and management.

Community management is the process of building an authentic community among a business's customers, employees, and partners through various types of interaction. It is the format by which a brand uses opportunities (in-person and online) to interact with their audience to create a network in which they can connect, share, and grow. (Baker, 2019).

#### 4.5 Engagement

Engagement is the core ability of community members to make the best contribution to the community. Engagement skills are the capabilities of the community team to create and maintain the best environment for every community member to make significant contributions to the community. Engagement can be influenced by lack of moderation. It is vital to sustain a healthy ecosystem in the community and resolve issues promptly not to allow them to fester and make a toxic community. The highest level of engagement is achieved when there is a powerful sense of community, good moderation and nurture of highly active community members. (Feverbee, 2013).

## 4.6 Community Engagement Framework

The community engagement framework was created by Rachel Happe to provide a tool for measuring engagement. Engagement behaviours can be split into four categories: validating, sharing, asking and answering and exploring. (Happe, n.d.)



Figure 11. Community Engagement Framework@The Community Roundtable(2016).

The first category is validation, where people are viewing, liking, sharing and responding in the community. Validation behaviour is a light engagement, once a sense of comfort emerges, members, move on to the second category of sharing documents, pictures, updates or idea. The third category is when there is enough connection and people have a sense of trust. That is when people begin to ask questions and participate in the community. The fourth category is when there is enough trust, a partnership can be built. A strong engagement behaviour when people ask questions, have conversations with other members and are willing to explore the community. (Happe, n.d.)

Culture is an essential aspect of the community, which can be measured by the way people are interacting with others when they are not required to do so. This interaction reveals how

supportive, open, caring and innovative the culture is and it can assess the capability of the leadership. (Happe, n.d.)

Community Engagement Framework is designed to identify the nature of the culture of the community whether it is open, passive, reactive or proactive by measuring what percentage of each of these behaviours and in what quantity is exhibited by community members. Community culture may indicate whether the culture supports passive or reactive behaviours or whether members feel confident of claiming ownership of solutions and problems by calculating the frequency of open-ended questions. This data is used to prioritise and create engagement strategies to cultivate a culture of trust within the community to reach strong engagement. (Happe, n.d.)

#### 4.7 Direct Community Engagement

Direct community engagement is the practice of interacting with an online community directly. Marketers or developers form a community around a specific product or title. This engagement takes the form of posting content, answering queries and continually connecting with the target audience. Discord facilitates community interaction by gathering all members on common ground and creates engagement around a specific product or title.

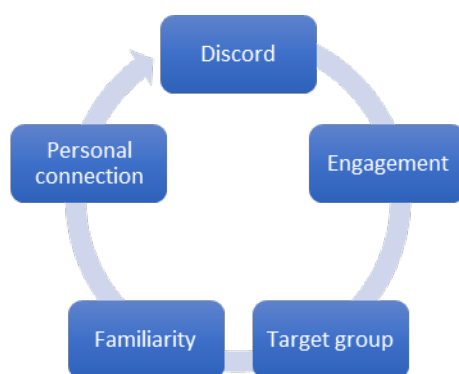


Figure 12. Discord engagement module. Diagram made by the Author.

As seen in Figure 12, this module illustrates engagement on Discord. The engagement begins on Discord platform with a specific target group or a community. The target group creates familiarity, which turns into a personal connection. Thus, a personal connection is formed with the game.

## 4.8 Direct Marketing

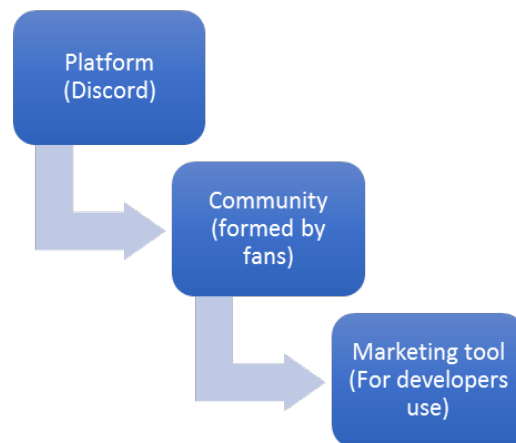


Figure 23. Direct marketing module. Diagram made by the Author.

*Marketing: an Introduction* Kotler (2013) defines direct marketing as connecting with customers directly without the use of intermediaries, often on a one-to-one basis. Direct marketers aim to get an immediate, relative response from their customers. For example, Finnair connects with their customers directly via the app, social media platforms and the website. That way, they can promptly answer any customer issue to drive sales. Nowadays, consumers are more informed than before. Thus a personal connection with a company is of the highest value to them. Consumers have brand relationships and value the personal touch. Therefore, most businesses have an online presence in the form of website and social media account, allowing customers to interact directly with the companies.

## 4.9 Organic Growth

Organic growth refers to the growth rate a company can achieve by increasing its output and enhancing sales internally. (Investopedia). In other words, organic growth means natural company growth achieved by sales. Organic growth strategy aims to maximise growth and utilise revenue on a quarterly or yearly basis. This growth is measured by specific parameters to assess the growth. Achieving organic sales growth is accomplished by promotions, enhanced customer service and launching new product lines. This growth is vital for investors to be assured of the company's ability for long term growth. (Chen, 2019).

## 5 METHODOLOGY

The methodological part of the study explains in detail the research methods, sample, research design and data collection methods.

### 5.1 Empirical Study

In the first section of the empirical study, the researcher identified methods used to collect, generate and analyse data of the study, distinguished the sample group and explained how the empirical part of the study was conducted and structured.

### 5.2 Research Methods

There are two research methods used to collect data and generalise results: qualitative and quantitative. These methods are closely interlinked; nevertheless, they are diverse following the purpose and goal of the study.

The qualitative research method is an exploratory research that provides insights into the problem and studies the problem more in-depth with a small sample size group. In collecting qualitative data, flexible techniques, for example, interviews, open-ended questions in the questionnaire, and observations are applied. These techniques help the researcher to gather responses to questions for the research that is based on the reflection by the respondents on their expression of emotions and experiences on the topic. (O'Gorman & Macintosh., 2015).

Nonetheless, a quantitative research method quantifies attitudes, opinions and behaviour and generalises the results from the large sample size of the population. Quantitative research is used to quantify the problems and attempts to find solutions by generating the data, which later can be turned into statistics. (O'Gorman & Macintosh., 2015).

These methods are normally used by performing a structured survey or questionnaire that focuses on a precise reaction from the respondents. The results of the survey or questionnaire are collected and exhibited in statistical structures that include tables, charts and graphs. (O'Gorman & Macintosh., 2015).



In this study, the quantitative method was chosen to explore the reasons behind Discord's high engagement with members. This method generates plenty of data to process and analyse which can demonstrate a tendency or a pattern. Since the question relates to engagement, quantitative method can generalise data and survey a large sample.

### 5.2.1 Sample Group

Sampling is a process of drawing a sample from a larger population to make conclusions about the whole population, where the population stands for the target group to be studied. (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad, 2010).

The researcher wanted to study engagement on Discord among professionals from the Finnish Game Industry. The research included a small sample population that varies between different professionals, mostly from the Finnish Game Industry.

Primarily, a study that is based on a large sample group is regarded as more accurate and reliable generating copious data. In this study, the sample group represented the population of interest from different companies, fields and locations. A total of 13 respondents concluded the study.

### 5.2.2 Research Design

The research was designed as an online questionnaire to facilitate collecting answers from the respondents. The questionnaire was designed to collect only relevant information and included questions that were essential to meet the research objectives.

The questionnaire was structured with the guidance of the thesis supervisor. It was constructed in the English language for a target group of professionals working in the game industry. The questionnaire was designed to maintain anonymity.

The primary data consists of a quantitative questionnaire regarding engagement on Discord platform, company's age and location and other community platforms. This questionnaire was designed to measure the level of engagement on Discord and other community platforms. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of general questions such as the type of game company, company's age, profession, location, size and other general questions. The second part of the

questionnaire consisted of questions about community platforms and engagement on them utilising dichotomies types of questions and Likert scales.

### 5.2.3 Data Collection

The author of this study has collected information from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are original sources that demonstrate that gathered data has not been previously collected. (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad, 2010).

Hence, the primary data sources of this study were derived from a questionnaire from an industry professionals perspective. The author chose to design an online questionnaire to facilitate collecting answers from the respondents while preserving their anonymity. The online questionnaire was distributed mostly among professionals in the Finnish Game Industry. An online questionnaire is considered to be a cost-efficient and affordable way of collecting quantitative data.

The secondary sources are sources that already have been collected for another purpose and study and are available for researchers for further use in their studies. (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad, 2010) Thus, the secondary data in this study was obtained from study materials, publications and related reports with the aim of acquiring reliable data.

### 5.2.4 Reliability and Validity

The concepts of reliability and validity have a significant impact on the researcher's thoughts about the conducted research (O'Gorman & Macintosh., 2015). The research can be regarded as reliable when the measurement of the data consistently under the same condition within the same subjects (Heale & Tywcross, 2015). The significance, relevance and reliability of information determine the quality of the study's findings. (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad, 2010) The author of this study guaranteed reliable results by gathering data from different sources of information on theoretical knowledge.

Furthermore, validity is used to determine the truthfulness of the results and shows the evidence where the initial interpretation of the data is correct with accurate measurements of the information. The validity and precision of the questionnaire was determined and tested, so that respondents would easily understand it, and correspond to the objectives of the study. This

enabled the questionnaire to gather only relevant information and enhance its validity and reliability.

## 6 DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis section includes the empirical findings its interpretation is analysed in the following subsections.

### 6.1 Company Types

The starting point of the questionnaire was to outline the distribution of company types. The objective was to differentiate between company types of respondents.

The total number of respondents for the questionnaire was 15. 46 per cent of the respondents are Indie<sup>12</sup>, 20 per cent is a AAA<sup>13</sup> company, 13 per cent are a Middle size company, Freelancer, Mobile and not a company account for 7 per cent. Most of the respondents work in an Indie company. Figure 14 shows the company types.

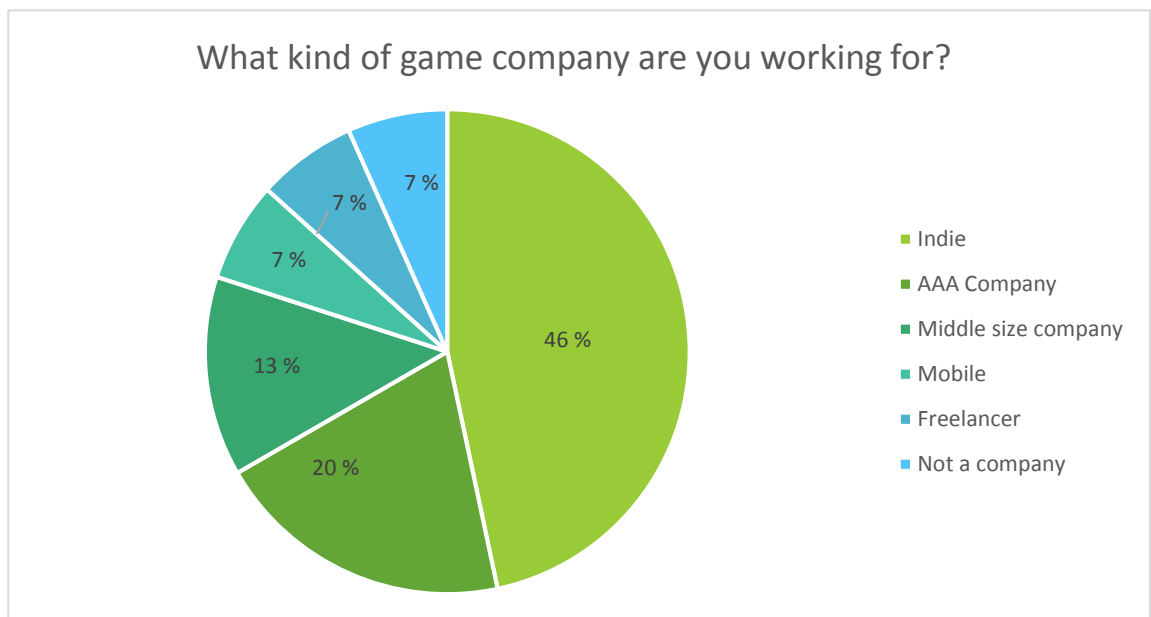


Figure 14. What kind of game company are you working for? (N=15)

<sup>12</sup> Indie is a classification term used to describe independent game studios or those who do not have a publisher (computerhope, 2017)

<sup>13</sup> AAA company or Triple-A is a classification term used for games produced and distributed by a middle-sized to large studios or major publisher, typically having massive budgets for marketing and development. AAA is comparable to the movie industry term "blockbuster". (Schultz, 2018)

## 6.2 Company Location

The second question objective was to identify the location of the companies. The majority consisting of 72 per cent are from Finland, and the rest 7 per cent are from Sweden, UK, France, USA and Serbia. Respondents who answered “Finland” were from “Helsinki”, “Tornio”, “Kajaani” and “Tampere” cities. Figure 15 displays company locations.

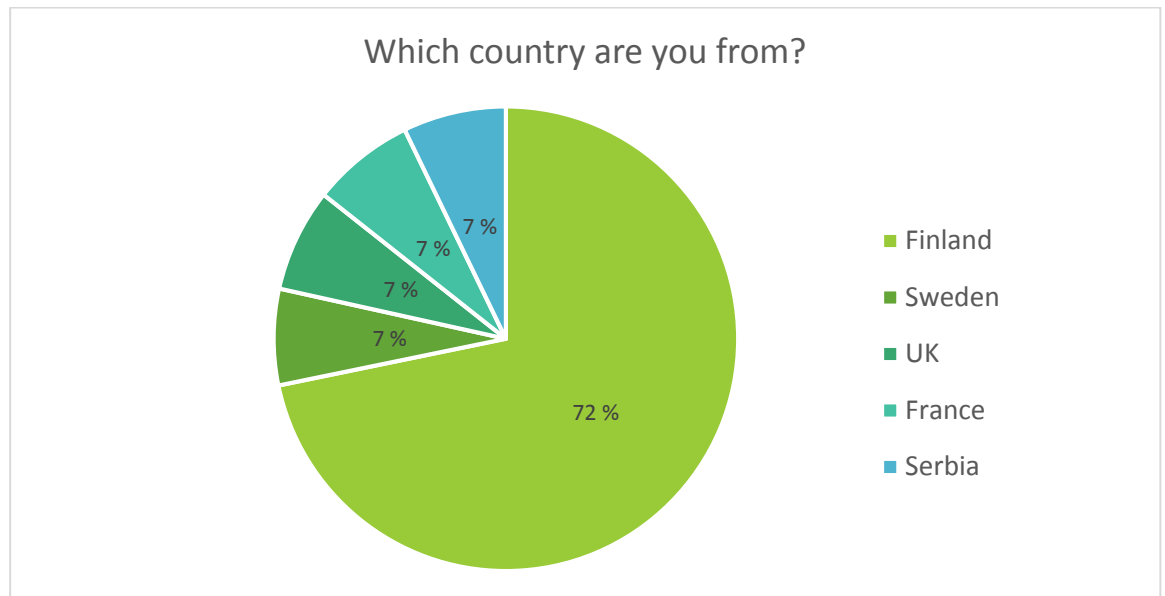


Figure 15. Which country are you from? (N=15)

## 6.3 Company Size

The third question objective was to have a distribution of the size of the companies. Twenty-seven per cent of the respondents' company size is 1-10 people and 11-15 people, 15-50 people and 200-1000 account for 20 per cent, people while 100-200 people are 7.1 per cent. Figure 16 shows the company sizes.

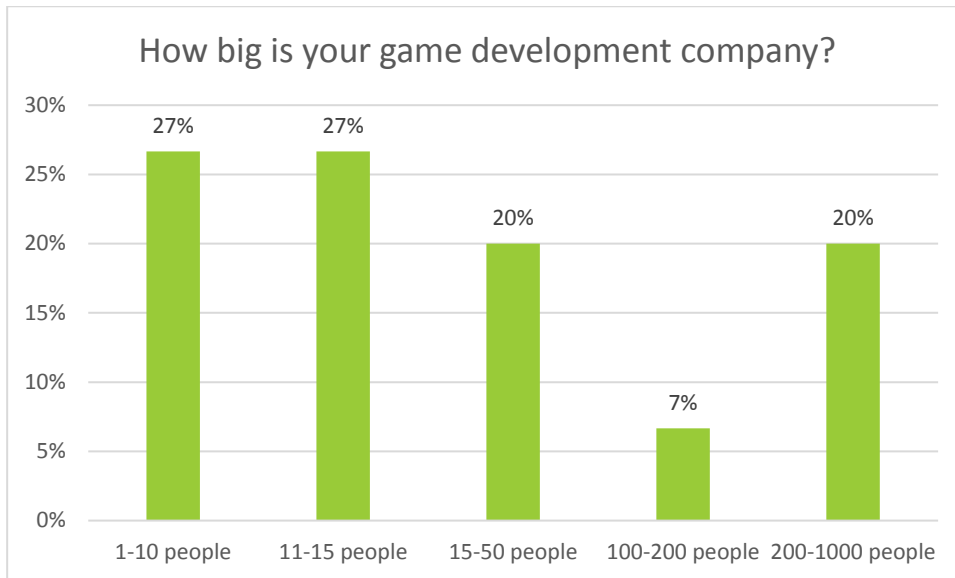


Figure 16. How big is your game development company? (N=15)

#### 6.4 Company's Age

The fourth question explored the age of companies. The majority (40 per cent) have a game company/team for 5-10 years, 20 per cent have a game company of 3-5 years and have a game company for 1-3 years, 13 per cent have a game company of 15-25 years while companies that are over 25 years consist of 7 per cent. Figure 17 demonstrates the companies age distribution.

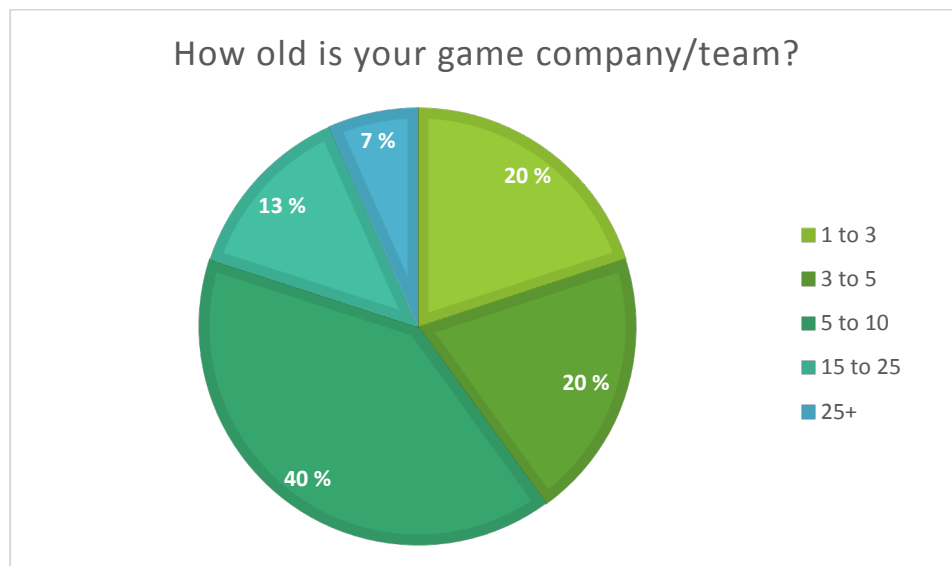


Figure 17. How old is your game company/team? (N=15)

## 6.5 Existence Of A Community

The fifth question objective was to explore how many of the respondents have a community. Based on the given answer, respondents either continued answering the questionnaire or were excluded from answering the rest of the questions and taken to the end of the questionnaire. Therefore, two respondents had to be excluded due to being out of the scope of the questionnaire.

Eighty-seven per cent of the respondents have a community. Only 13 per cent do not have one. Those who chose the “no” option answered, “I just started” or “marketing a game is hard as hell”. Therefore, they were excluded from the questionnaire.

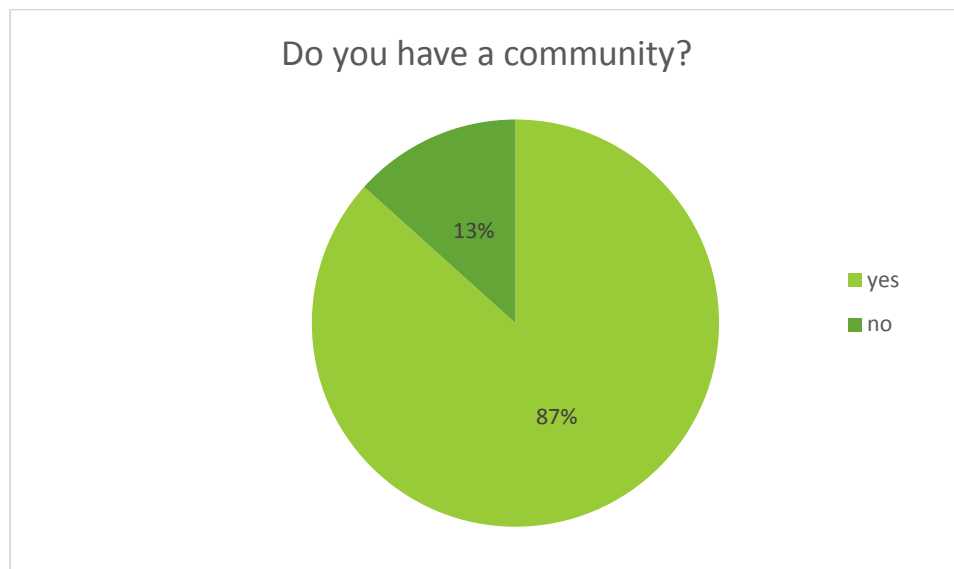


Figure 18. Do you have a community? (N=15)

## 6.6 Community Managers

The goal of the sixth question was to collect information regarding who manages the community. The majority (38 per cent) answered community managers, 30 per cent answered social media managers and community managers, 7 per cent use a third-party agency and community managers and other. Respondents who chose the “other” option answered, “I do both community management & marketing” and “All of our team members”. Figure 19 demonstrates who manages the community.

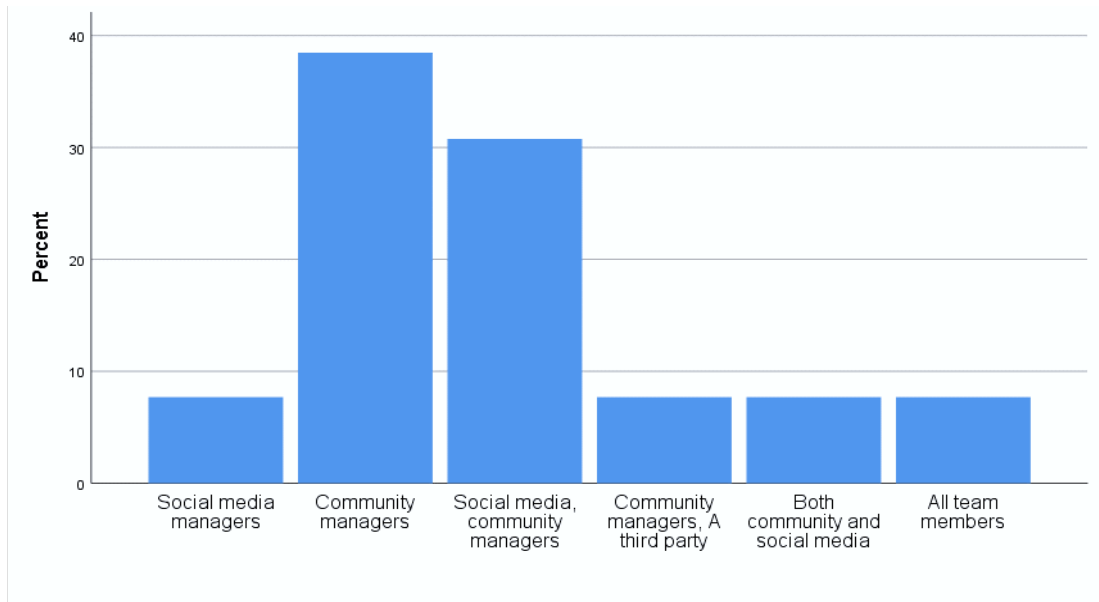


Figure 19. Community management (N=13)

### 6.7 Relevance of Community Building to Financial Success

Seventh question aimed to assess the relevance of having a community to financial success. Forty-six per cent of the respondents chose very important, 30 per cent fairly important, 15.4 per cent important and only 7.7 per cent answered slightly important. Figure 3 illustrates the community-building relevance for financial success.



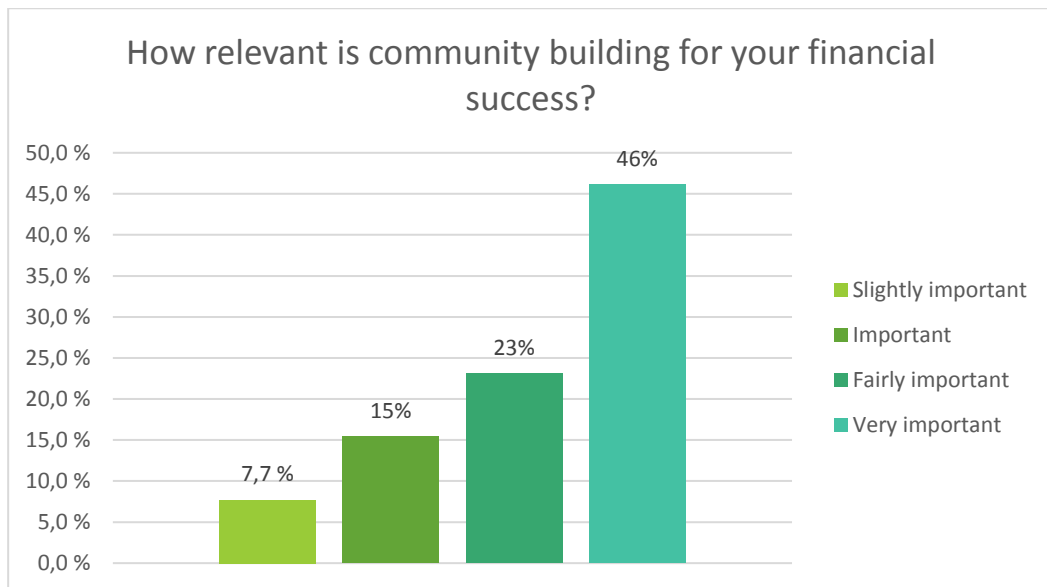


Figure 20. How relevant is community building for your financial success? (N=13)

### 6.8 Usage of Analytics in A Community Strategy

This question aimed to measure the amount of analytics used<sup>14</sup> as part of a community strategy. The majority (50 per cent) use some analytics, 17 per cent use more than average or very little, while only 8 per cent do not use at all and use a lot. Figure 21 displays the usage of analytics.

<sup>14</sup> Usage of analytics is the amount of analytics and metrics used in a community strategy. Analytics can be measured by Google Analytics and similar software.

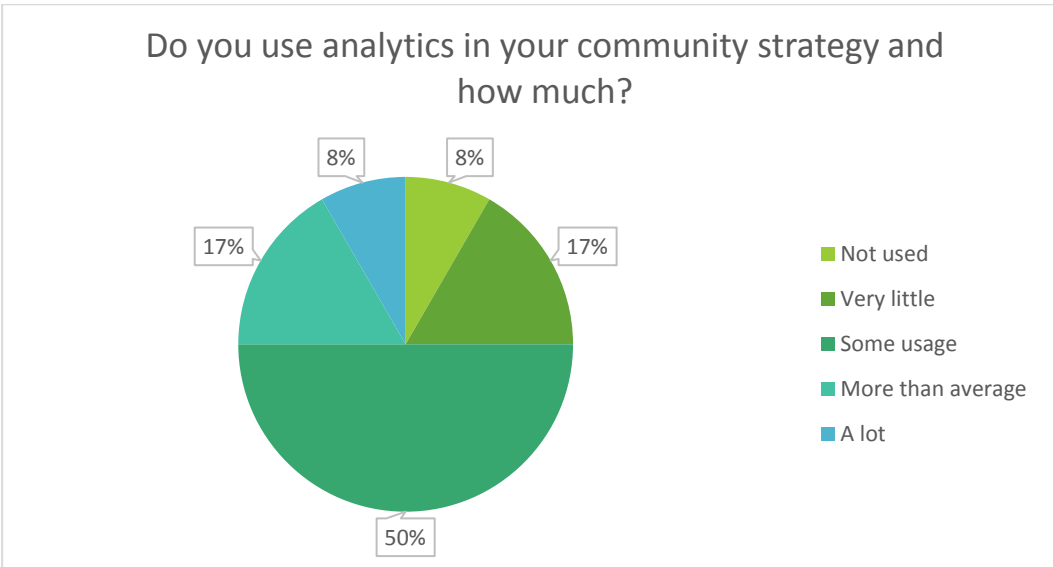


Figure 21. Do you use analytics in your community strategy and how much? (N=13)

6.9 Main Community Hub

This question aimed to discover whether the main community is centred around a game, studio or both. Seventy-seven per cent of the respondents centre their community hub around a game, 15 per cent focus on both and only 7.7 per cent focus on studio. Figure 22 illustrates the community focal point.

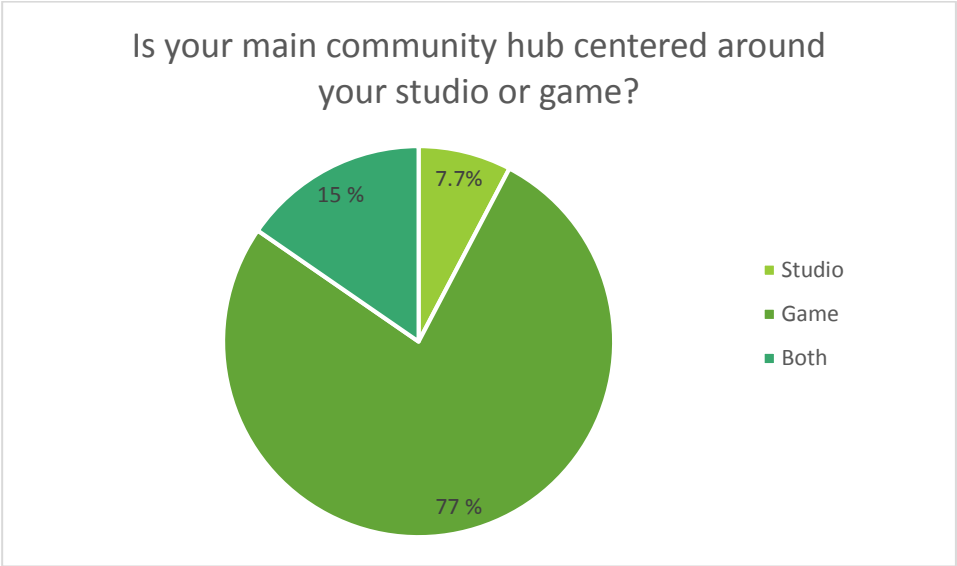


Figure 22. Is your community hub centred around your studio or game? (N=13)

## 6.10 Main Platform for Community Hubs

The objective of this question was to explore what platform is preferred for the main community hub. Forty-six per cent use Discord, while 31 per cent use Facebook as their main hub. Steam, Twitter, Reddit, game forums and multiple channels are used by 7.7 per cent. Figure 23 displays the main community hub platforms.

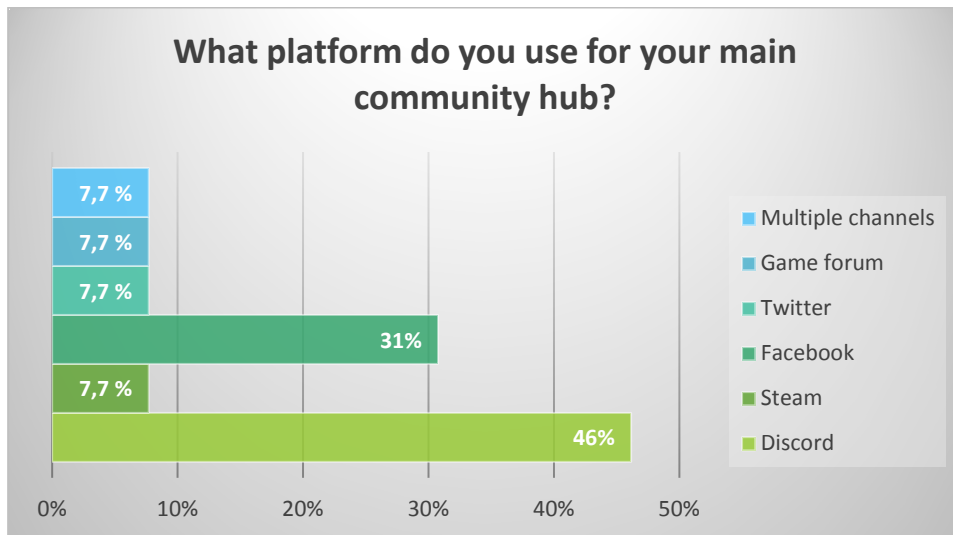


Figure 23. What platform do you use for your main community hub? (N=13)

## 6.11 Benefits of Using Discord for A Community Hub

This question delves deeper and explores the reasons why Discord is preferred among other platforms. Forty-six per cent mentioned "easy to set up and use", 38 per cent "people already have accounts", "platform independence" is important to 23 per cent and the rest 7.7 per cent mentioned "useful bots", "rich presence", "direct communication", "easy to find groups" and other. Respondents who chose the "other" option mentioned "users are more willing to take part in conversation, than on, say, Twitter or Facebook. On social networks, people often tend to be passive lurkers. Rich presence for games helps to maintain player activity in the game, as well as in the community." Alternatively, "easy to find other groups and teams too so we can share knowledge and games".

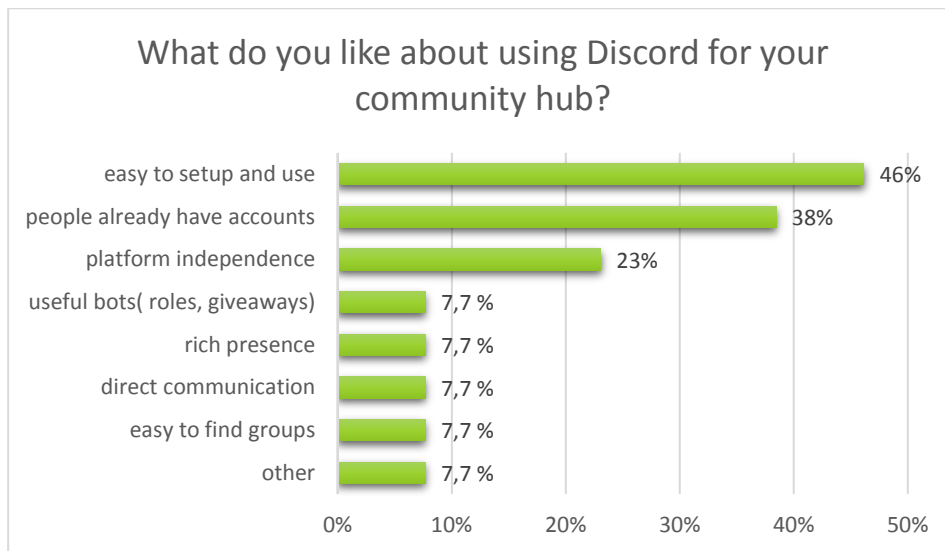


Figure 24. What do you like about using Discord for your community hub? (N=13)

### 6.12 Disadvantages of using Discord

Five main disadvantages were mentioned: Discord's toxic communities requiring diligent moderation, users moving between servers and creating toxicity, constant online presence, many players are unaware of Discord and lack of integration with social media channels to make users transition easier from being a Discord member to, for example, a Twitter follower.

### 6.13 Advantages of Using Facebook for Community Hub

Twenty-seven per cent answered that the advantages of Facebook include familiarity for users and game developers, 13.3 per cent mentioned that people have accounts, and only 6.7 per cent mentioned that post can go viral. Figure 25 demonstrates Facebook's advantages.

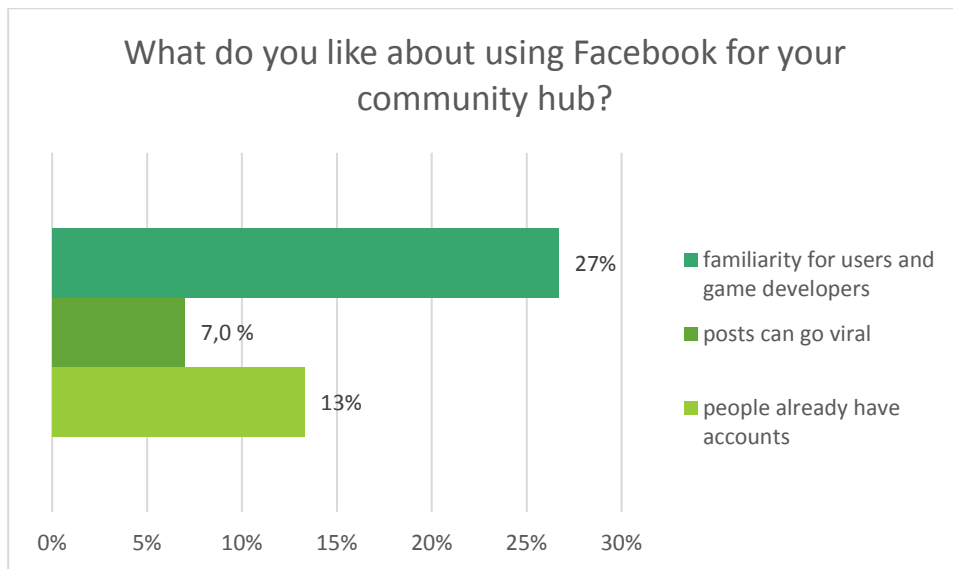


Figure 25. What do you like about using Facebook for your community hub? (N=13)

#### 6.14 Disadvantages of Using Facebook

This question objective was to find out the disadvantages of using Facebook for the main community platform.

Among the answers mentioned were: not all page followers see the posts, the difficulties of achieving organic reach, the changing algorithm, difficulties in moderation and in having meaningful conversations with players.

#### 6.15 Advantages of Using Twitter

This question objective was to find the advantages of using Twitter for the main community hub. 8.2 per cent mentioned the advantages as posts can go viral and easy to stay up to date with trends. Figure 26 shows the advantages of using Twitter.

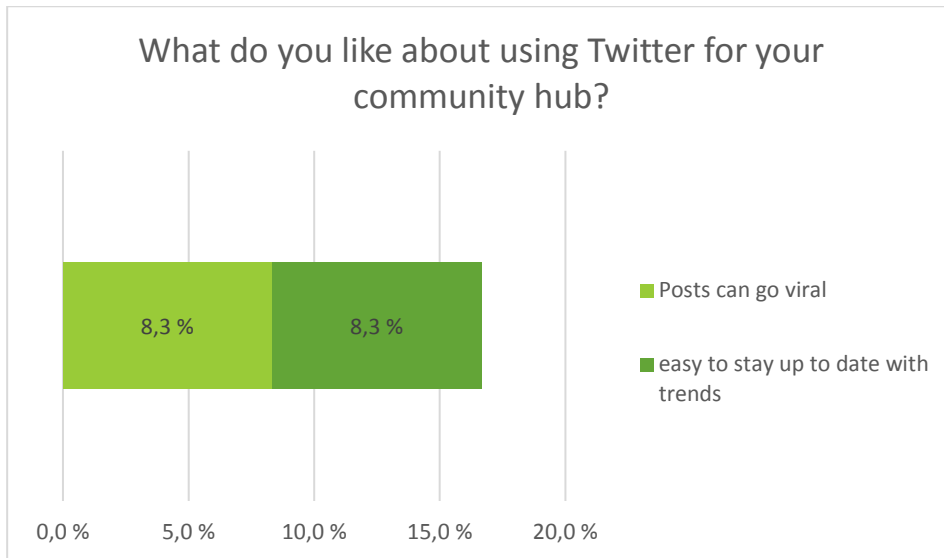


Figure 26. What do you like about using Twitter for your community hub? (N=13)

### 6.16 Other Community Platforms

The question aimed to discover other platforms that are used alongside the main community hub. Nineteen per cent use Facebook, 13,9 per cent use Discord, Steam and Twitter, 33 per cent use Reddit, 8,3 per cent use Instagram and game forums, 5,6 per cent use Tumblr, and the rest 2,8 per cent use 50+ channels and Reddit. Figure 27 illustrates other community platforms.

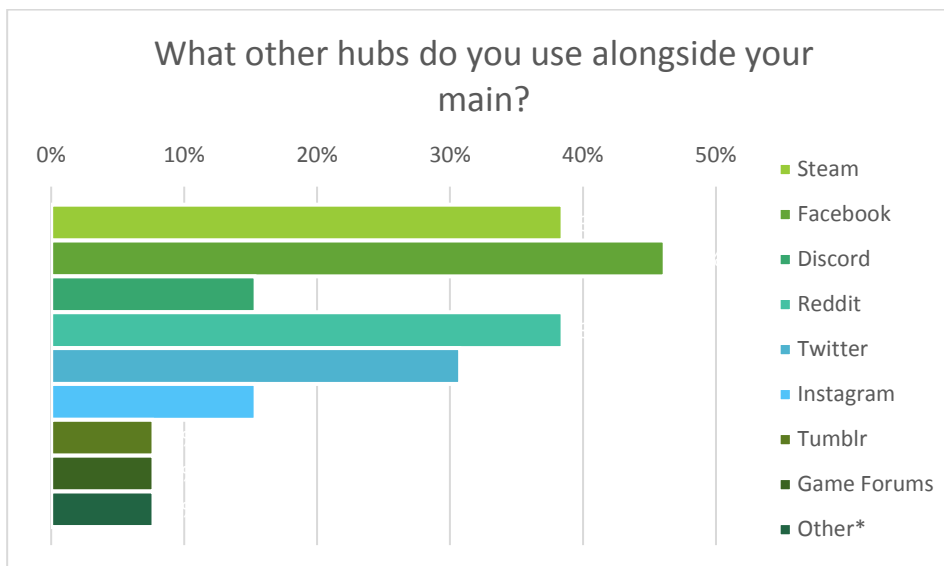


Figure 27. What other hubs do you use alongside your main? (N=13)

### 6.17 Community Size

This question aimed to discover what is the size of the community. The majority consisting of 38 per cent have a community of over 1,000,000 (1M) members while 30 per cent have over 1000 members, 15.4 per cent have between 0-500 members and only 7.7 per cent have over ten thousand members and between 500-1000. Figure 28 demonstrates community size.

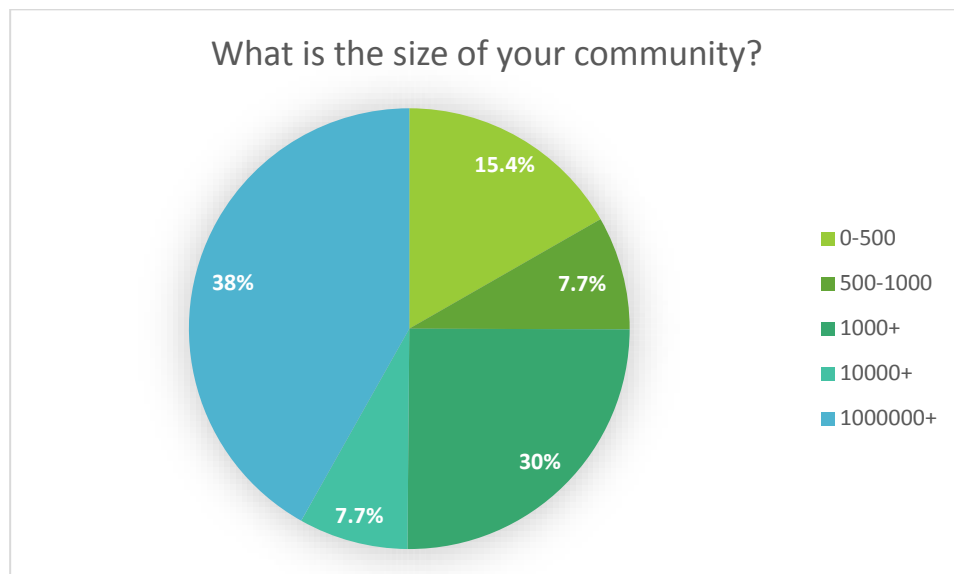


Figure 28. Community size (N=13)

### 6.18 Actions for Engaging With The Community

This question objective was to discover the sort of actions that companies perform to keep their communities engaged. Twenty-nine per cent of the respondents actively join conversations online with the community, 17 per cent use live streams while 15 per cent use daily posts, the rest 10 per cent use weekly contests, play with developers' events, memes and other. Figure 29 illustrates the actions to keep the community active.

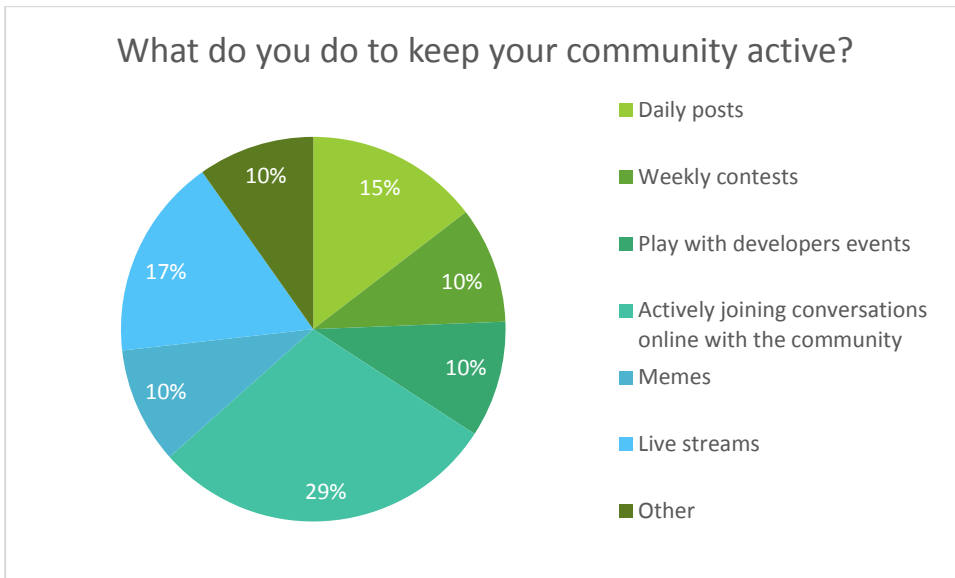


Figure 29. Actions to keep community engaged (N=13)



Team Jolly Roger is a Finnish game development company that was founded in November 1, 2013 by Niklas Saari, Jussi Hyttinen, Antti Tikkakoski, Jari Junkkari, Tarita Tammela and Teemu Tammela. It is based in Kajaani. Team Jolly Roger's speciality is producing multiplatform games with Unity and HTML5. They primarily target PC and consoles and occasionally develop mobile games.

Among their PC releases are *Interplanetary*, *Interplanetary: Enhanced Edition*, *Mushroom Crusher Extreme* and *Worbital*. On May 12, 2015, they had an in-house debut of *Interplanetary*, an <sup>15</sup>award-winning turn-based strategy artillery game, published by Team17 for PC, Mac and Linux. Three years later was the second in-house debut of *Worbital*, a real-time sci-fi strategy game released in January 31, 2018 for PC. *Worbital* was co-developed with Advanced Interactive Gaming Ltd.

TJR has released five mobile games: *Legends of Kitka* (Android, iOS, Windows Phone and browser in 2014), *Break MORE Aliens*, *Spiritual Mobile*, *Break the Aliens* and *Ouroboring LIFE* (Windows Phone 2010 - 2012). (Kaviocluster, n.d.) (TeamJollyRoger, n.d.).

Their work for hire projects consist of *Drive! -simulator software*<sup>16</sup>, including VR support and the partial development of *Carmageddon Crashers* for iOS and Android. (Hiltunen;Latva;& Kaleva, 2018). CSE Simulation Oy created the simulator hardware and developed in cooperation with Finnish Driving School Association. It is used in Finnish driving schools to simulate driving in darkness and tough road conditions.

Moreover, Team Jolly Roger developed four browser games: "*HAMA-peli*", "*Pelittääkö sinulla?*" "*Nivelrikko*" and "*Legends of Kitka*". *HAMA-peli* (HAMA translates as sparsely populated rural area) is a Finnish web-browser HAMA personality quiz. "*Pelittääkö sinulla?*" (Do you play?) is a web browser game developed for the Finnish Museum Association to design and plan a game project. (Tarinat peliin – matkalla museo- ja pelialojen yhteistyöhön, 2019) *Nivelrikko (osteoarthritis in Finnish)* is an online osteoarthritis game, developed for the Finnish Association for Lyme Disease and focuses on the cause of sports injuries. (Suomen Nivelyhdistys ry, 2014)

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<sup>15</sup> Nordic Game Indie Sensation Award 2015 Winner - *Nordic Game*, 21 May, 2015

<sup>16</sup> Certified by TRAFICOM Liikene- ja viestintävirasto (Finnish Transport and Communications Agency)

*Legends of Kitka* is a strategic fishing game, where the goal is to catch fish, upgrade the gear and make a fortune (TeamJollyRoger, n.d.) All of which were non-monetized commissioned projects predominately for informational and advertising purposes.

Team Jolly Roger has a vast online presence on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Indie DB, Discord, Tumblr, Imgur, Steam and YouTube. Team Jolly Roger has decided to use Discord chat platform for marketing their newest game *Worbital*. Team Jolly Roger said about their second in-house release: “*Worbital* is almost here, finally! Exciting times! We could not have done it without our wonderful Discord community, which grew beyond our expectations during the *Worbital* beta. Their feedback has been priceless in helping us create a game that we hope can stand proud among its venerable artillery-strategy ancestors. We want *Worbital* to be the kind of wacky, fun game that people gather around and enjoy playing together.” (Gamasutra, 2019).

## 7.1 Beta Testing Phase

Beta testing stage is when a product is still being tested and has not been officially released to the public. Beta version is released to gather feedback and reporting bugs. Christensson, P. (2013) During the beta testing phase, many beta versions are released, including new updates and bug fixes. The two types of beta are open and closed. The open beta, which is also a public beta, is released to everyone while the closed beta or private beta is released to a controlled testing group.

### 7.1.1 *Worbital* Beta Process

*Worbital* beta was a public beta. It had three stages: beta 1 (July 9- September 24), beta 2 (October 26-31, 2018) and beta 3 (January 11th-16th). In the first stage, members were actively encouraged to become beta testers for *Worbital* and join the Discord community. (Steam community, n.d.).

Beta key delivery methods

During the beta 1 stage, potential players had to join the Discord community and ask for a beta key in the *wrb\_request\_beta-key channel* on the server. The beta key allowed them to play the game. After this request, they received a direct message with the beta key. The goal during beta 1 was to grow the community. Beta stage 1 correlates to the initiation stage of an online community lifecycle.

In the beta 2 stage, keys were distributed in a limited fashion. Players had to fill a beta tester survey via Google Forms in order to get the beta key. Survey questions included their motivation to become a beta tester and previous experience. This survey made a higher entry barrier and created exclusivity due to limitation. Players had no prior knowledge of being approved or not. Therefore, once chosen, they felt more grateful and compelled to participate in the discussions.

In the Beta 3 stage, the first unlimited delivery method was employed. Whereas, anyone who wanted a beta key asked for it and received it in a direct message. The goal during this stage was to grow and nurture the community base before the official launch of the game.

#### Members engagement during the different beta stages

The highest engagement was achieved during the beta stages. Members commented on the game, added suggestions and reported bugs on Discord server. Other channels were solely for entertainment such as off-topic, art & memes. Some contributing factors that drove engagement were: Devs Play Worbital events, Tactics Tuesday and Worbital Fun Facts. The first factor was weekly Play with Developers event where players could play online against developers. These events were scheduled in advance, and members actively joined those. Players could also chat with the developers in an in-game channel. Tactics Tuesday was created during beta 1 to engage the community every week. This channel was open only on Tuesdays and members were encouraged to share their in-game best strategies and tactics. Lastly, Worbital Fun Fact was created on September 26 for keeping the community involved. Worbital Fun Fact was a bi-weekly series of posts about fun facts of Worbital. They created some activity on social media platforms. Currently, Worbital community on Discord has approximately 6300<sup>17</sup> members.

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<sup>17</sup> At the moment of writing this thesis.

## 8 CONCLUSION

The conclusion section includes research findings and discussion.

### 8.1 Research Findings

The objective of this thesis was to explore community engagement on Discord platform through the implementation of an online questionnaire. In order to simplify data analysis, the questions were divided into two sections: general questions such as the type of game company, company's age, location, size and other general questions and the second part of the questionnaire consisted of questions about engagement on community platforms.

The research findings demonstrate that forty-six per cent of the respondents have their main community on Discord platform. Respondents prefer Discord platform due to it "being easy to set up and use", that "people already have accounts" and "platform independence". The other top three community platforms used alongside with the main community are Steam, Twitter and Reddit.

Most of the respondents have community managers to interact with their community. The larger the game development team- the more people are in charge of community management (companies that have both a social media manager and a community manager). The majority of the respondents consider that community building is very important for financial success. The majority use some analytics in their community strategy.

Seventy-five per cent centre their community on a game. Therefore, the majority of the communities are based on one singular product. Thirty-eight per cent of the respondents have over 1,000,000(1M) members in their community and they use multiple channels to engage with their community.

It can be concluded that community engagement is complicated due to the various actions companies use to interact with their communities such as joining conversations online, live streams, daily posts, organising weekly contests, arranging play with developers events, memes and other. It appears that the more resources the company has, the more it can invest in engaging

with its community. For instance, AAA companies, in addition, use content publishing, community moderation, listening and various engagement promotions.

The majority of the respondents were from Finland. Finnish companies have been world-leaders in technology, ICT, paper and pulp industries, with globally known companies such as UPM-Kymmene, Stora Enso, Kone, Metso, Neste Oil, Wärtsilä and Nokia. (Finnish companies make Forbes Global 2000, 2016) (Forbes Global 2000 list, n.d.).

## 8.2 Discussion

The central idea of this research was to explore community engagement on Discord platform via an online questionnaire from the company's perspective. From the author's perspective, the research objective has been achieved and the study was successfully conducted. However, this research was conducted from the company's perspective, the majority of which are from Finland. Therefore, the findings of the study cannot be fully generalised.

Likewise, the same idea of the research can be studied from the player's perspective to discover their preferences and reasons to engage on Discord.

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10 APPENDICES

**Appendix 1: The frequency distributions table from statistics programme SPSS**

General questions

1) What kind of game company are you working for?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Indie	7	46.7	46.7	46.7
	AAA	3	20.0	20.0	66.7
	Middle size	2	13.3	13.3	80.0
	Mobile	1	6.7	6.7	86.7
	Freelancer	1	6.7	6.7	93.3
	Not a company	1	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

2) Where are you located?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Finland	10	66.7	66.7	66.7
	France	1	6.7	6.7	73.3
	USA	1	6.7	6.7	80.0
	Sweden	1	6.7	6.7	86.7
	UK	1	6.7	6.7	93.3
	Serbia	1	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

3) How big is your game development company?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-10	4	26.7	26.7	26.7
	11-15	4	26.7	26.7	53.3
	15-50	3	20.0	20.0	73.3
	100-200	1	6.7	6.7	80.0
	200-1000	3	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

4) How old is your game company\team?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-3	3	20.0	20.0	20.0
	3-5	3	20.0	20.0	40.0
	5-10	6	40.0	40.0	80.0
	15-25	2	13.3	13.3	93.3
	25+	1	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

5) Do you have a community?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	13	86.7	86.7	86.7
	No	2	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

6) Who manages your community-building?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Social media managers	1	7.7	7.7	7.7
	Community managers	5	38.5	38.5	46.2
	Social media, community managers	4	30.8	30.8	76.9
	Community managers, A third party	1	7.7	7.7	84.6
	Both community and social media	1	7.7	7.7	92.3
	All team members	1	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

7) How relevant is community building for your financial success?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Slightly important	1	6.7	7.7	7.7
	Important	2	13.3	15.4	23.1
	Fairly important	4	26.7	30.8	53.8
	Very important	6	40.0	46.2	100.0
	Total	13	86.7	100.0	

7) Do you use analytics in your community strategy and how much?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not used	1	7.7	7.7	7.7
	Very little	2	15.4	15.4	23.1
	Some usage	7	53.8	53.8	76.9
	More than average	2	15.4	15.4	92.3
	A lot	1	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

9) Is your main community hub centred around your studio or game?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Studio	1	7.7	7.7	7.7
	Game	10	76.9	76.9	83.3
	Both	2	15.4	15.4	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

10) What platform do you use for your main community hub?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Discord	6	46.2	46.2	41.7
	Facebook	4	30.8	30.8	75.0
	Game Forum	1	7.7	7.7	83.3
	Twitter	1	7.7	7.7	91.7
	Multiple channels	1	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	13	29.3	100.0	

11) What do you like about using Discord for your community hub?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	People already have accounts, Easy to set up and use, Direct communication with players	1	7.7	7.7	7.7
	Platform independence	1	7.7	7.7	33.3
	Easy to set up and use, Platform independence	1	7.7	7.7	50.0
	Easy to set up and use, People already have accounts, Easy to find other groups and teams	1	7.7	7.7	66.7
	Easy to set up and use, People already have accounts, Useful bots (roles, give aways)	1	7.7	7.7	83.3
	Easy to set up and use, People already have accounts, Platform independence	1	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	6	46.2	100.0	
Missing	System	9	53.8		
Total		15	100.0		

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Easy to setup and use	6	12.2	31.3	31.3
	People already have accounts	5	9.8	25.0	56.3
	Platform independence	3	4.9	12.5	68.8
	Useful bots (roles, giveaways)	1	2.4	6.3	75.0
	Rich presence	1	2.4	6.3	81.3
	Direct communication	1	2.4	6.3	87.5
	Easy to find groups	1	2.4	6.3	93.8
	Other	1	2.4	6.3	100.0
	Total	19	39.0	100.0	

12) What do you like about using Facebook for your community hub?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	People already have accounts	2	28.6	28.6	28.6
	Posts can go viral	1	14.3	14.3	42.9
	Familiarity for users and game developers	4	57.1	57.1	100.0
	Total	7	100.0	100.0	

13) What do you like about using Twitter for your community hub?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Posts can go viral	1	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Easy to stay up to date with trends	1	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	2	100.0	100.0	

23) What other hubs do you use alongside your main?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Steam,Facebook, Twitter,Instagram,Tumblr	1	7.7	7.7	7.7
	Facebook, Reddit	1	7.7	7.7	15.4
	Steam, Facebook, Discord, Reddit	1	7.7	7.7	23.1
	Reddit	1	7.7	7.7	30.8
	Reddit, Twitter	1	7.7	7.7	38.5
	Facebook, Reddit, Twitter	1	7.7	7.7	46.2
	Discord	1	7.7	7.7	53.8
	50+ channels	1	7.7	7.7	61.5
	Steam, Facebook, Instagram, Own forum	1	7.7	7.7	69.2
	Steam, Twitter	1	7.7	7.7	76.9
	Facebook	1	7.7	7.7	84.6
	Steam	1	7.7	7.7	92.3
	None	1	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

24) What is the size of your community?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-500	2	15.4	15.4	15.4
	500-1000	1	7.7	7.7	23.1
	1000+	4	30.8	30.8	53.8
	10000+	1	7.7	7.7	61.5
	1000000+	5	38.5	38.5	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

25) What do you do to keep your community active?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily posts, Play with Developers, Actively joining conversations online with the community, Memes, Live Streams	4	30.8	30.8	30.8
	Actively joining conversations online with the community, Live Streams	1	7.7	7.7	38.5
	Actively joining conversations online with the community, General ad hoc posts	1	7.7	7.7	46.2
	Daily posts, Weekly contests, Actively joining conversations online with the community, Live Streams, Sneak peek	1	7.7	7.7	53.8
	Weekly contests, Actively joining conversations online with the community	1	7.7	7.7	61.5
	Actively joining conversations online with the community, sharing fan content	1	7.7	7.7	69.2
	Actively joining conversations online with the community, update Youtube channel, write a blog	1	7.7	7.7	76.9
	Actively joining conversations online with the community, Weekly Devblog	1	7.7	7.7	84.6
	Daily posts, Play with Developers, Actively joining conversations online with the community, Live Streams	1	7.7	7.7	92.3
	Actively joining conversations online with the community	1	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	13	100.0	100.0	

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily posts	6	14.6	14.6	14.6
	Weekly contests	4	9.8	9.8	24.4
	Play with developer events	4	9.8	9.8	34.1
	Actively joining conversations online with the community	13	29.3	29.3	63.4
	Memes	4	9.8	9.8	73.2
	Live streams	7	17.1	17.1	90.2
	Other	4	9.8	9.8	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	100.0	



## **Appendix 2: Thesis research**

\* Required

1) What kind of game company are you working for? \* (Multiple choice)

- Indie
- AAA company
- I am a freelancer
- Add option

2) Where are you located? \* (Short answer)

3) How big is your game development company? \* (Multiple choice)

- 1-10 people
- 11-15 people
- 15-50 people
- 50-100 people
- 100-200 people
- 200-1000+ people

4) How old is your game company\team? \* (Multiple choice)

- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 15-25 years
- 25+ years

5) Do you have a community? \* (Multiple choice)

- Yes
- No

6) Who manages your community-building? (Multiple choice)

- Social media managers
- Community managers
- A third-party (agency, individual contractor)
- Interns

7) How relevant is community building for your financial success? (linear scale)

1-5 (not important at all- very important)

8) Do you use analytics in your community strategy and how much? (linear scale)

1-5 (very minimal-maximum)

9) Is your main community hub centered around your studio or game? (Multiple choice)

- Studio

- Game
- Both

10) What platform do you use for your main community hub? (Multiple choice)

- Discord
- Steam
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Reddit
- Instagram

11) What do you like about using Discord for your community hub? (Checkboxes)

- Easy to set up and use
- People already have accounts
- Platform independence
- Useful bots(roles, give aways)

12) What don't you like about using Discord? (paragraph)

13) What do you like about using Steam for your community hub? (Checkboxes)

- Is set up automatically & free
- May positively influence purchasing decision

14) What don't you like about using Steam? (paragraph)

15) What do you like about using Facebook for your community hub? (Checkboxes)

- People already have accounts
- Posts can go viral
- Familiarity for users and game developers

16) What don't you like about using Facebook? (paragraph)

17) What do you like about using Twitter for your community hub? (Checkboxes)

- People already have accounts
- Posts can go viral
- Easy to stay up to date with trends

18) What don't you like about using Twitter? (paragraph)

19) What do you like about using Reddit for your community hub? (Checkboxes)

- People already have accounts
- Posts can go viral
- Ability to track the most popular\discussed themes

20) What don't you like about using Reddit? (paragraph)

21) What do you like about using Instagram for your community hub? (Checkboxes)

- Many people use Instagram
- Hashtags increase posts visibility

- Easy to encourage user-generated submissions
- High visibility

22) What don't you like about using Instagram?

23) What other hubs do you use alongside your main?

- Steam
- Facebook
- Discord
- Reddit
- Add option

24) What is the size of your community? (Multiple choice)

- 0-500
- 500- 1000
- 1000+
- 10000
- 1000000+

25) What do you do to keep your community active? (Checkboxes)

- Daily posts
- Weekly contests
- Play with Developers events
- Actively joining conversations online with the community
- Memes
- Live streams

26) Why don't you have a community? (Paragraph)

### **Appendix 3: A selection of the most intriguing answers received from the questionnaire**

#### **Actions to maintain an active community**

*“Actively joining conversations online with the community, General ad hoc posts.”*

*“Daily posts, Weekly contests, Play with Developers events, Actively joining conversations online with the community, Memes, Live streams, All of these and much more, the question doesn't take into account the big AAA companies who combine content publishing, community moderation, listening and various engagement promotions some of which are pretty extensive.”*

*“Actively joining conversations online with the community, Sharing fan content.”*

*“Actively joining conversations online with the community, We sometimes update our youtube channel or write a blog on what is going on. We work on/off since we cannot focus mainly on making games.”*

*“Daily posts, Weekly contests, Actively joining conversations online with the community, Live streams, Sneak peeks about the next update.”*

#### **General notes**

*"I would suggest you take a closer look of the possible channels out there by using a popular game as a benchmark. Depending on your focus and the view on engagement, I'd suggest focusing on smaller companies. Bigger companies do not reveal their tactics and discuss them openly and researching what tactics they use is almost impossible unless you work for the said company. It's an interesting topic but almost no one wants to give away what works for them and what doesn't unless it's a start-up."*

*"Community engagement is quite difficult when your games don't have online or updating components (such as single-player narrative games), and new games take 3-6 years to produce. Coming up with content in the downtime after launch and before next announcement is a struggle, and not putting out content means losing both engaged and casual fans. Thankfully we have a known game under our belt and know that both engaged and casual fans will come back when we announce/launch again, but perhaps not as many fans will return as in the situation where the dev cycle is shorter."*

**What platform do you use for your main community hub?**

*"There isn't a single channel that tops them all (and even if there was, that would be a trade secret), you need to use multiple channels in order to be successful. we use ~50+ channels in total"*