Women as Video Game Consumers

Hanna Kiviranta

Abstract

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Author	
Hanna Kiviranta	

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The purpose of this Thesis is to study women as video game consumers through the games that they play. This was done by case studies on the content of five video games from genres that statistically are popular amongst women.

To introduce the topic and to build the theoretical framework, the key terms and the video game industry are introduced. The reader is acquainted with theories on consumer behaviour, buying processes and factors that influence our consuming habits. These aspects are tied together by discussing women as consumers of technology, and the video game marketing specifically targeted for women. Lastly, the theoretical framework is finalised with important statistics and earlier data on video game consumers, as well as the specific genres they prefer.

The case study research is conducted with the research problem in mind: what video games do women play, and are there common characteristics amongst these games which could give us more insight why they prefer these games and their genres? All the games are analysed through a defined set of questions and criteria, as well as compared to their respective genres and each other. Finally, the results are analysed in relation to the theories on consumer behaviour and past data on women as video game players.

The purpose of this Thesis is to give insight on women as a video game consumer group, and to work as a possible base for future research on this topic. This study was conducted as an independent research, and was not commissioned by any outside party.

Keywords
Games, gender, marketing communications, consumer behaviour

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1   Introduction

Traditionally, video games and gaming have been seen as a hobby for children and young men, and women seen as an anomaly in the gaming community. It can be seen in the formation of terms, such as 'gamer-girl' – a female who seeks attention through the gaming community, without truly knowing how to play any game. The thought that women don't play video games (or if they do, they do so badly), seems to be rampant. But is it truly so? Are women, indeed, a minority as a demographic of gamers? As a woman and a video game enthusiast, I wanted to delve deeper into the subject, and through this Thesis, maybe get some answers to these questions.

Studies would show us that women are no minority in the gaming community. Ranging from traditional games to mobile games, all the way to console games, adult women have become increasingly important as consumers. The objective of this thesis, is to find out what kind of games women play, what important characteristics these games share, and ultimately, is it possible to learn about women as a demographic in this field, through the games they play?

It is also important to remember the various levels of commitment to video games, and gaming as a hobby. Do the needs found in the research apply to all players, or are these needs different between casual and serious gamers? Is there generally a need to talk about gender when it comes to video games – or is it old-fashioned to think that women and men are that different?

Gaming, or video games in themselves are a massive field, and it would be impossible to discuss all aspects of it, even when talking about gender. The culture of gaming is heavily different with, for example, online multiplayer games compared to mobile games, which have exploded in popularity in the 2010's (examples: Candy Crush Saga, Supercell games). This thesis will be discussing console video games, such as games for Xbox, PlayStation or PC. Quite often games are developed cross-console, so when talking about specific games, they can often be found on different platforms, such as hand-held, console and PC. In this research, I will be talking about women generally as video game consumers, with no specified region or area pointed out as the sole focus. I have of course, tried to find accessible data from all over the world, including Finland. As I study in a Finnish University of Applied Sciences, some minor focus has been shed on Finnish studies and findings, but always compared and related to findings from other sources and countries as well.

1.1 Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured into the first chapter of introducing of the topic, second chapter of the theoretical framework, third chapter of case study research, fourth chapter of analysis of the results and lastly the fifth chapter of discussion.

In the introduction, the key concepts of this Thesis are introduced along with the most important terminology. In second chapter, the theoretical framework explains the some ways of examining buyer behaviour, followed by information on female buying behaviour as related to technology. The important statistics of video game consumers are given to understand and justify case study choices.

In the third chapter, the case study research looks into five games from specific game genres. Important concepts and genre information are explained for each game, so it is possible to easily understand the game without playing through it. Finally, the five games' contents are compared to each other. Some visual examples of the explained points are given as well. The results delve further into the analysis of the comparisons, some common and important characteristics in these games.

In the fifth chapter, the discussion, I have examined ethical viewpoints, own learning, and possibilities for future development: mostly on points and viewpoints that are not especially considered in this Thesis. The video game industry is an immensely wide world with full of interesting topics and aspects, and due to limitations, it is hard to tackle all of them in a Bachelor's Thesis. I will also talk about possibilities of further research, and the possible angles to consider. I will be talking about the research process, availability of material and data, and the trustworthiness of this research.

1.2 Research problems and objectives

The research problem is understanding women as video game consumers. As this research has been done from the perspective of business and marketing communication, I chose the method of case study research. To understand what attracts the examined consumer group, it is impossible to simply analyse the marketing of these products to the audience desired, especially in our digital age. It is important to understand that the most important marketing that a video game company (or any company in the 21st century, for that matter) can indeed do is the product itself. People are very connected online through social media and other forums and platforms. If a game is truly worth their time and effort,

they will find out through their peers. Simply stated: if the game does not live up to the expectations, the potential consumers will know about it.

From a marketing and communications viewpoint, the game content is vital. The content, at the end, is what speaks to the consumer and players: do they feel that they are represented, do they get emotional attachment to the game, or are such things necessary at all? Video games are entertainment, and the purpose of many entertainment facilities are giving, for example, a possibility to engage in an imaginary world, to do or see things not possible in real life, such as flying or fighting with a sword in the Middle Ages. In short: to understand the consumer, there is a need to understand the products they buy and use.

The objective of this Thesis is to gather data that could tell us more about the games of popular game genres amongst female players. This could tell us more about women as consumers of video games as related to the theoretical framework and previous research. The research questions are:

- What characteristics are there in the games that women play?
- Are there universal, uniting characteristics in these games?
- Is it possible to discuss women as gamers through these characteristics?

As the video game industry is a massive one, as well as the consumer base, it is obvious to see that it is hard to purely declare what specific games women play, as it is hard for the general population as well. It is possible to find statistics that can give us an idea about what kind of games are most popular amongst women. This Thesis is going to be looking at some of the game genres that according to the previous research presented are popular amongst women. There are both examples of games that a casual female player would play, as well as some that are more oriented for the core-players mentioned in the theoretical base.

The above-mentioned commitment to video games is important, and for this research I have deliberately chosen games meant for both groups; the casual gamer and the core gamer. While these groups might have different needs, I thought it was interesting to compare the games and their genres meant for both groups to each other. They all still fall into the same category of female gamers, and give insight as to the importance of commitment levels to the needs of the player.

This being established, it is important to realize that the games chosen for this research are not established as solely 'women's games', but are representatives of the general

genre of games chosen according to previous research available. Categorizing game-genres has also become increasingly difficult as many genres are often combined in games. Many of the games in this study, therefore, might represent more than simply one group of game genres.

1.3   Key terms

Since this research will be read by people who are not necessarily as familiar with some terminology associated with video games and popular culture, it felt important to add a summary of the ones used in this Thesis.

Video games: all digital game forms; they can range from mobile to PC games in many different genres

Console games: video games played on different kinds of consoles, such as Xbox One, PlayStation (PS), Nintendo Switch, etc.

PC-games: Personal computer games – quite often, same games are developed for consoles and PC alike

FPS: First-person shooter game, where the game is portrayed from the player's perspective

Platform games: a game which involves guiding a character/avatar through different platforms/obstacles

RPG: Role-playing game, several subcategories:

RPS: Role-playing shooter game, a game which has elements and characteristics from both role-playing games and first-person shooting games

MMORPG: Massively Multiplayer Online Role-playing game

JRPG: Japanese Role-playing Game, an RPG game developed in Japan, usually with a style very distinctive to Japanese popular culture

WRPG: Western Role-playing Game, an RPG game developed in any Western country

MOBA: Multiplayer Online Battle Arena, a strategy game where two teams fight to destroy the other's bases

MMO: An online game which is simultaneously played by players amounting to even thousands, for example World of Warcraft, and are available for many platforms, such as PC, consoles and smartphones

Adventure game: A game where the player controls the protagonist through the game by interaction and puzzle-solving

Anime: In West known as Japanese animation, while in Japan the term covers all animation

Chibi: A form and style of drawing in manga and anime where the character's proportions are changed to seem 'cuter', often used to depict a character as more child-like or childish

Co-op (co-operation): When a game can be played with at least one other player

Stealth game: A game in which the player needs to use stealth, or 'sneak around' to avoid enemies' detection.

2   Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the theoretical framework of this research will be set up through examining past research and data. As this Thesis is about consumer behaviour of a specific group, theories of consumer behaviour and the buying process are explored, as well as the various influencers that affect it. The past data of women as consumers of technology are introduced, as well as important statistics of video games and their players.

2.1   The Video Game Industry

Games have become an increasingly important part of our daily entertainment, with games getting more popular than traditional digital forms of entertainment, such as television. Consoles have a larger role in our entertainment than simple games – with them it is possible to use other forms of media, such as Netflix, Viaplay, YouTube, Spotify etc. Games have become a driving force in modern popular culture, and not only competing with other forms of entertainment, but importantly complementing it. An example of this could be different franchises being spread out on different platforms, such as several Marvel series, as well as Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, with block buster movies turned to games, Walking Dead and Game of Thrones from massively popular television series into games, etc. These are mostly western examples, but all the way on the other side of the globe, popular, cult-classic anime series in Japan have been turned into games as well, such as Naruto, Bleach, One Piece etc.

As implied, the industry is spread out far and wide across the globe, with important regions being East-Asia, North America and Europe. There are some important actors in the industry, such as Electronic Arts (U.S), Bandai Namco (Japan), Activision-Blizzard (U.S), Riot Games (U.S), Microsoft (U.S), Sony (Japan), Nintendo (Japan); not to forget all the independent game developers around the globe. The companies mentioned are massive corporations, with plenty of interest to attract plenty of different kind of consumers. From a historical point of view, children were the first important demographic that played digital video games, but eventually these children that grew up with games have grown up to become adults – without discarding their hobby (Nichols, 2014). Digital games have even become an official sport; e-sports have grown large interest, with popularity booming in the 2010's, with examples such as *Dota 2*, *League of Legends*, *Counter-Strike: Global Offence*, *Call of Duty*, and the list goes on (Nichols, 2014).

While the formal research on video games is in its beginnings (Nichols, 2014), what research has been done, has focused quite strongly on aspects such as violence in video games, its effect on players, such as children, as well as video games as a hobby for

young men. But, while still not very numerous, there is a growing number of research done in the demographic of females as consumers of video games. This Thesis' mission is to explore several aspects of women as video game consumers, and to start, it is wise to explore the concept of consumer behaviour, and some aspects of women as consumers of technology.
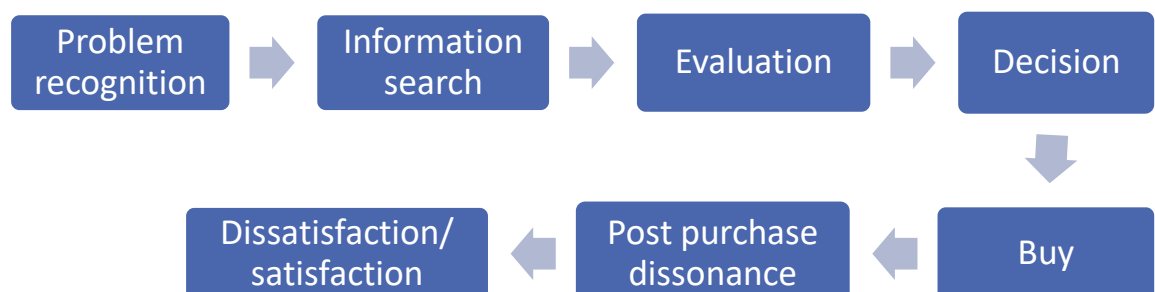
2.2 Consumer Behaviour

While consumers often tend to think of themselves as rational decision makers, the truth is that most of the time our buying behaviour is actually the result of a rather complex **emotional process**. The developed world lives in an era of consumerism, where what we consume highlights what we are as people; what do we represent, what do we want to show to the world, and what image we give out of ourselves. Through the strong brands of companies and their products, people give a message to the rest of the world about who they are and how they identify themselves. Every product from a consumer perspective, is in a sense, a message. (Solomon, 2011)

It is important to understand some of the basic patterns that affect the way we consume, what processes are required for the actual consuming to happen, and to understand the various levels of consumer psychology behind our buying habits.

2.2.1 Buying Process

There are several ways in which we can try to understand the process that the potential buyer goes through. A simple **buying process with high involvement** goes somewhere along the lines of this:

Problem recognition → Information search → Evaluation → Decision → Buy → Post purchase dissonance → Dissatisfaction/ satisfaction

(Smith, Zook, 2011)

For example, in the context of a person wanting to find a game as a means of entertainment and a pastime, they first need to recognize their need of amassing a new game into their collection. Chances are, a consumer with a high understanding of their need will know quite precisely what they are looking for from the game, for example game genre, area of publication, etc. The consumer therefore goes on a quest of information search. Someone with a PlayStation 4 console will, for example, search different games from the PlayStation store, where they can search the games within several categories, such as JRPG, Stealth-games, puzzle-platforms, etc.

The consumer might find an interesting game, but a high-involvement customer most likely will not simply buy something without researching the product thoroughly. As a gamer, they know which channels are good to find more information on the game, such as rankings, evaluations, etc. Channels useful for this are for example IGN, YouTube evaluations, publications of the specific area of games and technology, etc. Through these the consumer can decide based on their set of needs and criteria.

Eventually this information search and evaluation will lead to the buying event. While the buyer most likely knows quite well what to expect from the product they have bought, they are going to evaluate whether their choice was good – in other words, whether the performance of the product and the expectations of the brand are satisfying the customer or not. The satisfaction of the customer will eventually most likely lead to the consumption of video games of the same criteria, or from the same publisher and developer.

There are some useful, more in-depth ways to depict the customer's journey towards the actual buying of a product. These are **Response Hierarchy Models**, in other words communication models that give insight into the consumer's buying process. One of the earliest models is the E K Strong's 1925 **AIDA** model.

Attention ➡ Interest ➡ Desire ➡ Action

(Smith, Zook, 2011)

This is a quite basic form of depicting the buying process. Other important models are, for example Lavidge & Steiner:

Awareness	→	Knowledge	→	Liking

Liking → Preference

Purchase	←	Conviction	←	Preference
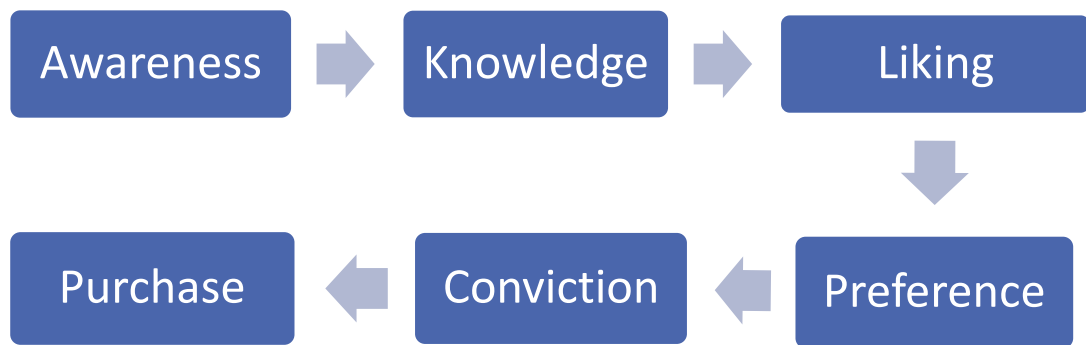
(Smith, Zook, 2011)

In the context of the situation depicted earlier, the Lavidge & Steiner model applies quite well, especially in the case where there are several games from which to choose. Liking and Preference are what occurs before the key moment of the purchase decision: conviction.

There are many important and well-known models to depict the buying process, with these being only examples of them. Many of the models are limited, though, as they do not explore the many internal and external factors that affect the buying process. What affects the Liking and Preference in the Lavidge & Steiner model? Or what in the AIDA model sets us up for Attention and Interest in the product?

These factors are explored by the **Black-box model**. It is a representation of how the consumer responds to different stimuli, both internal and external, and how these affect the behaviour of the customer. The Black-box model truly considers the individual as a black box which cannot be clearly analysed or prevented by marketers. (Smith, Zook, 2011)

2.2.2   What Influences Our Consumer Behaviour?

What happens within the black box? What are the different variables that affect our buying behaviour?

The self's influence on our consuming behaviour is very strong. Our perceptions of our own abilities, looks, interests and capabilities affect the way we make buying decisions. For a person with problems with their hair comes a solution in the form of hair-strengthening potion with a logo of an attractive person with shiny, strong hair – and an idea of themselves being and becoming as attractive as this ideal. For a tech-savvy millennial, a new

state-of-the-art computer with the logo of a well known fruit-shaped logo gives a message of belonging to a modern, technologically comfortable group. The list is endless, as are people's motivations to buying products and consuming brands and images of who they want to be. (Solomon, 2011)

Of course, when talking about consumer behaviour, **cultural influences** cannot be ignored. A set of social rules that vary around the world influence our behaviour on various levels and layers – including our buying decisions. For example, the societal cultures between the east and the west create different expectations on individuals. In many Asian regions, the emphasis is on **the collective culture**, whereas the western world tends to emphasise **individualism**. As stated earlier, the brands and items we purchase send out messages about us as people, and in places where societal norms are strong, these messages might strongly vary in distinct groups, for example in different gender groups. (Solomon, 2011)

Although it is true that **gender norms** are slowly starting to change in many countries and regions, there is still no denying that the gender differences are being used by marketers around the world do differentiate products into men's and women's products. The separation of goods portrayed as feminine and masculine start already at childhood. The gender socializations send messages of what is appropriate for example as activities for boys and girls, and later for men and women. Some very obvious differences lie in the promotion, packaging and advertising of products, for example in the colouring of girls' and boys' toys. (Costa, 1994)

While it might seem uncomfortable as a concept, the fact is that these existing norms do affect the way we consume products, and even if we do not consciously try to fit into these norms, subconsciously we do it anyway. There is discussion though, whether these differences between men and women are innate or more heavily influenced by the diverse cultures that we live and operate in.

2.3   Women as Consumers of Technology

The belief that women and men are innately different does not differ in the field of technology, either. Research in the 1980's concluded that boys and men are more comfortable and positive as technology consumers, whereas girls and women were either not very interested or not very comfortable. In this time and age, technology and games were seen as very much as male activities – by men and women alike. It is important to remember

that the 1980's and 1990's were the decades of the first technological breakthroughs before the smartphone boom of the 2010's, and attitudes towards technology amongst younger generations were already changing at the time. For example, an empirical study was conducted on Canadian college students in 1989, and the results indicated that female students *did* display interest in technology and computers, but many seemed concerned about their lack of abilities, and thus felt uncomfortable with them. (Costa, 1994)

Plenty has changed since then. In the 1990's, it was estimated that the close connection between gender and consumption would dissipate (Costa, 1994), and it indeed has happened – especially in the era of high digitalisation, where technology is no longer seen as something too complex or frightening. The changes in the older, conservative social structures have happened largely thanks to social movements such as feminism, postmodernism and youth movements (Costa, 1994). Our perceptions in society as to what roles women and men have as individuals have changed (although gender roles have not completely disappeared, one could say that the rules are more laxed now) – and so has our behaviour as consumers changed. Gaming and technology have become an acceptable pastime for women as well, and women from all generations are familiar with digital technology.

It seems that the thought of women not being able to use technology as efficiently as men seems to be dissipating, mostly thanks to the vast amounts of tech-savvy people, mostly millennials. The millennials are the first generation to be growing up as children with technology, so the use of digital devices and digital entertainment does not seem to have such conflictions with gender.

2.4   Video Game Marketing for Women and Girls

As mentioned, children were the first important demographic of players of digital games. Eventually, digital gaming companies were looking for widening their audiences, and wanted to attract female consumers with their products. How did they start? The strategy relied on famous franchises, such as Harry Potter, Lizzy McGuire, Disney etc, and casual leisure games such as the widely popular SingStar games. The success of SingStar games probably rely on the social aspect of the game – female game consumers are often drawn to social games, not only offline but online as well (Nichols, 2014).

Indeed, these games had some success (Nichols, 2014). Party- and singing games are still popular amongst women, in Finland as well (Mäyrä, Karvinen, Ermi, 2015) – it is still the fourth most popular category of games amongst women.

Another example of companies trying to use 'femininity' as an attempt to attract more female consumers, in 1991, Nintendo released the Gamegirl – a pink version of the handheld Gameboy console (Bryce, Rutter, 2005). There are several examples of attempts to directly appeal to the 'female mind', as it has seemed impossible to the minds of marketers, that boys and girls could indeed be interested of similar subjects.

These attempts of making technology and games more 'feminine' (to the extreme, even), are another indication of the aforementioned attitudes of the 'innate' differences between men and women as consumers. Games, quite often, have some violent themes, which have been seen as something that a female consumer would not consider as attractive to them, not to mention the way female characters are often over-sexualized in video games (Bryce, Rutter, 2005). It seems though, that nowadays, companies and game developers are starting to develop a wider variety of games as an answer to the on-going change of gamer demographics, too.

2.5   Statistics of Gamers and Gender

It is interesting how the idea of female gamers as a very small minority sometimes still seems to persist even in the 2010s, when statistics increasingly show us a very different story. For example, in the U.S, video game consumption amongst women has largely grown. In 2006, 38% of women reported playing games, with percentages rising to 44 in 2015. The latest statistics from 2016 rest in 41%, as shown in Chart 1. Women of over 18 years represent a larger demographic of gamers (31%) than boys under age of 18 (17%). The average female player is 44 years old, while a male gamer was by average 35 years old. (ESA, 2016)

Chart 1. Female Video Game Players in the U.S.
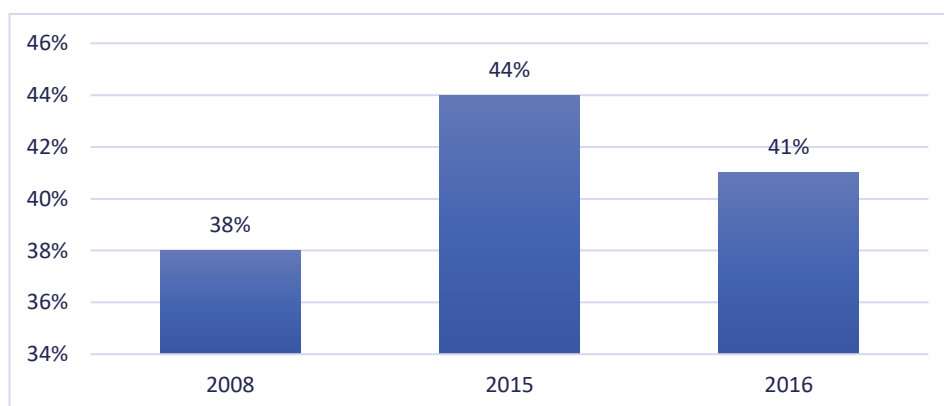
(ESA, 2008-2016)

Asia is still a great game-hub and cannot be ignored due to the key role of Japanese video games in the history of the gaming industry. Tokyo is still one of the most (if not the most) important video game hotspots (Lehtonen, 2014), with some of the most important players in the industry being situated there. According to a Chinese game-site 17173's data, in 2016, 66% of Japan's gamers were girls. Other Asian countries are following, with South-Korea at 37% and China at 27%, being the most important countries after Japan. South-Korea is known, for example, for the large popularity of certain online games, such as Riot Game's *League of Legends* and Blizzard's *Overwatch.* (Techinasia)

The US and Asia are of course considered as the largest and most important segments, with very wide audiences, but digital gaming is also a popular hobby in European countries as well. For example, in Finland in 2015, 60,1% of the population was reported to actively engage in digital game playing (Player Barometer, 2015). It is interesting to notice, though, the differences of female gamers within European countries. For example, France has a very low female gamer percentage (2.5%), compared to the UK (27.2%), or Spain (24.4), as shown in chart 2. (Nichols, 2014). In Finland, 52% of women were active digital players in 2015 (Mäyrä, Karvinen, Ermi, 2015).

Chart 2. Female Video Game Players in Europe
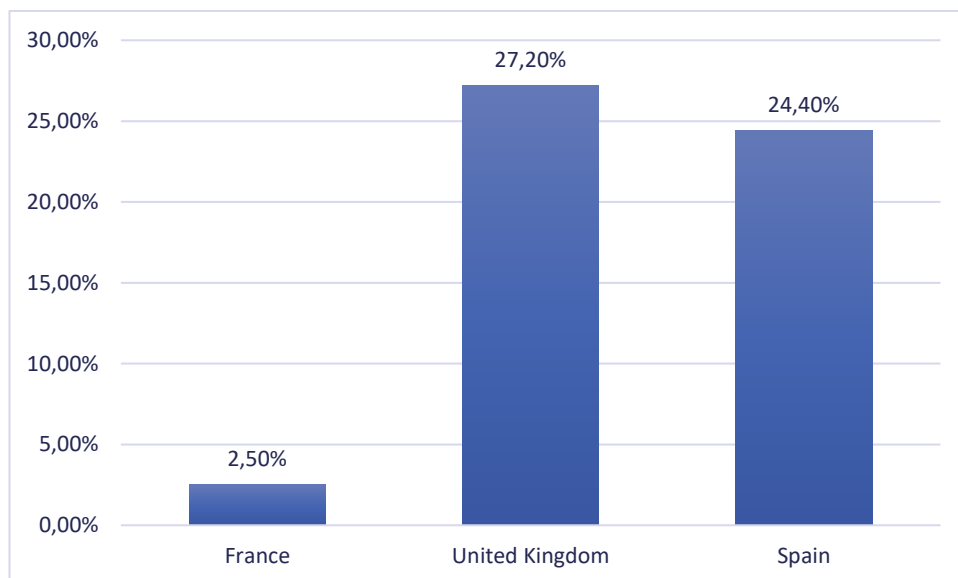
(Nichols, 2014)

2.6   What Do People Play by Gender? Do statistics give a realistic view?

Even though women play games too, it seems that there are differences between the type of games they prefer to play as related to men. As mentioned, in Finland, women tend to gravitate towards low-commitment social games, with less competition, whereas men

gravitate more towards action-based and strategy games, such as different war-games and shooter games. Interestingly though, adventure-games were popular with both genders (Mäyrä, Karvinen, Ermi, 2015).

It is important to remember, though, that all gamers can be categorized into casual and active players. This categorization as to what constitutes as a 'serious' or active gamer depends on each study. It is possible to say, however, that what kind of games people play, even by gender, is determined by how serious they are with their hobby. It is impossible to compare someone who plays online games on an almost E-sport level, to a person who only plays video games perhaps once or twice every month.

While looking at different statistics of gaming in the general population, it could be said that RPG games are simply not very popular amongst female players. Perhaps this is because RPG games are quite often seen as difficult and time-consuming, and are a little rarer even amongst men, who are considered as more active video game consumers. These results are of course only from Finland – other countries may have different results. For example, Quantic Foundry, a game analytics consulting practice, conducted a questionnaire on gamers; their gender, motivations to playing video games, and their favourite genres of video games. This study mostly concentrated on "core" gamers, i.e. active gamers who put time and effort into their hobby, and the results are quite different compared, for example, to ESA's results. Only 18% of active gamers in Quantic Foundry's study were women, compared to the 41% of ESA's results. It could be that ESA's results represent the very high number of casual gamers as well as active, core gamers – and some of the games that these two groups play, might be a little different.

While the two largest groups of women played simulation games and puzzle games (the same genres as the casual gamers in the ESA report, according to Quantic Foundry), Japanese and Western RPG games were very popular as well. Out of all the players who reported playing JRPGs, 33 % were women. For WRPG the same percentage was 26 %. From Western RPG games, a very popular one is Dragon Age: Inquisition, one of the most successful games of 2015; a whopping 48% reporting as playing the specific game were women. MMO games were also very popular, with the emphasis on Fantasy MMO games, as opposed to Sci-Fi MMO. (Quantic Foundry)

This is interesting, and partly surprising. From statistics of the general population's video game activity, it would seem that MMO's are not that popular amongst women. Especially RPG games played online seem to have gathered a rather cruel reputation. Online gam-

ing culture in certain MMO, MOBA and MMORPG games is considered as very aggressive, a trend which seems to be dominant all across the online world, all the way from social media to anonymous Internet platforms. A famous MOBA game, *League of Legends,* is quite appropriately legendary as to its toxic chat-culture amongst the gaming community, and it is possible that many feel this culture highly difficult to approach as a new player. Sexism plays a role in why women might feel uncomfortable with these online platforms and games. At the same time, it seems that a growing number of women are ignoring this or simply deem it as a part of online chat culture – in light of the growing number of female gamers playing MMO games, this would seem to be the case. It is understandable – online games offer social interaction and a possibility for competition in an unique way than simply playing single-player video games.

Nevertheless, the least favourite types of games seem to be quite similar as the findings in the Player Barometer. Shooter games, strategy games and MOBA games seem to be the least popular amongst women. This seems to be the trend across countries.

These findings can also give us an idea about the motivational differences – for women, they were Completion and Fantasy (top 2), while for men these were Competition, and Destruction (top 2). The fact that female representation in these games is scarce is mentioned as one of the possible reasons, as well as the interesting fact that FPS games have a lot of "rapid 3D movement, which can cause motion sickness in women more often than it does in men.". Another important view that was pointed out is the historical attributions to these games being men's hobbies. This has resulted in the marketing of these products mostly to men, and very limitedly for women. (Quantic Foundry)

3 Content of Games Popular Amongst Female Consumers

In this chapter, the objectives the methodological choice of this research are further considered. The focus of this case study research, the video games, are introduced and analysed according to specific research questions. Finally, the games are compared as well as their common characteristics revised.

3.1 Methodology

This research has been gathered using methods that best support the quest of finding answers to the research questions and problems stated. As this is a qualitative research, qualitative research methods have been used, the most important being case studies of four different games.

All the methods and objects of this research have been reflected to the theoretical framework in the first part of this Thesis. The choices of topic and objects are further examined and justified in their respective sequences.

3.2 Case Study as a Research Method

Case study can be a challenging but a rewarding method of research. As a research method, the case study is used in many situations, to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena (Yin, 2009). As this Thesis is about the phenomena of women as gamers, and as the objective is to understand what kind of characteristics are common in the games that women play, it is important to observe and analyse the games themselves.

I have designed this case study research to be conducted in three parts. The three individual games to study have first been chosen from the main genres of games that have been proven popular amongst female gamers by statistics around the globe. These three games' contents have been collected and analysed firstly with their respective genres in mind. Secondly, the games are analysed in relation to each other, in respect of their similarities and characteristics in common, such as characters, storyline and gameplay. The marketing material, all the way from pre-publication material, game packaging to the game content are also examined and analysed.

The questions and aspects considered in each individual case studies include:

- General description of the game, such as:
    - gameplay, story-driven or action based, visuality, etc.
- What are these games like in respect to their own genres?
- What universal characteristics can be found in these games?
    - Comparisons of the games to each other
- How are these findings significant in relation to the theoretical framework?

Each of these questions are considered for each game, and the results are presented in the form of a case report.

3.3 Case: Ori and the Blind Forest
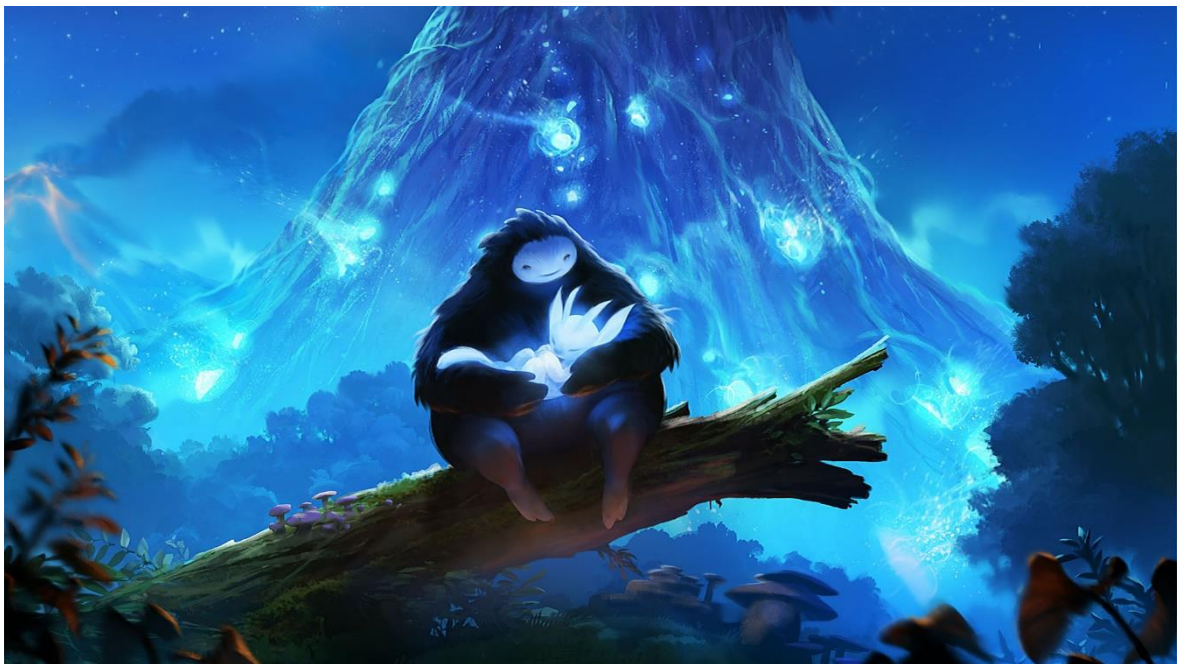
Picture 1. Ori and the Blind Forest

3.3.1 Game Description

Ori and the Blind Forest, is a single player 2D platform-adventure *Metroidvania* video game, designed by Moon Studios and published by Microsoft Studios on March 11, 2015. The platforms on which the game was published was Microsoft's Xbox One. The game was acclaimed by critics, and won several awards, including many Game of the Year-awards.

Ori and the Blind forest is a very visually beautiful, fun-to-play game. The game developers themselves describe the game being heavily influenced in style by the Japanese Hayao Miyazaki's Ghibli movies (picture 2), as well as classic animation movies such as Lion King or Iron Giant. This can be seen in the stunning visual graphics of the game.

Picture 2. My Neighbor Totoro, Studio Ghibli

Ori and the Blind Forest is an adventure game that is heavily story-driven instead of simply being action-based, as opposed to many other platform games. The story itself is a classic story of saving the world, combined to a coming-of-age storyline, and interestingly the main protagonist is described as a young girl. The storyline isn't exactly very complex – it has quite classic mentality of good vs. evil, but interestingly the darker characters have a 'deeper' storyline that makes them more relatable. At first, the story and its' characters might seem clear-cut and perhaps even childish, but they raise important thoughts and questions that the player can truly relate to in their own lives; how do people act when jealous, angry or trying to protect their loved ones? Generally, the characters have been designed to be sweet and cute, with the characters being animal-like, small beings.

The game is very much suitable for children without being boring for adult players either. It seems that the game has been designed so that it seems easily approachable with different difficulty levels (as with many games nowadays, probably to make it seem easier to play for gamers who aren't accustomed to playing) enabling even a less experienced gamer to play through. Again, as many games seem to be designed for wider audiences and more versatile, there is a possibility for great challenge – the player can enter their statistics and see how they rank globally, with trophy systems, statistics of items found, the length of game-time, etc. So, while the game does not seem to be very challenging at first glance, it can also be played on an almost nightmarish difficulty level.

3.3.2   Relation to Genres

Adventure games are a very large group of games, with many different subcategories depending on the emphasis of the gameplay. For example, in Japan, visual novels (games that are graphical adventures with emphasis on interaction with other characters as opposed to actions or battle) are quite popular, whereas in the West, adventure games have seen a large decline in popularity from the 1980's and 1990's. This can be explained by technological advancement. The adventure games were the most high-tech games of the era, until FPS (first person shooter) games were invented and eventually took a large part of adventure game's players' interest.

Adventure games concentrate mostly on exploration and puzzle-solving, which is strongly present in Ori and the Blind Forest as well in the form of exploring new areas, finding items, opening locked doors, etc. Usually this exploration is important and fundamental for the continuation of the story.

The platform aspect of the game is visible in how the character is moved around the different areas of the world. The world is built around tunnels which Ori moves around in – these tunnels have obstacles which the player needs to try to get past. The two basic movements are running and jumping, but as the game develops and the character with it, it is possible to use different skills to attain more items and cross barriers and obstacles that were impossible to pass earlier.

3.4   Case: LittleBigPlanet

Picture 3. LittleBigPlanet

3.4.1 General Description

LittleBigPlanet is a puzzle-platform video game, developed by English Molecule Media and published by Sony Computer Entertainment Europe in March 2007. It was acclaimed by critics and became widely popular at the time of its publication, and has several succeeding games, such as LittleBigPlanet 2 and 3.

The player controls a figure called a 'sackboy', which can grab and move objects to proceed in the puzzle-like platform game. Gathering experience points and levelling up happens through completing levels in a specific time, collecting items and reaching difficult

places in the game environment, which usually carry important or rarer items. To pass a level, the player needs to use the several abilities the sackboy has: grabbing, pushing and moving objects around, as well as running and jumping. Sometimes with an environment that moves, for example platforms that change place, the player needs to strategically use these skillsets to explore new regions or to reach for an item.

An interesting feature about LittleBigPlanet is the importance of content-creation. Players can create their own objects, stickers, customization elements, as well as design their own levels and environments. This content can be shared online in the LittleBigPlanet Community, where others can also use the content the player has created. Before these features can be accessed, however, the player needs to complete the official Play mode, where the player is introduced to the game through tutorials. It is possible to play through the game without creating any of one's own content, and simply go through the ready-set levels and the storyline.

There generally isn't a 'world' or a 'universe' in LittleBigPlanet as there are in most games, including the ones introduced in this study. In this game, the individual levels are different and have been inspired by different themes, cultures and locations.

The story in LittleBigPlanet is quite humorous for an adult player – the creatures called 'sackpeople' are set in a universe where people called Creator Curators create everything in the world. One day, one Curator decides to steal the creations instead of sharing them with everyone. At the end of the day, the player finds out that this Creator Curator is a lonely person, who simply wanted to have friends – and finally changes his evil ways, as the rest of the characters accept him as their friend. In LittleBigPlanet, the focus is in the puzzle-solving and physical gameplay, with the story serving little more than as a moral lesson of sharing and the power of friendship.

3.4.2 Relation to Genre

LittleBigPlanet is a very clear platform game, where all of the game's actions are based on moving objects to move forward. Jumping, running, dragging and pulling are all actions that are needed in the gameplay, and while it might seem that this type of game is not very challenging, it can be surprisingly hard to achieve all possible items and access all areas. Timing is important in the game, with moving objects swinging the character around, and possibly deadly enemies making it even harder to move around freely.

The most fun the player gets out of LittleBigPlanet is while playing the game with a friend, and solving puzzles and timing together. There are also small races, where it is possible

to challenge each other through the levels to see who is faster. The possibility to create own levels and sharing them with other is a great way to interact with other players. As an example, LittleBigPlanet is an example of a fun game for a party with friends.

3.5   Case: World of Final Fantasy

Picture 4. World of Final Fantasy

3.5.1   Game Description

The World of Final Fantasy is a single-player adventure role-playing game developed by Square Enix and Division 3. The game was published in October 2016 by Square Enix on PlayStation 4 and PlayStation Vita platforms. The game was designed into a lighter game than the mainline Final Fantasy games, with a wider and younger audience in mind. The game received generally good response from critics at the time of its publishing, and has been quite popular in 2016.

This can be seen in the game. The World of Final Fantasy is a story-driven, fun game, with the design being cuter and sweeter than the average Final Fantasy game. The game is lighter in its tone and more stylistic than mainline games, which are often more serious and darker with more complex characters, for example the new Final Fantasy XV. The story itself is a rather classic quest to save the world, as well as a kind of coming-of-age story.

Picture 5. Main protagonists of World of Final Fantasy

The gameplay in The World of Final Fantasy is quite easy compared to many RPG games, without any possibility to change difficulty settings. The battle-system is a classic turn based system (TBS), which is more slow-paced and easier to adjust to than active time battle system (ATB), or real time battle, which is quite popular in the Western RPG games. The World of Final Fantasy is a very easily approachable game, and while it is possible to use plenty of time for character development, it is also easily suitable for non-committal game playing.

3.5.2   Relation to Genre: Final Fantasy -series and Japanese RPG

When compared to mainline Final Fantasy series, The World of Final Fantasy is quite different in many aspects. As mentioned before, its light atmosphere and its cute and sweet characters, designed with the Japanese 'chibi' characters and cartoons in mind, remind players more of Square Enix's Kingdom Hearts series. Kingdom Hearts is a Final Fantasy and Disney crossover-game, with characters from very known Disney movies and franchises, such as Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and so on. Kingdom Hearts series is also directed to younger players, so the similarities between the games is quite visible.

RPG games have a reputation of being more serious and having darker themes of good versus evil, with generally very complex characters and difficult storylines. The World of Final Fantasy has a good storyline with a lot of different sidequests and plenty of interesting characters, but for a seasoned player, it is quite easy to sometimes forget to be playing a Final Fantasy game.

It is interesting to note that female characters play an important role in this game. Most of the important main characters are portrayed as female. This is quite different when compared to most RPG (and video games) in general. Female representation is generally quite simple, and quite often very limited. Male characters are usually represented as leaders and action-takers, whereas women seem to be additional characters that simply 'need to be' present at the background. Quite often women are portrayed as healers, mothers, or simply present for visual gratification. It was therefore an interesting choice for Square Enix to develop a game with so many important female characters that are also portrayed as intelligent and capable and not simply waiting for strong male characters to do everything for them. This is important in relation to the discussed female representation in video games.

3.6 Case: Tales of Berseria

Picture 6. Tales of Berseria

3.6.1 Game Description

Tales of Berseria is a Japanese role-playing video game, developed and published by Bandai Namco Entertainment in 2016. It is the sixteenth game in the *Tales of-* game series, and was published for PlayStation 3 and 4, and Microsoft Windows. The Tales of- series, like many other Japanese game series, has not been very popular in the West. In Japan, however, it is one of the most popular RPG series after Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest.

Tales of Berseria's battle system is a version of Linear Motion Battle System (i.e. LMBS), where the player can freely move the character and camera in-battle. The player can form a series of different combinations of attacks, according to the order of buttons pressed.

The battle system is quite fluid and fast, and outside battle, it is possible to customize the player's own attack-combinations with different abilities. This requires some knowledge of the battle system and the outcomes of these combinations, but luckily, it is also possible to let the AI of the game decide them for you. The player can use different 'Artes', or skills, which can cause status ailments such as confusion or sleep, as well as side-stepping enemies in order to avoid their attacks.

The game's storyline is interesting with serious and dark themes such as vengeance and revenge, but as is usual for Japanese role-playing games, it is linear, without possibilities to affect the storyline. The story evolves through dialogue with other characters, and quite different to western role-playing games, the dialogue is shown in small, animated clips with the pictures of characters speaking, instead of video-clips. This is quite a popular option in Japanese games.

That being said, while the storyline is very linear, it does not take anything away from the game. The story explores the darker sides of the human mind and heart, as the protagonist, Velvet, goes on a journey to avenge her late brother's death. This is different to the other publications of the Tales of- series, where the general feeling of the game is quite a lot happier and positive.

Picture 7. Characters of Tales of Berseria

As the case is in most games in the 21st century, the graphics of Tales of Berseria are incredible and very beautiful. Visuality is a very strong aspect in the game, with colours and landscape changing the ambiance of the story according to the situations and emotions the main character is facing, for example bright, beautiful colours when going back to the main character's happier past versus the darker and cold colours of the world in the character's current time.

3.6.2   Relation to Genre: Japanese RPG

As mentioned earlier, in many Japanese RPG games women are shown as often weaker or less significant to story, with male characters often being more important to the game. Indeed, Tales of Berseria is the first game in the 16-game series to have a female protagonist. Interestingly, the main protagonist is also an anti-heroine, as she is consumed by rage and her life is encapsulated in her anger and need for revenge. This is not exactly new in games and entertainment in general, but nevertheless gives this game an interesting perspective.

Because of the anti-heroine aspect of the game, Tales of Berseria is not an average, classic story of good versus evil. There is no pure good or pure evil, and while the protagonist works (in a sense) to save the world from abhorrent evil, she is no angel herself, either. This is also fascinating, considering that many female characters in Japanese are shown as healers with a good, warm heart – perhaps as a reflection of the country's ideals of how women should be.

As per usual in any games across the globe, in JRPG's, women are often portrayed, if not by nature, then physically in a stereotypically feminine manner. In Asian cultures, women are indeed encouraged to embrace their feminine side, which can be seen in the development of the female characters in JRPGs as well. Women are quite often not portrayed as masculine (indeed it seems that male characters have a more feminine/emo look from the western point of view), and quite often portray strength differently to men – more on the inside, and less on the outside.

Picture 8. Final Fantasy XIII: Lightning Returns

There are, of course, exceptions to this 'rule'. For example, in the Final Fantasy XIII-series, the main protagonist, Lightning, is a woman. She was a very strong, but a rather icy character; very similar to Velvet in Tales of Berseria.

3.7   Case: Dragon Age: Inquisition
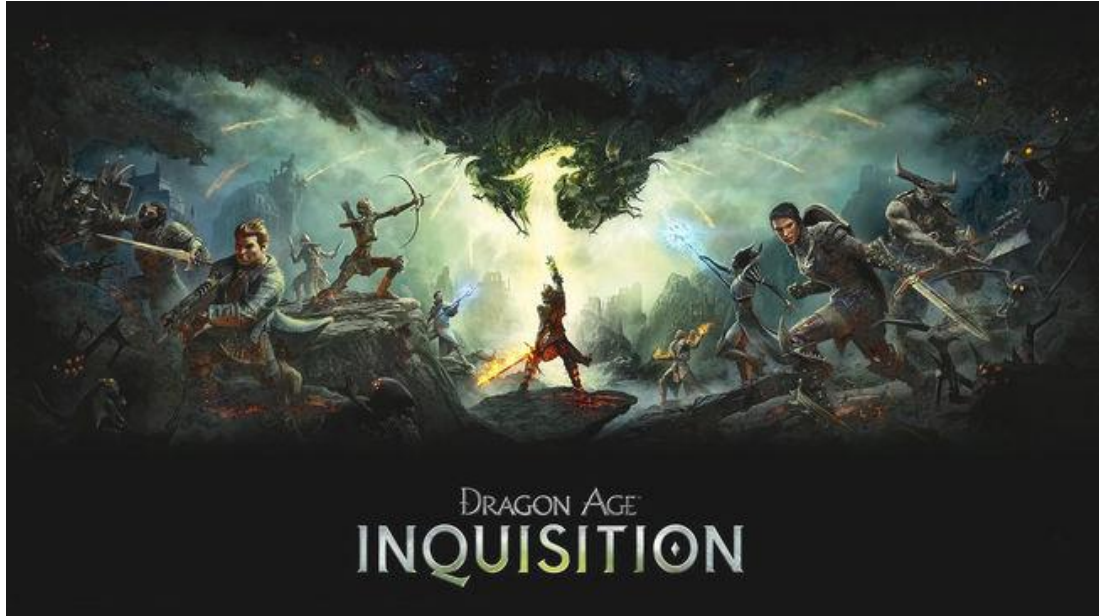
Picture 9. Dragon Age: Inquisition

3.7.1   Game Description

Dragon Age: Inquisition is a Western action-based single-player roleplaying video game. It was developed by Bioware and published by Electronic Arts in November 2014. Inquisition is the third publication of the massively popular Dragon Age franchise, and a sequel to Dragon Age: Origins and Dragon Age II. It was chosen as the Game of the Year in several occasions, with critics acclaiming the game.

Inquisition was one of the most expected games in 2014, and for a good reason. It is a fantastically realistic game with state-of-the-art graphics, a very wide open-world with the possibility of great exploration of the Inquisition's world, not to forget the complex storyline and characters with their very own and unique personalities.

The game has incredibly realistic graphics, and throughout the game it is easy to simply marvel the realistic scenery, as well as the intricate details of the characters' appearances, for example their armour, weapons and facial features. The variety of the landscapes are unique, ranging from deserts to swamps, castles to dark dungeons and everything in-between.

Picture 10. Illustration of Dragon Age: Inquisition

Inquisition's gameplay is very interesting, as the player can change the settings according to their level of skill. The game can be very easy, without any effort in-battle, or incredibly difficult – this gives a possibility for all kinds of people to enjoy the game. The battle system is based on strategic thinking: how to position allies for the best combos of attacks to win the battle. The further the player gets in the game, the more importance strategic battling becomes, especially on higher difficulty levels. The Tactical Mode the game introduces is highly useful in situations like this.

One of the greatest aspects of Dragon Age: Inquisition are its' story and characters. The story evolves through the choices the player makes as the main protagonist, and the outcome at the end of the game can always be different according to the decisions the player makes. While the core of the storyline always remains the same, the rest is completely impacted by the player, and thanks to the open-world, the game does not seem linear at all. The vast areas in the world of Inquisition can be explored at the player's own pace.

The characters and the relationships with them are one of the highlights of the game. While similar possibilities are present in other games, no other developer has quite managed to make it as rewarding as in Dragon Age: Inquisition. Similar to the story's possibilities, your friendships are also affected and change according to the choices the player makes in the world. The approval rate system works through the set of values each ally has, and your choices affect their view on *you*. It is also possible that the approval rating of the other character drops so low that they either leave you and your party or turn

against you. Inquisition has also a complex set of romance options, where it is possible to start a romantic relationship with another character. Similar systems are not present in many other Western RPG games.

3.7.2   Relation to Genre: Western RPG

There are some legendary examples of Western RPG games, notably The Elder Scrolls series from Bethesda Studios, with The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim remaining one of the most successful and best-rated RPG games to this day. RPG games are quite often fantasy-oriented, with some examples being the Lord of the Rings-series (originally a legendary book series and a film trilogy), Witcher-series etc. There are also some notably popular Sci-Fi RPG's, for example BioWare's Mass Effect-series. Although Dragon Age and Mass Effect are both series from the same game-developer, they are quite different in game-play: Mass Effect is an RPS (role playing shooter) game, while Dragon Age is an RPG (role playing game).

Picture 11: Witcher III: Wild Hunt

In Western RPGs, the characters are often situated in Middle Age-like fantasy universes, with quite dark storylines and grim characters. Most of the characters are male, which re-flects well to the supposed timeline where the game is situated. What is interesting about Dragon Age: Inquisition is the fact that the main character can be built the way the player wants, all the way from gender to their appearance as well as their voice. It is interesting that people are given the chance to play as a female character – a woman is portrayed as being able to change the course of the universe and save the world, instead of being a side-kick for the male protagonist, or simply an irrelevant character to the main story.

3.8   Common Characteristics and Comparisons

While the games all represent a variety of different genres, and are all quite different from one another, there are some clear, common characteristics in all of them. These characteristics are:

- Visuality
- Story-drivenness
- Varying difficulty levels
- Depth of characters
- Great female roles

Visuality is present in most video games of our current time, and seems to be more of a must than a perk. But it does stand out that many of these games have used visual outlook in varying ways, with their own individual styles and purposes. Whereas Ori and the Blind Forest looks like a magical dreamland with sweet and beautiful details, the world of Dragon Age: Inquisition is purposefully made as realistic and partly gruesome as possible. The World of Final Fantasy used the Japanese chibi-style for the interest of especially younger audiences, and LittleBigPlanet heavily used different visual outlooks for their themed platforms and levels. Tales of Berseria used the play of colours to emphasise the feelings of the main protagonist, as well as the animesque graphics of their small cutscenes and conversations between the main characters.

Story is another major mutual characteristic with these games, as well as their genres. The only game with truly little importance of the story and more of an action-focus is LittleBigPlanet. The rest of the games have an extensive storyline. The best example is Dragon Age: Inquisition, with the ability to genuinely affect the entire storyline through the choices of the protagonist. This reminds a little bit of simulation games such as Sims, where the player can control the lives of their characters. The evolving of the storyline seems to interest players, as games with the possibility to affect the storyline are extremely popular. Great examples are games such as Mass Effect, Witcher III, and Skyrim.

A noticeable aspect visible in these games were the difficulty levels. Many of these games had the possibility of changing difficulty settings that meet the player's need of challenge. It is completely possible to enjoy an RPG game such as Dragon Age and its' amazing story without getting too bothered by the gameplay and the difficult battles. At the same time, it is possible to customize the difficulty settings to make certain aspects of the game even harder – this is an interesting aspect to a player who wants to develop specific skills.

This is important with games that are considered as 'too difficult' by beginners, and extends the consumer base by making the game more accessible to more than the core gamers.

Fourth important common characteristic is the characters and their development. Most of these games, LittleBigPlanet excluded, have meaningful characters who are truly important for the storyline. Especially in the RPG games the characters develop in an interesting way, and while playing, the player can easily bond with them. The connection to the characters and understanding their feelings is important in these type of games, or at the very least, make them more enjoyable for the player. Even closer connection might develop when playing a game such as Dragon Age, where the player determines the interactions they have with the other characters around the main protagonist.

The connection of the player and the characters brings us to an interesting issue. Most of these games have potentially important female roles, where women achieve great things, shape the world and have meaningful duties instead of being side-characters with little to no importance in the story or the world. As mentioned, some games let you determine the sex of the main protagonist, with the possibility of choosing a female hero for the game. Traditionally (and in many cases even to this day), male characters have been the heroes and protagonists of all kinds of entertainment, be it books, movies or video games. It seems that the entertainment industry is slowly starting to change things – take as an example Tales of Berseria, with the series' first female leading character. In Dragon Age: Inquisition, if the leading character is a woman, the player will have a conversation with a companion where they talk about how incredible it is that a woman is shaping nations and changing the fate of the world. In Ori and the Blind Forest, while Ori's sex cannot be determined by simply looking at her, the game refers to her as she – a young girl saving the forest and its' inhabitants.

Of course, simple representation of women in video games does not mean that the game is any more attractive to women as players and consumers. For example, Tales of Berseria gives us a rather stereotypical and unrealistic image of women's outer appearance. This is quite common in popular culture around the world and does not necessarily help with women feeling welcome as a consumer group. The unrealistic images do extend to male characters as well, so this is not necessarily a gendered issue. It would seem, on some part, that while stereotypes and cultured norms are being broken, at the same time certain gendered behavioural and physical aspects of the characters are strengthened. The main point of video games and entertainment seems to be the image and fantasy of

something that does not take place in the real world, and is most likely a part of why some people enjoy them so much.

4   Results

What do these results tell us about women's consumer behavior? The points of storyline, character development, visuality, and important female roles can tell us, that the abstract content of the video game is as important, if sometimes not even more so, than the physical gameplay itself. While an enjoyable gameplay is a pivotal point for any game, for some players this does not seem to be enough.

An interesting story and deep characters, as well as a beautiful design, on their own accord, keep the player engaged to the game. The emotional attachment to the characters keeps the player going on with the game, as well as the intrigue on how the amazing story ends, much like a book or a wonderful movie. This is quite important – video games are not simply violent and useless, with no other point than shooting enemies. They can, at their best, be a form of entertainment comparable to popular films and novels. Video games now compete with other fictional forms of entertainment instead of simply complementing them with the familiar stories of hugely popular Hollywood franchises. It seems that the abstract is what many female players seem to look for. Even for MMO games such as World of Warcraft, where the gameplay is in the most important role, there is a massive world full of background stories, lore, and *meaning* for the actions of the player.

Social interactions seem to be an interesting aspect to consider. Interaction with others doesn't seem to be limited to games that are social by nature, such as party-games, but to the content of other kinds of games as well. Take, as an example, the simulation game Sims. The idea behind the game itself are the social relationships between the player's characters and others in the game. In Dragon Age: Inquisition, the relationships with the other characters can be influenced, whether it is a romantic, friendly or hostile one. In many MMO's, such as World of Warcraft, the player interacts with other anonymous players from around the web, and in LittleBigPlanet, it is possible to play together with someone through levels in person as co-op, or simply share customized content with others.

These results can give us some insight as to why these games and their genres are popular amongst women. The social aspect is quite strong in all the games researched – communication between the characters of the game, or communication between players. Perhaps women feel this kind of games more interesting as they have grown in societies and cultures where certain behaviour and interests are more 'expected' from women than men. Although, at the same time, it could be said that maybe one of the reasons women are getting more interested in video games and digital entertainment could be breaking

these mentioned gender norms, especially when considering core gamers. The breaking of gender norms comes in with the fact that they play games that are still, even statistically, considered as men's games. Perhaps these women want to show that they are truly not very different from men when it comes to their video game habits, and through this send a message of themselves to the rest of the world – an important aspect in consumer behaviour.

The subject of female roles in these games came up as a common characteristic. The role of women in video games is a very wide topic, and needs careful consideration, as gendered issues seem to be quite delicate these days. However, it could be said, that game developers are perhaps waking up to the fact that they have a consumer group, which, in a sense, is still somewhat ignored. Perhaps this explains the many different games where women have started to have significant roles, just the same as male characters.

These are all aspects that are important when considering the consumer behaviour discussed in the theoretical framework. These abstract themes, according to the analysed games and their content, seem to be driving forces for buying these certain games. The statistics mentioned earlier of the unpopularity of action-based shooter games and wargames with little interaction or storyline, as opposed to adventure-games and simulation games, can support this hypothesis: women seem to be often simply more drawn to content that has an emphasis on the abstract, rather than pure action. When discussing women core gamers, an important characteristic seems to be the world of the game (another abstract aspect), as related to the motivations found by Quantic Foundry. Indeed, in the popular categories, such as JRPG and WRPG, the storyline holds a key role, as is visible in the games analysed in this Thesis.

It was also established that certain products are still, quite often, produced and marketed in a gendered way. While it is true that women play more video games, and there are constantly more core gamers, gaming as a hobby is a 'message', something rare. Perhaps on some level, the marketers and developers might still lag behind compared to the possible interest women seem to be having towards playing video games? Perhaps lack of representation could stifle the budding interest to begin with. The games in this study are good examples to the growing need for varying characters and stories that not do not simply revolve around a meaningful male character.

To summarise, the analysed games are great representatives of their respective genres, and are wonderful video games on their own. It is surprising how, despite their differences and the great differences between their genres, they all had certain aspects in common.

While certainly not all games had all the same qualities, many of them shared strong abstract qualities, related to the story and the world of the games. Character development, interaction and relationships between characters (and sometimes players) were notable features to consider. Gameplay was very different in all of the games, even within the same genre. A common quality in relation to gameplay seemed to be the varying difficulty levels, which give greater challenge or a more relaxed game-experience.

5   Discussion

This case study research was very interesting to conduct. It was interesting to see some of the information mentioned in the data that I found from previous research, and comparing it to the games chosen for the analysis. At the same time, it was intriguing to notice the great similarities between the very different games, representing completely different genres.

This study raised more questions, though, about women's perception of their own gaming – what do women themselves think about their video game consumption habits and the games they play? How do they as consumers see women's role in the games that they play? These are some possible points to ponder in future research. Another interesting viewpoint would be to research the way men feel about women's role in games, and whether it has an effect on their attitudes towards women in for example the online gaming world.

As this research was purely of qualitative nature, a quantitative research would be interesting as a next step, for example in the form of a questionnaire online, or perhaps of students in Haaga-Helia UAS. Perhaps some interviews would be interesting to add to this research, from either female gamers themselves or experts of the field of digital entertainment and gaming.

As much as this research was very interesting to do, it was also partly challenging. The official academic research of video games, not to mention the players themselves, is taking its baby steps. Therefore, much of the information related to the games and their genres had to rely on my own knowledge as well as the online gaming community. When talking about consumer and buying behaviour, a lot of scientific research material was already available. Quite a bit of research has been done to find out how much our attitudes towards gender roles affect our behaviour, but a little more scarcely on simply the topic of video game consuming. It is difficult to make very clear assumptions on video game consumer behaviour simply by comparing it to other forms of consumerism. This would need further research, and perhaps one good way would be to ask female gamers themselves.

Most of the research done on video games and playing are related to either men's video game preferences and playing, or violent or over-sexual themes of the games. Quite little information was available about women. The little information that was available, were usually very specific about certain type of video gaming, for example online gaming and

the sexist attitudes women face online. The research found was quite obviously very intriguing and partly useful for my research, simply focusing on online-gaming is slightly too narrow and specific considering my own topic. It was also sometimes difficult to find accessible information, that wouldn't have cost anything. Some research was simply not accessible free online, and parts of research available online had been cut in such a way, that a full, complete picture on the matter was hard to make.

I have done this research as objectively and ethically as I could. It is important to remember, though, that as scientific, academic material on this subject was hard to come by, this research, on its own, is quite limited for a broad topic such as female gaming. This is also part of the difficulty in video game research: large masses of consumers that should be thoroughly examined, as well as the thousands of games to study. Genres are getting mixed and become more and more like one another, so differentiating them from one another is quite difficult. More research is needed, and the trustworthiness of the information available will only get better once the study of video games becomes more mainstream, accepted as serious and more common in the academic world.

The thesis process itself was very interesting, as this is my first time doing any kind of academic research. I learned a lot about the research process itself by independently studying different forms of research. I was surprised by how much I learned, as a video game enthusiast, about the industry itself and its' history. As I would hope to one day work in the video game industry, this study was very interesting and eye-opening as well.

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Picture 1: Ori and the Blind Forest
URL: https://www.google.fi/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=im-ages&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwi899uhxIvUAhUlJ5oKH-SaKAHAQjB0IBg&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.oriblindfor-est.com%2F&psig=AFQjCNFqt9rAom_U8xXCytsmBwFqyG-DrPQ&ust=1495818491622855
Accessed: 24 May 2017

Picture 2: My Neighbour Totoro, Studio Ghibli

URL: https://www.google.fi/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=im-
ages&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwjdtaDb3ZnUA-
hXCa5oKHV5bDEUQjB0IBg&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.rogerebert.com%2Fre-
views%2Fgreat-movie-my-neighbor-totoro-1993&psig=AFQjCNEL6PD43tqm2IWfqmEm-
LZuSSxXL3A&ust=1496306052869615

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Picture 3: LittleBigPlanet

URL: https://www.google.fi/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=im-
ages&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwiRnqLaxYvUAhVHQJoKH-
fOhDpEQjB0IBg&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ign.com%2Fgames%2Flittlebigplanet-
891799%2Fps3-856680&psig=AFQjCNFDC1y1-lHhb5eJH-
sAD6jeFC73PQg&ust=1495818872662460

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Picture 4: World of Final Fantasy

URL: https://www.google.fi/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=im-
ages&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwjcp4yixovUA-
hXFA5oKHT0QDU0QjB0IBg&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.puolenkuunpe-
lit.com%2Fkauppa%2Fproduct_info.php%3Fprod-
ucts_id%3D99711&psig=AFQjCNE4wCNH2DEkOENRsZM-
8iG2w9GUfw&ust=1495819026398504

Accessed: 24 May 2017

Picture 5: Main Protagonists of the World of Final Fantasy

URL: https://www.google.fi/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=im-
ages&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwijy_WJyovUA-
hXMWSwKHU9rAo8QjB0IBg&url=https%3A%2F%2Fstore.na.square-enix.com%2Fprod-
uct%2F285318%2Fworld-of-final-fantasy-day-one-edition-
ps4&psig=AFQjCNE4wCNH2DEkOENRsZM-8iG2w9GUfw&ust=1495819026398504

Accessed: 24 May 2017

Picture 6: Tales of Berseria

URL: https://www.google.fi/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwidyYbVx4vUAhWGFywKHT79DpIQjB0IBg&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.playstation.com%2Fen-us%2Fgames%2Ftales-of-berseria-ps4%2F&psig=AFQjCNFsFinNJbBHLan0OFWYIvYKdg4Lqw&ust=1495819399142042

Accessed: 24 May 2017

Picture 7: Characters of Tales of Berseria

URL: https://www.google.fi/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwj-o9Lny-YvUAhVIjywKHVPnDE0QjB0IBg&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ign.com%2Farticles%2F2017%2F01%2F23%2Ftales-of-berseria-review&psig=AFQjCNFsFinNJbBH-Lan0OFWYIvYKdg4Lqw&ust=1495819399142042

Picture 8: Final Fantasy XIII: Lightning Returns

URL: https://www.google.fi/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwjPv6aUyIvUA-hUKWywKHS1nDPAQjB0IBg&url=https%3A%2F%2Fgameserrors.com%2Ffix-lightning-returns-final-fantasy-xiii-errors-crashes-not-load-ing%2F&psig=AFQjCNEeOT_imjO04XX2bMaIzXHw7ysG4Q&ust=1495819509946027

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Picture 9: Dragon Age: Inquisition

URL: https://www.google.fi/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwiSu6u_yIvUAhVF_ywKHbyeAHAQjB0IBg&url=http%3A%2F%2Fdragonage.wikia.com%2Fwiki%2FDragon_Age%3A_Inquisi-tion&psig=AFQjCNFN-ZpcDqE8LervWOotXGY9M9n6Ug&ust=1495819625033322

Accessed: 24 May 2017

Picture 10: Illustration of Dragon Age: Inquisition

URL: https://www.google.fi/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwicwbC-yYvUAhWGjCwKHRg3Al8QjB0IBg&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ign.com%2Farticles%2F2014%2F11%2F11%2Fdragon-age-inquisition-review&psig=AFQjCNFN-ZpcDqE8LervWOotXGY9M9n6Ug&ust=1495819625033322

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Picture 11: Witcher III: Wild Hunt

URL: https://www.google.fi/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=im-

ages&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwjs9_GLyYvUAhUBCSwKH-

coVA1cQjB0IBg&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.thewitcher.com%2F&psig=AFQjCNFHp8uF4

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