GOD OF WAR

MARKETING CAMPAIGN ANALYSIS

E-Marketing

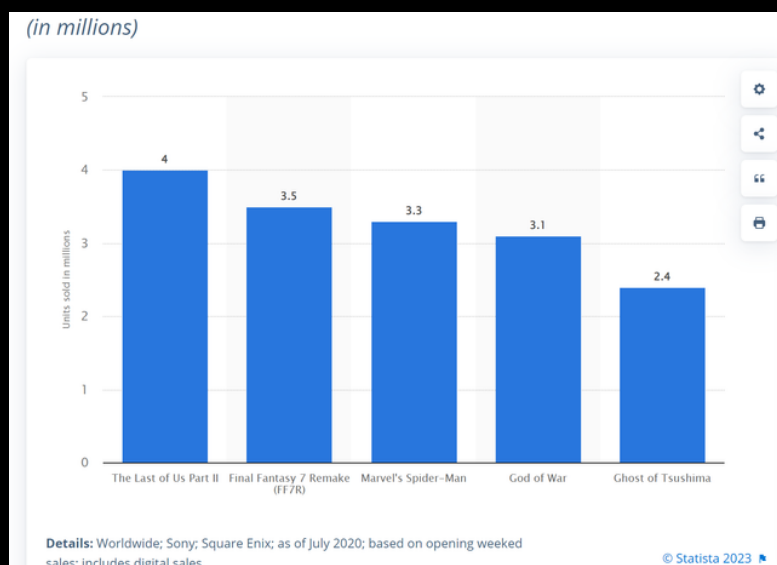SIDDHANTH CHRISTOPHER

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Introduction

As an avid gamer, my passion for gaming first stemmed from the day I played Road Rash on my PC in the early 2000's. Since then, my interest and love for interactive entertainment only snowballed into a colossal mammoth. In an industry where technology is constantly improving and impacting the lives of the daily user, one has to navigate through the white noise in order to find what hits the mark for them. Santa Monica Studio's God of War and CDProjekt Red's Cyperpunk 2077 are fine examples of how game developers can make it or break it in a highly competitive and dynamic industry. This essay aims to shine some light on the key elements of these marketing campaigns which led to their success and failure.

God of War

Inspired by Norse mythology, God of War is a revival and reboot of a popular Action-RPG franchise. Set in The Nine Realms, players find themselves immersed in a magical world and in control of a thoughtfully reimagined protagonist named Kratos, accompanied by his young son Atreus. Kratos, a stoic warrior haunted by his violent past, embarks on a journey after the death of his wife and Atreus's mother, Faye. The game facilitates a compelling story that explores human elements such as emotion, character development and moral ambiguity, a beautiful mystical world that's rewarding and an incredibly satisfying combat experience. The characters face adversities and tasks that shine a light on their personalities, enabling players to resonate with the characters and connect to the brand's offering.

Selling 3.1 million copies within three days from launch, the game was one of the most successful PlayStation exclusive launches in Sony's history. With positive word of mouth, the quality of the game spoke for itself. Upon being revealed at E3 2016, the trailer's reception was staggering, creating instant hype for the game. To curb the skepticism, Santa Monica hoped the game would sell itself by disclosing minimal details and relying on positive word of mouth on the internet, enabling them to generate a revenue of $500 million towards the end of the game's life cycle.

(in millions)

Details: Worldwide; Sony; Square Enix; as of July 2020; based on opening weeked sales; includes digital sales
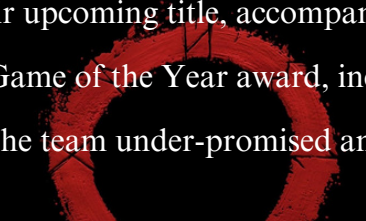
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Targeting gamers of all age groups, their primary (and only) segment at the time was PlayStation users. Most of the game's marketing was done through social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Some brand collaborations with Loot Crate and guerilla marketing regarding billboards and creatives in subways also took place early on to raise awareness. In retrospect, the objective of their campaign was to convey as little as possible by providing very little information to build anticipation for the game's release.

Outcome

Their subtle marketing practices enabled the team at Santa Monica Studios to create widespread awareness about their upcoming title, accompanied by significant hype, which enabled them to take home the Game of the Year award, including Best Game Direction and Best Action-Adventure Game. The team under-promised and over-delivered as the game swept gamers off their feet.

Cyberpunk 2077

Set in 2077, the Sci-fi RPG sandbox game immerses players in a dystopian city called Night City. It was first revealed in May 2012 and was in the works for nearly a decade. With that being said, CD Projekt Red managed to keep its title in the limelight with some versatile marketing, showcasing gameplay via live streams, engaging with fans on social media, celebrity endorsements and previewing footage of Night City. Having promised gamers that the game would run smoothly on both generations of consoles, it was teased that it would be released on numerous platforms.
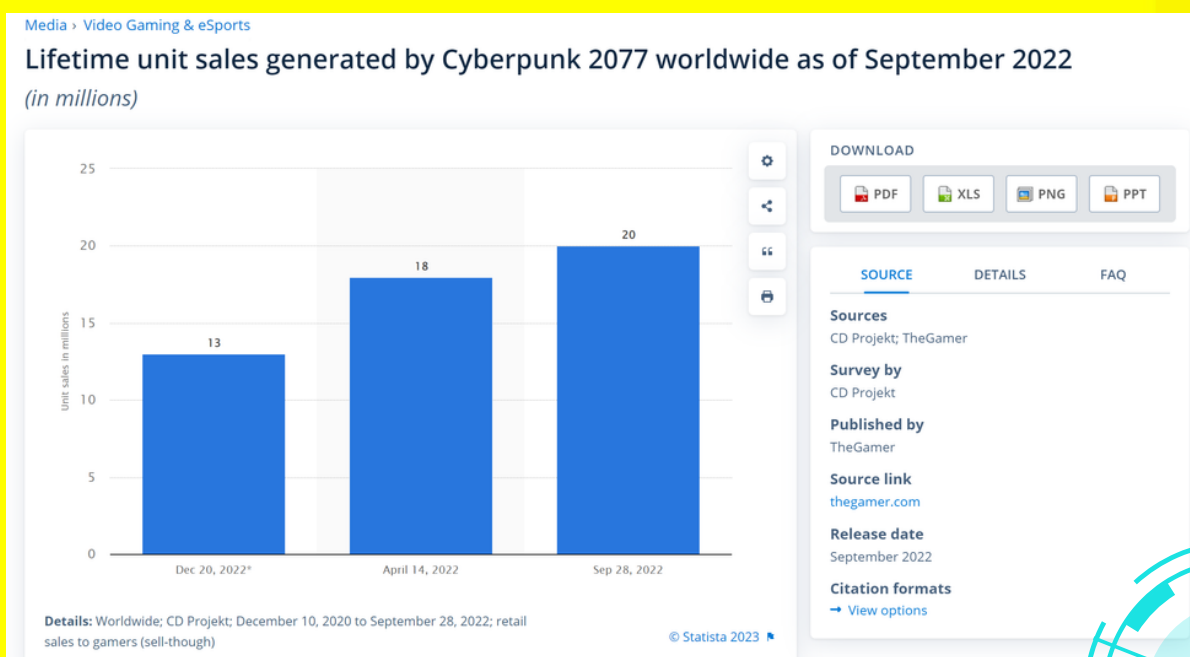
Consistently updating fans about the game by giving in-depth information via social media platforms about the gameplay and its mechanics well before it reached their hands, it is safe to say that the fans knew what they were about to indulge in. Paired with onboarding Keanu Reeves as a supporting character and the face of the game, his association with the franchise skyrocketed the hype for the game. The marketing campaign targeted every screen, billboard and commodity put forth in front of the naked eye. Disclosing information regarding the omission of micro-transactions instilled trust in the fans, showcasing the brand's efforts towards being consumer-centric.

CYBERPUNK 2077 LAUNCH MARKETING CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW
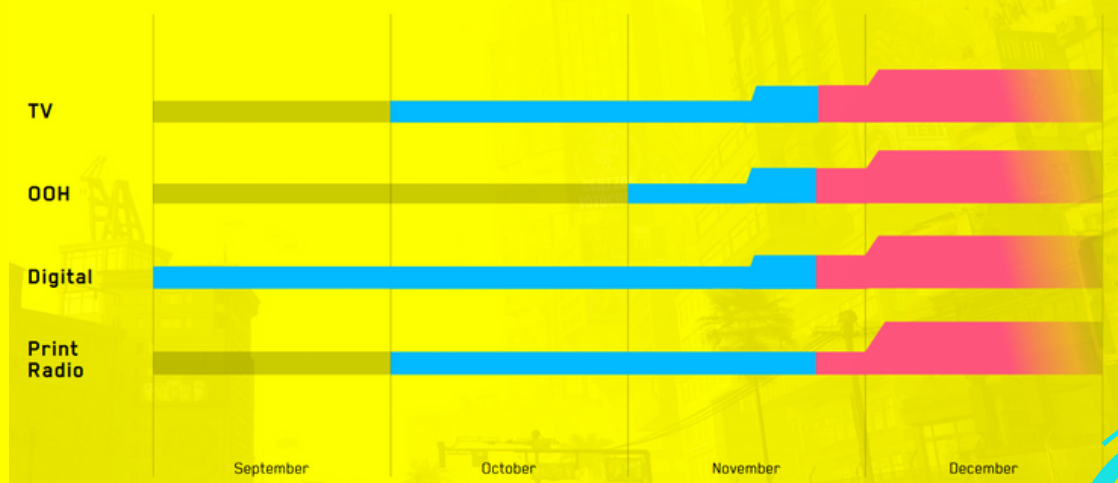
Upon release, the game was a technical disaster. Despite being delayed numerous times, it failed to hit the lowest bar of technical quality when played on previous-generation consoles. Its clunky mechanics, subpar AI, game-breaking bugs and low frame rates contradicted what the team at CDProjekt Red promised its consumers. It left the entire gaming community feeling deceived and lied to, labelling the campaign led by the marketing team a sham. Players needed a metric at launch to correctly judge the game apart from Cyberpunk's campaign material.

The key to being a cognizant gamer is knowing when a scripted trailer ends and real footage begins. Ideally, the objective of the campaign was to assure gamers of an immersive experience with innovative gameplay, story and mechanics, but eventually, its success led to the company's downfall as it focused more on living up to the expectations of its investors and players and meeting the deadline rather than narrowing down its focus to produce a high-quality game.

Media › Video Gaming & eSports

Lifetime unit sales generated by Cyberpunk 2077 worldwide as of September 2022
(in millions)

Details: Worldwide; CD Projekt; December 10, 2020 to September 28, 2022; retail sales to gamers (sell-though)

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Sources
CD Projekt; TheGamer

Survey by
CD Projekt

Published by
TheGamer

Source link
thegamer.com

Release date
September 2022

Citation formats
→ View options

Outcome

The team at CDProjekt Red were accused of misinformation, which led to lawsuits being filed on behalf of all company stockholders for falsifying material. The firm issued a public apology to its community via Twitter and promised customers a refund for their unfinished product, resulting in Sony pulling out the game entirely from its digital catalogue in the PlayStation Store. Compared to God of War, as of September 2022, Cyberpunk only sold 20 million units.

CYBERPUNK 2077

Dear gamers,

First of all, we would like to start by apologizing to you for not showing the game on base last-gen consoles before it premiered and, in consequence, not allowing you to make a more informed decision about your purchase. We should have paid more attention to making it play better on PlayStation 4 and Xbox One.

Second, we will fix bugs and crashes, and improve the overall experience. The first round of updates has just been released and the next one is coming within the next 7 days. Expect more, as we will update frequently whenever new improvements are ready. After the holidays, we'll continue working – we'll release two large patches starting with Patch #1 in January. This will be followed by Patch #2 in February. Together these should fix the most prominent problems gamers are facing on last-gen consoles. We will be informing you about the contents of each patch ahead of their release. They won't make the game on last-gen look like it's running on a high-spec PC or next-gen console, but it will be closer to that experience than it is now.

Finally, we would always like everyone who buys our games to be satisfied with their purchase. We would appreciate it if you would give us a chance, but if you are not pleased with the game on your console and don't want to wait for updates, you can opt to refund your copy. For copies purchased digitally, please use the refund system of PSN or Xbox respectively. For boxed versions, please first try to get a refund at the store where you bought the game. Should this not be possible, please contact us at helpmerefund@cdprojektred.com and we will do our best to help you. Starting from today, you can contact us for a week up until December 21st, 2020.

Humbly

Marcin Iwiński, Adam Kiciński, Adam Badowski, Michał Nowakowski, Piotr Nielubowicz, Piotr Karwowski

CD PROJEKT RED

PS. PC gamers will also be getting regular updates and fixes improving the game.

Strategies and Key Factors

Effective Content Marketing

Millennials and Gen Z are a unique demographic who are tech-savvy, value authenticity and personalization, and rely on their mobile devices. Both firms integrated content marketing by targeting gamers across all digital platforms by showcasing gameplay at live streams, gaming events, and social media. They prioritized customer engagement and feedback by providing gamers with information about their games' visually stunning graphics and innovative mechanics to help differentiate themselves from their competitors. The pre-release footage did help buyers resonate with the offerings as they were engaging and immersive, allowing gamers to get a feel of the game. The effectiveness of their strategies can be measured through launch day sales, social interactions and hype created.

Strong Influencer Marketing

In order to amplify their reach, both firms collaborated with popular gaming influencers and content creators who had a strong connection with their target audience by providing early-beta access to their games and sponsored content, allowing them to voice their experiences and opinions with their audience. Providing behind-the-scenes footage by interviewing developers gave viewers an insight into the development of the games and the companies. Doing so enhanced their engagement with the gaming community and empowered these influencers to share their curated content by fostering creativity, allowing players to feel involved with the title's development. Exclusive events were also hosted by leveraging social media platforms to showcase in-game highlights, enabling influencers to interact with developers and build a relationship with the brand to solidify their bond with the gaming community.

Positive Word of Mouth

What influenced my decision to purchase God of War was its post-launch reviews. Deemed a masterpiece, the game had positive reviews from all digital influencers and reviewers on social media. Though minimal, their campaign kept me hooked and inspired me to expect the unexpected. Information about the game's features, such as the quality of the graphics and gameplay mechanics and the ability to see developers work, fueled my imagination and built my anticipation for the game. Santa Monica's gamble paid off as they prioritized user experience by investing in quality assurance and focused on creativity and innovation, enabling the game to market itself due to its compelling storyline and innovative gameplay.

Over-Promised and Under-Delivered

The CDProjekt Red team showcased many in-game highlights and gameplay reveals, leaving no mystery for potential buyers. Despite having Keanu Reeves onboard, the entire campaign felt like a scripted movie trailer that spoiled the ending. My experience with their campaign was neutral, as the pre-alpha footage felt too good to be true and needed more ingenuity. The action-role-playing market is oversaturated with well-made release trailers and terrible end products, resulting in me not purchasing the product on release whilst waiting for reviews.

God of War Review

10 IGN

Masterpiece

God of War's outstanding characters, world, and combat come together to form an unforgettable adventure.

EDITORS' CHOICE

Review scoring

Jonathon Dornbush

Cyberpunk 2077 for Xbox One and PlayStation 4

4 IGN

Bad

Please don't play Cyberpunk 2077 on a base Xbox One or PS4. It is a shockingly bad way to experience what is a fantastic RPG on better hardware.

Review scoring

Destin Legarie

Conclusion

These are the key factors that played a role in my purchasing decision after experiencing the campaigns from both developers. Though both campaigns were distinguished from their competitors, the end product played a significant role that ultimately gave me a positive experience with Santa Monia's offering. In a world where information is readily available to vigilant consumers, businesses must convey credible information with due diligence. Doing so will enable them to build trust with potential customers and increase their likelihood of purchasing their offerings, instilling a positive purchasing experience.