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ÚSTAV JAZYKŮ

VIDEO GAMES, BOOKS AND FILM ADAPTATIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON GAMING COMMUNITY
VIDEOHRY, LITERÁRNÍ PŘEDLOHY A FILMOVÉ ADAPTACE A JEJICH VLIV NA HRÁČSKOU KOMUNITU

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AUTHOR   Jan Přichystal
AUTOR PRÁCE

SUPERVISOR   Mgr. Magdalena Šedrlová
VEDOUCÍ PRÁCE

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Student: Jan Přichystal   **ID:** 164378
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NÁZEV TÉMATU:

Videohry, literární předlohy a filmové adaptace a jejich vliv na hráčskou komunitu

POKYNY PRO VYPRACOVÁNÍ:

Videohry, především role playing games, inspirované literární předlohou se v současné době stávají trendem. Řada z úspěšných her navíc získala i svou filmovou, či televizní adaptaci. Současné pojetí tohoto spojení se odráží především v hráčské komunitě, která nejen že generuje ohromné příjmy herním studiím, vydavatelům, ale i filmovým společnostem nebo autorům literární předlohy. Cílem práce je popsat jakým způsobem lze předlohu úspěšně převést do podoby videohry, nebo filmu. Dále pak popsat pokrokové technologie, které se k tomuto účelu využívají (motion capture, CGI, apod.) jak ve hrách, tak ve filmech. A v neposlední řadě také to, jak může toto spojení ovlivňovat společnost, například tvorbou velké hráčské komunity, zpětnou vazbou pro vývojáře, nebo rozšiřováním kánonu.

DOPORUČENÁ LITERATURA:

Dymek, M.: Exporting Wars: Literature Theory and How It Explains the Video Game. Stockholm: Royal Institute of Technology.

Caillois, R.: Hry a lidé. Praha : Nakladatelství studia Ypsilon

Chatman, S.: Story and Discourse. Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

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Konzultant:

doc. PhDr. Milena Krhutová, Ph.D.
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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims at describing techniques used in the process of making a book into a video game, main aspects of such a transition, changes in different media that occur during this process and describing the relations between video games, literature and movies. It also comments on some of the recent technologies used in the process of developing a video game. Main topics of this thesis will be demonstrated on the series of books, TV show and popular RPG *The Witcher*, originally created by Polish author Andrzej Sapkowski. In rather contrasting comparison with these popular Slavic tales, the other examples will be mostly e-sport games and also a variety of other games of different genres.

However, this is not the only topic described in this thesis. It also aims at the impact of the relationship between books, movies and games on the society – or more precisely – the gaming community. The impact can be seen in many fields – e.g. subcultures composed of fans (fandom), costume play (cosplay), and professional gaming (e-sports). The statements concerning this part of the bachelor thesis will be also supported by my own research conducted using Google Forms, with a sample of video game players from a Facebook site Hráči 2.0.

KEYWORDS

Video games, movie adaptations, Andrzej Sapkowski, The Witcher, gaming community, e-sports, fan subculture

ABSTRAKT

Cílem této práce je popsat postupy používané při převádění knihy do podoby videohry, hlavní aspekty tohoto procesu, změny v daných médiích, které při tomto procesu probíhají a popsat spojení vznikající mezi videohrami, literaturou a filmy. Nastíní také některé z nových technologií používaných při vývoji videoher. Hlavní témata této práce budou demonstrována na sérii knih, seriálu a populárním RPG *Zaklínač*, původně vytvořené polským spisovatelem Andrzejem Sapkowským. V porovnání s těmito populárními slovanskými příběhy budou dalšími příklady především e-sport hry a také mnoho dalších her jiných žánrů.

Nicméně to není jediné téma popisované v této práci. Zaměřuje se také na vliv vztahů mezi knihami, filmy a videohrami na společnost, nebo přesněji, na herní komunitu. Tento vliv můžeme pozorovat v mnoha oblastech, např. subkulturách fanoušků (fandom), kostýmových hrách (cosplay) a profesionálním hraní videoher (e-sporty). Tvrzení, která publikuji v této části bakalářské práce, budou také podloženy mým vlastním výzkumem provedeným za pomoci Google Formulářů na vzorku hráčů videoher z Facebookové stránky Hráči 2.0.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Videohry, filmové adaptace, Andrzej Sapkowski, Zaklínač, herní komunita, e-sporty, subkultura fanoušků

PROHLÁŠENÍ

Prohlašuji, že svoji bakalářskou práci na téma Videohry, literární předlohy a filmové adaptace a jejich vliv na hráčskou komunitu jsem vypracoval samostatně pod vedením vedoucího bakalářské práce a s použitím odborné literatury a dalších informačních zdrojů, které jsou všechny citovány v práci a uvedeny v seznamu literatury na konci práce.

Jako autor uvedené bakalářské práce dále prohlašuji, že v souvislosti s vytvořením této bakalářské práce jsem neporušil autorská práva třetích osob, zejména jsem nezasáhl nedovoleným způsobem do cizích autorských práv osobnostních a/nebo majetkových a jsem si plně vědom následků porušení ustanovení § 11 a následujících zákona č. 121/2000 Sb., o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon), ve znění pozdějších předpisů, včetně možných trestněprávních důsledků vyplývajících z ustanovení části druhé, hlavy VI. díl 4 Trestního zákoníku č. 40/2009 Sb.

V Brně dne 30. 5. 2017

(podpis autora)

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INTRODUCTION

Techniques used in the process of making a book into a video game and/or a movie/TV show are subject to change these days. With a rapid development of new strategies and technologies in the video game and movie industry, it is difficult to understand them all, but the basic ones hold from the very beginning of the history of entertainment and these will be described in this thesis. It is always better to illustrate the plain theory and the example used in this thesis will be the series of books, TV show and popular RPG *The Witcher*, originally created by polish author Andrzej Sapkowski. This example was chosen due to the fact, that it is one of the best known set of literature, video games and TV show across the gaming community, which is also supported by my research – nearly 90% of respondents know the video game series, around 65% of them know the books and more than 35% know the TV show. Due to the slightly worse quality and critical reception of the TV show, the number of respondents, who are familiar with the TV show, is also lower. When one media presents the topic well, other media can benefit from its popularity among the community. Thus the link is actually present and the connection can be observed, due to the fact that fans of the respective set are usually familiar with all three main media presenting the topic. In Sapkowski's work and the corresponding work of video game designers and TV show producers, one can find many examples of the relation between different media, but it is also necessary to compare them to other popular sets of literature, movies and video games. A different approach can be exemplified on a variety of games (e.g., *Harry Potter series, World of Warcraft, Mass Effect, or Battlefield*) and movies (e.g. *The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings, Assassin's Creed, Warcraft* and also a variety of Marvel studio movies). In the past few years, movie industry seems to focus more on movies based on novels and literature in general and also popular video games, generating an immense box office income for the studios and breaking records in the audience share numbers, compared to the past. ("Top-US-Grossing Feature Films", n.d.)

Nevertheless, this is not the only topic of this thesis. It comments on the impact of the video games and corresponding literature and movie industry production on the gaming community, especially European, Japanese and North American, where many people participate in some way in the fan subculture. Video games and movies create subcultures composed of fans (fandom or fanbase), which live their own life and pervade into other fields like costume play (cosplay) and professional gaming (e-sports), which is a new growing trend. Fan art (graphics, music and other artistic figures created by the fan subculture) and fan fiction are also a vast part of this subculture and some of the examples will be described in this thesis.

1 CONNECTION BETWEEN LITERATURE, VIDEO GAMES AND MOVIES

1.1 ORIGIN OF VIDEO GAMES IN LITERATURE

Many successful video games (and movies) are based on books, especially in European and North American culture. There are strong tendencies to incline to the original story, but usually, some changes have to be made, so the audience would be satisfied. A rather extreme example of this scenario could be the video game *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.*, which is loosely based on the book *Roadside picnic*. The story of the game utilizes only the fundamentals of the original story from the book, like setting, atmosphere, etc. Actually, there is not any mention of the original characters from the book and storylines can be barely visible in the game.

Another approach could be seen in *The Witcher* series – a book originally created by Sapkowski under the title *Wiedzmin* (or *Vedmak* in other Slavic languages, due to the similarity to female Vědma or Witch). The origins of this series of books were in Polish speculative fiction and fantasy magazine *Fantastyka*, for which Sapkowski wrote short stories in 1986. The books were later made into a TV show (named *Hexer* during the first release) consisting of 13 parts and finally, in 2007, it was made into a PC game *The Witcher*, which was released by CD Projekt RED. The TV show gained rather poor reviews, whereas the PC game won The Game of the Year (GOTY) title and was later released in so-called GOTY edition, receiving very positive reviews. In the TV show, one can see that the storyline was adapted with some differences; namely merging two characters into one, adding some new characters, modifying some scenes, where the story takes place, etc. These changes were received rather negatively, due to the fact that it does not follow the original storyline. The main part – the story of one of the witchers called Geralt of Rivia – remained mostly intact in the sense that a viewer, who is familiar with the books, can find some crucial parts of the story within it, but the TV show did not manage to represent the original work in detail, thereby it was not interesting and tempting for the viewers. Another fact is that the characters in movies are described differently and usually without any insight to their background or feelings because there is not much space for a deeper description. On contrary, the visual interpretation of their appearance and the appearance of the world is usually much better in audio visual media. The movies and TV shows based on literature usually follow the storyline as much as possible and the audience regards them as an audio visual representation of the book, which is more popular because the tendency in these days is to read less and spare the free time by watching movies. Developers of the PC game chose a slightly different approach. The game took not only the fundamentals of the world, where the story takes place, but also characters and story, but it is not an actual

interactive re-telling of the original story since it rather fills in the blanks in the original book and adds new stories of what might have happened. Also the way, in which the video games are connected to the original source, matters because it must preserve the features and fundamentals of the original story. In the case of *The Witcher* video game series, this was done in a rather simple but also elegant way, when the main protagonist suffers from an amnesia and discovers the world around him from the beginning without any knowledge of the previous events. Sapkowski later dissociated himself from the game. "The game - with all due respect to it, but let's finally say it openly - is not an 'alternative version', nor a sequel. The game is a free adaptation containing elements of my work; an adaptation created by different authors", he noted, but then expressed his enthusiasm and support for the developers, which continued through the years when another two titles (*The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings* and *The Witcher 3: The Wild Hunt*) were released. (Purchese, 2012)

Other video games designers are using different approaches, which are somewhere between these two examples. It is also worth mentioning, that the success of the original literature does not automatically render the video game successful. It depends on many factors like advertising (of both the literature and the video game), reviews in renowned magazines and other medias and also the popularity of the author and/or the studio in the respective country. Among many games based on literature, one can find examples like Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Glukhovsky's *Metro 2033*, or games loosely based on Tom Clancy's novels. The style and genre of the literature do not determine the genre of the game, but usually, these games are role-playing games (RPGs) or adventures because these genres are platforms that allow producers to expand the original story further. On contrary, in the case of Clancy's games, first-person shooter is also a genre, that can be used as a platform for telling a story, albeit it is a simple one.

1.2 ORIGIN OF LITERATURE AND MOVIES IN VIDEO GAMES

There are some popular video games that have a very large fan base, which demands additional stories and because it is easier and cheaper to write a book than develop a new game, some literary stories were released. Another reason for writing books based on video games is the possibility of trying different approaches, styles and ways of storytelling, which enables the writer to experiment with the given topic and the readers to enjoy different points of view on their favourite video game. Although video games (especially open-world RPGs) are a relatively good platform for telling an interactive story with lots of details, it is sometimes impossible to describe characters, situations, or feeling as good as in a book. Moreover, some

fans can try to write their own stories originating from their favoured video game. But books are just a kind of extension to the original source material. Popular video games generate income only for game studios and books can boost the income only a little, especially those written by fans without buying a license. Film studios see the potential hidden in video games, which already proved successful (either by themselves or by forming a fandom and releasing literature based on them) and wants their market share as well. Usually, scriptwriters have to be familiar with basic fundamentals of the video game, so they can choose an interesting part of the game and prepare the script for the movie. The lack of knowledge and experience with video games among scriptwriters in these days can result in rather poor movies, but this situation is about to change in the future.

A fine example of the link between video games and books or movies can be the role-playing game (RPG) *World of Warcraft*, or originally the real-time strategy (RTS) series *Warcraft I, II* and *III*. The franchise currently incorporates more than 60 books. After the success of the literary stories, it was only a matter of time until a movie appears. An action-fantasy movie *Warcraft*, released in 2016, using life-action combined with CGI procedures, based on both the video games and the novels, was also a great success. It generated a box office income of $433.7 million, with a budget of only $160 million, meaning that it is the highest-grossing film of all time based on a video game.

A similar approach was chosen by Ubisoft, the developer of the *Assassin's Creed* video game, when they released a series of books set in the *Assassin's Creed* universe written by Oliver Bowden. Currently, the whole series comprises 8 titles, which take place across all the games from the original series. A life-action movie, named simply *Assassin's Creed* (2016), starring Michael Fassbender, accumulated a box office income of $240.5 million, placing among the best movies at the turn of the years 2016 and 2017, which can be seen as a success. Successful movies based on video games are usually prequels or sequels because it is easier to write the script due to the fact that the scriptwriters can alter the story and do not have to stick precisely to what is presented in the video game. Speaking of the *Assassin's Creed* movie, it is not a prequel, nor sequel, but rather a copy that takes place along the video game settings. This approach is not wrong and was positively received by the audience because the *Assassin's Creed* universe offers great possibilities (like entering the genetic memory of a person), which enables the scriptwriters to alter nearly any story that take place at any time in the past or present and graft it to the *Assassin's Creed* universe. This also occurs in the *Assassin's Creed* video game series. On contrary, some deviations can also be observed, usually to satisfy the audience.

Movies are shorter, the plot must be explained quicker and it is more intensive. This gave the producers less time to explain the fundamentals of the original material (e.g. the "leap of faith" is one of the most prominent features of the original video game, it also appears in the movie, but it is not described any further, or the Animus, which is also one of the most noticeable machines in the *Assassin's Creed* universe, which is described in detail in the video game, but only its basic functions are presented in the movie). Moreover, the scriptwriters and producers of a movie should stick to a common schema of the plot (e.g. introduction – realization – plot twist – good ending), which makes it different from the open-world adaptive-storytelling video games, where the player influence the ending (or at least can choose from a variety of several endings).

The numbers above show that movies based on video games can become popular also among viewers, who are not familiar with the game and this is a fine example of the fact, that the fandom can generate immense income for the whole combined industry (meaning video game developers, movie producers and publishing houses). The audience share in the case of movies based on video games is definitely increased by the fans of respective video games. The interesting fact is that fans of a video game sometimes attend the premiere of their long-awaited movie in large groups dressed as their favourite characters (in terms of cosplay), discuss the anticipated movie and prepare for the first night in general. The movie theatre companies expect great demand for the premiere and sometimes offer a preview (pre-premiere) or special opening nights with the participation of director of the movie. The income from the movie is thus increased again and prepares ground for the release of another episode of the franchise. Other games, for example *Need for Speed*, managed to create a different kind of fandom, where people are involved in the idea or settings of the respective game (i.e. sport cars and racing) than the game and its features itself and see the game only as a medium for enjoying their shared interest, although this is a unique occurrence.

1.3 ORIGIN OF VIDEO GAMES IN MOVIES

Video games based on movies are popular mainly due to the fact that they offer an interactive walkthrough of players' favourite movie, where they can change the outcome, which differs from the movie, or on the other hand, find it enjoyable because they can interact with their favoured characters and deepen their relationship with them, especially in an open world video game, which offer greater possibilities for telling an interesting story.

Considering video games based purely on movies (without any books or comics previously released), there are usually only rather poor games, mostly based on animated movies for young audience (e.g. *The Cars, Shrek*, etc.), which are quite simple, straightforward in gameplay and funded only insignificantly by the production company itself. Usually, this is used only to maintain the income from the respective title for some time and it is not intended to create a canon or fandom. The reason why these games are rather poor is that one cannot create an interesting AAA[1] game title based only on minor canon presented in the movie. In this case, the developers try to stick to the original plot as much as possible, without finding some blank spots and filling them. These video games often lack the funding comparable to AAA titles and have a rather poor marketing, which usually results in a short lifespan of such games.

However, there are some exceptions, most notably the *Star Wars*, which managed to form an immense fandom and pervade into literature and video games market, generating considerable incomes for creators and respective studios and companies. *Star Wars* is a unique phenomenon in the movie industry and related fields. Many video games and novels utilizing the plot, environment or settings of the *Star Wars* were released and they spread across many genres ranging from an arcade first-person shooter (FPS) (e.g. *Star Wars Republic Commando*), through online multiplayer games (*Star Wars Battlefront*), up to demanding RPGs (*Star Wars The Old Republic*), or from short comics to long novels, respectively. The link, in this case, is enhanced even more, due to the fact that *Star Wars* managed to create not only the set of movies, video games and literature, resulting in an enormous fandom, but also a religion. The famous Jedi Knights, originating from the *Star Wars* universe, are listed among new religious movements in many countries and people actually identify themselves as followers of the Jedi Order or Jediism.

Other video games, which are based on movies, also take some parts of the original literature, on which the movie itself in based, but are popular mainly thanks to the movie. As an example, we can consider the RTS *Lord of the Rings: Battle for Middle-Earth* (2004) or the RPG *Middle-Earth: Shadow of Mordor* (2014). Those games take place in the universe of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* but are heavily influenced by Peter Jackson's movies and aim at the audience, which is familiar primarily with them and not with the original literature. This approach is chosen usually because the original content was already made into a popular

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[1] Highly funded, anticipated and awarded video game

video game, but it still remains tempting. In the case of those two video games, the main focus is not on the story of the original prose but uses its general settings instead. Both games were received very positively and the *Battle for Middle-Earth* is still played even in these days by many players worldwide, due to its great combat system and connection to *The Hobbit* movie (2012).

2 TECHNIQUES USED IN MAKING A BOOK INTO A GAME

2.1 BASIC IDEAS AND TECHNOLOGIES USED IN VIDEO GAMES

There are actually two different ways to create a video game based on a book. One possible way is to re-tell the story itself, without any deviations from the original plot or developing it further, maintaining the storyline, characters, environment, etc. and simplifying the gameplay by adding only minor puzzles and easier quests. This can be seen in *Harry Potter* video games or some comics' stories. Since this is rather a simple example, it is not described further in this thesis. The reason, why this approach is usually not welcomed by the audience is described above. (See 1.3)

2.1.1 ADAPTIVE STORYTELLING

Apart from re-telling the story of a book, another way is to take the unique sections from a book and create an entirely new environment (or world) that offers great possibilities for creating a new story. Most of these games are role-playing games (RPGs), which usually transforms the storyline based on player's actions through the whole gameplay with different outcomes – this is called adaptive storytelling (Paul et al., 2011). This phenomenon can be clearly seen in *The Witcher* video game series. The decisions of the player's character affect the world or environment of the game and can result in additional storylines while maintaining a seamless flow of the original story that remains intact.

Non-linear open-world video games sometimes offer more than one possible ending, but it is not feasible to start developing the story for a respective ending from the very beginning of the game, therefore only decisions made through last moments (parts, acts) of the game matter. Multiple endings are warmly welcomed by the gaming community because it allows players to play the game twice or more times and still find it enjoyable. On the contrary, it is difficult and more expensive for game designers to develop a game with more endings, thus they often tend to make only minor adjustments to one major ending, but still proclaiming that the game has different possibilities. This was the case of *Mass Effect* game series, developed

by Bioware as a closed three-part game series (similar to *The Witcher*). There should be a major decision at the very end of the last game that changed the destiny of the whole universe, but actually, it was one ending only in different colours and with slightly different animations. The community was very unsatisfied and there were strong objections against the developers because of reasonable suspicion for false advertising. Bioware then released an *Extended Cut* DLC[2], which improved the ending and added some new information about the fate of characters. (Phillips, 2012)

Branching dialogue system (or dialogue tree) is often used to create an environment presenting an open world, which is suggesting the possibility of free will and choice, even though all lines are scripted and some of them might not have any impact on the conversation nor the outcome of the whole game.
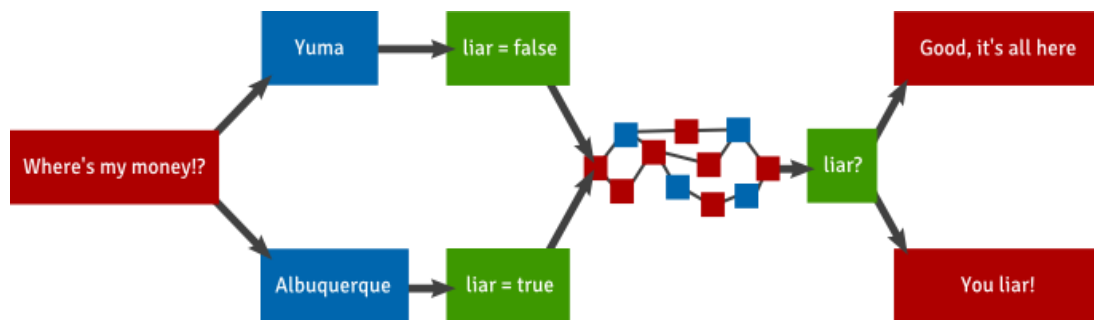

Figure 1 - A branching dialogue tree example (Todd, E.)

Usually, a simple question is answered in two or more possible ways. Each way leads to a dialogue consisting of both important and unimportant information and utterances resulting in only a few possible outcomes again. This feature is common in video games made with regards to adaptive storytelling. The player requires an open-world environment, filled with life-like non-playable characters[3] (NPCs), which are able to pretend a seamless flow of conversation resembling cognitive functions of a human. Another interesting usage of this system is quest acquisition when the player can start a random minor quest line only after speaking to some NPC. The dialogue tree can be skipped relatively quickly, so the player actually only starts the quest without any relevant information known, or can find some clues about the upcoming quest during the branching conversation. Last but not least example is also very popular in video games based on adaptive storytelling – the player can sometimes choose between a straightforward force-based solution or try to negotiate and find a peaceful solution to the problem. All these steps are used with regards to realistic decision making.

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[2] Downloadable content

[3] a character controlled by the computer through artificial intelligence

Figure 2 - A decision-making example (CD Projekt)

2.1.2 ADAPTING LITERATURE FOR A GAME

Players want to encounter known locations and characters from the books, but these are only the settings for new adventures previously unmentioned in the literature. The demands of the gaming community, which is familiar with the original source literature, allow the producers of the game to make the initial decision-making process during the pre-production stage (which is described later in this thesis) easier and faster. This approach usually predetermines the success of the game and allows the producers to start with fundamentals that already proved successful among the community. The whole gameplay is easily accessible for newcomers to the title, without any knowledge of the past events, as well as for fans of the series of books who are familiar with information from previously released titles. There is sometimes a risk that the newcomers would not perceive the bits from the original story that are hidden in the plot, thus they might not have the same experience as the fans. The fact is, that game developers realize they have to make a game accessible for a wide audience and it remains their main objective, but scriptwriters and programmers like to prepare so-called easter eggs[4], which are usually warmly welcome by the fandom. It is simply a great chance to amuse players without spoiling any crucial part of the original prose. On the other hand, there are sometimes parts of the video game's plot, which require at least basic knowledge of the original literature. Only skilled scriptwriters can handle this situation without any obvious problems or discontinuances

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[4] an intentional inside joke, hidden message, or feature in an interactive work

in the story flow. Some video game series are planned from the very beginning as a closed set of two or three games, in which the story continues through each of them (e.g. *Mass Effect* or *The Witcher*) and, since these games are made using adaptive storytelling, some crucial choices in one part of the game should have a lasting effect, which shows up in the next game. It is not feasible to prepare a script that would correspond with each choice made in the previous game and thus only the most important ones are taken and, thanks to importing the saved games, influence the plot of the next game in the series. This procedure is also warmly welcomed by the players because they feel that their decisions have an effect and they can identify themselves with their character.

The main problem with adapting a prose is its copyright and intellectual property laws covering it. Basically, if an independent game designer makes a game based on a plot that is common in some kind of literature, like romantic novels (where a knight saves a princess from a tower after slaying a monster protecting it), one cannot find any violation of laws, but in the case that some characters or any other part of the original literature can be found within a new game, then the designer can be sued for copyright infringement. Game designers then need an approval from the author or publisher of the original prose and the final product can be seen as a licensed one. Some designers and developers create independent games, which are funded by themselves and released independently usually with some help from fans in the form of donations on crowdfunding websites. These games focus on gameplay and innovative ideas more than a famous story or known characters and places, thus they do not need to buy any licence. In the case, when there is no possibility to avoid buying a licence or gaining an approval or agreement from the creator of the original content, negotiation of the level or degree of used amount of the original work starts and, after finding a mutual agreement, some price is set. Sapkowski was asked for the licence on *Wiedzmin* twice. The first negotiation started in 1998, when the head of Metropolis game studio, Adrian Chmielarz, presented a concept of an entirely new video game from *The Witcher* universe (still named *Hexer* in those days) and offered him $4000, which is a relatively small amount for such a licence considering other deals on licensed products. The game was never released, unfortunately, but Sapkowski, thanks to his scepticism, got the money for the licence in advance. Metropolis was later bought by CD Projekt and they bought another licence for their new video game series, which was paid in advance again. There were speculations that Sapkowski did not believe in the success of the new game and thus he wanted the money in advance. (Doskocil, 2017) On contrary, many authors believe in the

success of the licensed works and choose that their payment is based on the earning of respective derived title.

Speaking of *The Witcher* series, the game designers discussed their ideas and feelings with Sapkowski in advance before any part of the video game was released or sketched on the storyboard. However, Sapkowski believes that different media does not mix with other, but it can affect it in some way. ([SmutnySyn], 2015) After the release of *The Hexer* movie, as well as after the release of any game from *The Witcher* series, the sales of the books increased, which is not a unique occurrence. Although Sapkowski has a rather relaxed opinion of his work being adapted into a video game, he strictly denies that any stories presented in *The Witcher* are sequels to his books, and again, this is very common among the authors on whose books any video games were based. (Purchese, 2012)

2.2 PRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF A VIDEO GAME

Modern technologies are implemented during the production of new games. The process itself begins on a storyboard, which somehow predicts the entire appearance of the game. The story must be solid, but the technologies put it in motion. In the past, there were games which stood solely on text and players had to remember the whole preceding story to make sense to them. Today video games offer much greater possibilities. With the arrival of powerful graphic chips, more detailed and advanced rendering engines (notably Unreal engine, id Tech, Frostbite engine, Real Virtuality, IW engine, CryEngine, or REDengine; the last one was developed by CD Projekt RED specifically for non-linear open-world games), physics and collision engines, developers and designers have efficient tools to create both an attractive story and spectacular realistic graphics.

The process of developing a video game (or any other software) consists of three (or four) stages: Pre-production, production (including milestones) and post-production. Each stage requires a variety of professionals in different fields.
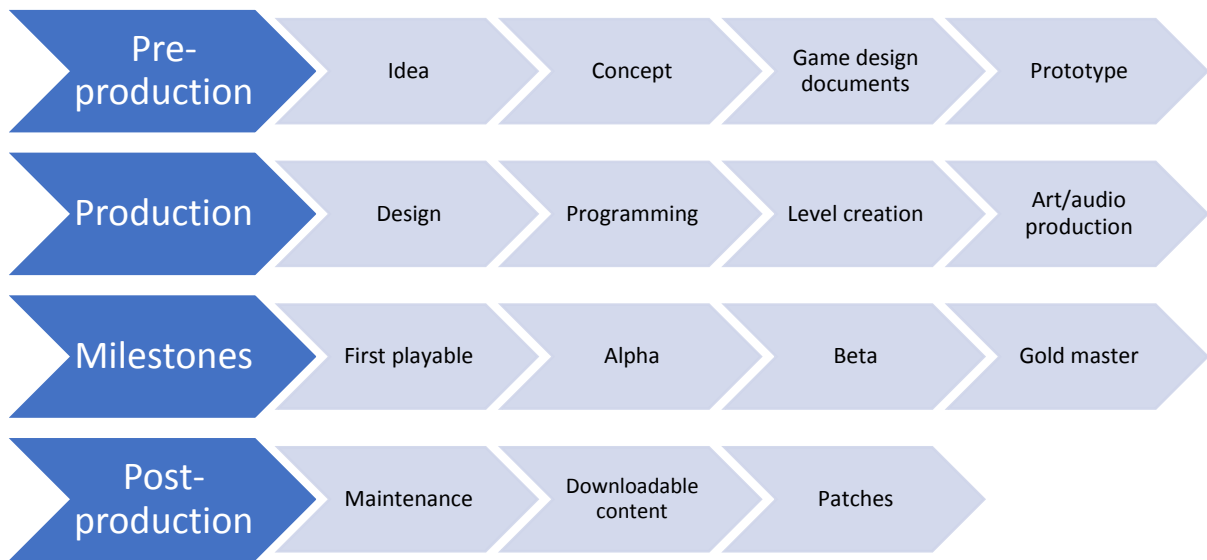
Pre-production	Idea	Concept	Game design documents	Prototype
Production	Design	Programming	Level creation	Art/audio production
Milestones	First playable	Alpha	Beta	Gold master
Post-production	Maintenance	Downloadable content	Patches	

Figure 3 - Video game development process

2.2.1 PRE-PRODUCTION

During the pre-production stage, there are some necessary steps that have to be done before any game can be made. An idea – sometimes called high concept – is a brief description of a game, which is presented to the developers. In this stage, it is not crucial to prepare any representation or examples of the game itself, rather than present it from the marketing perspective and summarize basic ideas, which will be put into concept documentation.

Concept documentation (game proposal) is a summary of the high concept presented to the publisher. It aims at game's selling points and possible profits for the publisher. Audiovisual materials are sometimes presented at this point, e.g. demo of the software or game, but it is not necessary and usually omitted. Developers seek mutual understanding with publishers and await their approval.

After the publisher's approval, the development itself can begin. A full-scale development in nearly every field requires product documentation. In the gaming industry, this is called a game design document, which incorporates detailed descriptions of original ideas, suggests basic principles and elements of the gameplay, predicts entire appearance of environment, characters (both playable and non-playable) and level design, while remaining a living document, which can be changed during the development. Some changes are tested on a prototype, usually to find if they are applicable, and only then integrated into the documentation.

In the case of *The Witcher 3 – Wild Hunt*, the pre-production stage was rather straightforward since the whole series was prepared and developed as a closed three-act story, the critic response was very good and the previous title (*The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings*) sold more than 8 million copies (Pieczyrak, 2014). Speaking of marketing, it is also easier to sell a game based on well known stories among the community. Original ideas held and only minor adjustments were made to make the game more accessible for newcomers and adjust the difficulty for players who cared more about the story than the gameplay, which is not unusual in the RPG genre. The game was officially announced on 4th February 2013 for "all high-end platforms available" meaning PC, Xbox One, and Playstation 4 versions was released at the same date worldwide, which is rather unique, since the console versions are often released in advance, prior to the PC version.

2.2.2 PRODUCTION

Production stage is the second stage of the whole developing process. It includes writing a source code, creating and designing levels, programming combat system, economy system, or quest progression, art and audio production and also testing and optimizing the game for final (or gold master) release.

The source code itself has to be written in a way that allows all the ideas from the pre-production phase to be incorporated into the game. It is not unusual to rewrite the source code during the production phase to correspond with the needs of designers.

The design of the levels depends on many factors. Firstly, there is a leading game designer, who sets the goals and controls the entire outcome of this procedure – the visual representation of the game's levels, appearance of playable and non-playable characters (although the trend is that players themselves can change the appearance of their characters), atmosphere of important parts of the game, etc. Secondly, the story needs to be blended into the game in a smooth way, which is usually done by mixing main- and side-quests. Role-play games are based on a strong plot (consisting of non-linear storytelling with numerous plot twists, which sometimes culminate in more than one possible ending), that requires skilled writers' cooperation with game designers and programmers. Thirdly, respective fields of game design require skilled specialists. Audio production can be an example of this phenomenon because modern games build the atmosphere also through ambient sound and music. A soundtrack is highly valued part of a game and nearly every successful game had its soundtrack recorded by a renowned group of artists (for example, the soundtrack for *The Witcher 3* consists

of 35 tracks with the total running time of approximately 81 minutes). Artwork and graphic design are also performed by professionals in both artistic and game design fields. CD Projekt RED created their own game engine – REDengine – used exclusively for non-linear RPG games, incorporating modern rendering techniques that helped designers and programmers fulfil their goals. In the past, it was also common to prepare pre-rendered short videos or cut scenes, which masked rather long loading times and offered a better visual experience of the game, like in the case of the first *Witcher* game. This is no longer true because it is possible to use in-game render techniques, which seamlessly traverse between interactive parts of the game and crucial story points worth a cinematic presentation. It is also a beneficial technique in case of games that offers the possibility of changing your characters appearance (such as clothes, hairstyles or equipment) or dynamic daytime changes (which is the case of the third *Witcher* game) because it eliminates the inconsistency between the interactive and cinematic part, resulting from the differences in pre-rendered scenes and actual appearance of the player's character.

The whole production passes through a series of milestones – first playable, alpha, beta and gold master are the most notable ones. First playable version of the game is accessible to and used only by in-house developers and designers and aims to demonstrate and test main aspects of the game. The Alpha release contains a majority of the game principles, design is about to be completed and changes are usually only minor. Beta phase denotes that the game is about to be finished. There is a part of the beta phase called "code-freeze", wherefrom the code is no longer developed and only bugs are corrected. A growing trend is to release the game in beta phase for testing to players (who subscribed in some insider programs or pre-purchased the game), who seeks bugs and errors in the game by simply playing it and sending (usually automated) feedback to the developers. This approach chose EA DICE, the developers of *Battlefield 1*, and it was a great success because it does not only helped the developers to fix bugs in their code but also gained popularity among the gaming society. This is a mutually beneficent act that serves needs for both the players, who can access the game in advance and developers who do not have to spend a part of their budget on testing. Finally, after optimizing the game, there is a gold master release, which indicates that the game is ready for duplicating and releasing for public.

Since production of a game is a long-lasting procedure, the release date can be postponed many times during the development. As regards *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, this happened two times and the game was finally released on 19 May 2015, whereas the original

release date should be in autumn 2014. It took over three years, 240 in-house developers and more than 1,500 people involved in the production of the game worldwide. The development budget for the game was 306 million Polish złoty (or 69 million Euros). CD Projekt RED claims that more than 10 million copies were sold worldwide. (Makuch, 2016) It was awarded by The Game Awards 2015 as the Game of the Year and The Best RPG (along with countless other "the Best game" awards) defeating games like *Bloodborne* or *Fallout 4*, which aimed even higher than *The Witcher 3*. In comparison, *The Witcher 2* was awarded by European Games Awards as the best European game, defeating games like *Battlefield 3* and *Minecraft*. The games from *The Witcher* universe usually beat other video games in categories like best narrative, best story, or best art.

2.2.3 POST-PRODUCTION

Post-production stage of a video game usually consists of maintenance tasks only. The variety of hardware available for personal computers and its interconnections can cause problems, prevent the game from running smoothly or launching completely, or some bugs might not been observed and patched before the gold master release. Thus it is necessary to prepare a fix, which is available to the customers as soon as possible, and this remains the task for the game developers even after the game is released. Nevertheless, in the case of console games, the maintenance part is sometimes omitted, since once the game is released, it is difficult to install patches and also because of the minor probability that some hardware changes would cause problems because video game consoles houses identical or nearly identical hardware, besides PC, which has a variety of different hardware configurations, as mentioned above. However with the arrival of the new generation of video game consoles (PS4, or Xbox One) developers focus more on the maintenance part of post-production.

The Witcher 3 was the first game of the *Witcher* universe that was released on the same day for both PC and video game consoles, making it barely patchable in few days after the release. Nevertheless, this action was not necessary because the game was tested and optimized appropriately. A slightly different outcome was brought by the release of *The Witcher 2*, which was criticized for use of the DRM[5] causing problems with activation of the product and also some performance issues. Ultimately, the DRM was quickly removed with patch version 1.1.

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[5] Digital Rights Management – system used to protect and restrict usage of proprietary hardware and copyrighted works

Another point that should be mentioned is the downloadable content (DLC), which is a new trend in the gaming industry. It is an expansion pack with content ranging from a simple and minor alternation of game's appearance to new storylines or even a change in game's mechanisms. Usually, this content is released considerably long time after the original game and accessible only through the internet and only after confirming that one actually possesses the original game (with a product key, gaming service account, etc.), but recent events shows that DLC can be also used for marketing purposes and become available to players, who pre-ordered the game, on the day of release or even distributed on a physical medium along with the original game. Amongst players, it is considered rather unfair, but they tend to pay more attention to the release of a partly uncompleted game for a full price, which is later completed with a DLC by the publisher.

3 IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

The impact of the video games on society in general is far beyond the scope of this thesis and is often discussed. Main topics of these discussions are the violence of the video games, their impact on children development and many others. This thesis is focusing more on the positive impact of video games on society, or more precisely, on the gaming community. My research, which I will refer to in this part of my thesis, was conducted on a previously chosen sample – the fan base of a Facebook.com site named Hráči 2.0. From the total number of 277 responds, only 219 of them were useful and proper (due to the fact, that some forms were not complete or clearly misleading), unfortunately. Nevertheless, this sample was suitable for showing the trends among the gaming community. Most responders were males (87%) aged 15 to 25 (89%) with completed primary or secondary education (88%). On the other hand, one can find also some interesting deviations from the trend. For example, 15 responders have bachelor, master or doctor degree. The trend is that teenagers from Hráči 2.0 tend to spend more time on playing video games (about 30 hours per week) rather than reading books (usually 0 to 2 hours per week) or watching movies. With increasing age, the tendency is to decrease the time spent on playing video games (less than 10 hours per week) and increase the time spent on reading books. Younger players are more likely to be a part of some fandom, but their interests can change quite rapidly, so they skip between different fandoms or take a part in more fandoms simultaneously, while older players stick to their favourite fandom as much as possible.

3.1 FANDOM

A fandom can be described as a group of people sharing the interest and enthusiasm in some area of human activity. Fans are usually familiar with every known detail of the object of their fandom and spend a significant amount of time acquiring, sharing and using the knowledge of the subject. The subject can be nearly everything, thus it became affiliated with popular literature and video games throughout the time. A large number of players focusing on RPGs are also familiar with the original literature or video game based literature and also other fields where the game is presented (e.g. board games, fan fiction, fan conventions). According to my findings, 65% of the gaming community prefers RPGs to any other genre and their favourite literary or movie genres are fantasy and sci-fi usually combined with action.

Fan labour is an interesting part of every fandom, which focuses on utilization of one's abilities to create something connected to the respective fandom. Fan labour can be divided into different groups, namely literary arts (fan fiction), costume play (cosplay), traditional visual arts (graphic design and art), computer-aided visual arts (videos and popular Machinima), musical arts and sometimes also applied arts (usually used as a technical term for costume construction/fabrication).

3.1.1 FAN FICTION

The greatest part of fan labour is created by the fan fiction – nearly every fan can participate in this kind of fan labour because it is not expensive, time demanding and fans can publish their work anonymously, which encourages many authors to experiment. Fan fiction usually expands the original storyline (canon) by filling in the blanks in the original plot or creating entirely new stories, where one can find characters or locations from the original literature. These works are usually not commissioned by the authors of the original work, unless some of the works gain such an immense popularity that they are released by a publishing house as a book, but even in this case, the book is usually not commissioned and thus released without any obstructions, however some of them need to adjust the character names or typical locations to avoid copyright infringement. *Harry Potter* universe comprises the most titles released as fan fiction (FanFiction.net currently offers more than 760,000 stories ranging from a few hundred words up to a hundred thousand words). *The Witcher* universe is not an exception in this field and its fandom creates many stories (due to the nature of both Sapkowski's prose and video games usually focused on the relation between the witcher Geralt of Rivia, his lover Yennefer of Vengerberg and their adoptive daughter Cirilla) and also so-called crossovers (e.g. with the Game of Thrones, where the story take place in Westeros, or with sexual content).

3.1.2 COSTUME PLAY

Nearly any story, which has any visual depiction of the content (e.g. a movie, TV show, comics) pervades during the time into costume play. Cosplay is a form of art – or more precisely – performance art, where one wears a costume and also plays the role of a chosen character. Cosplayers usually form their own subculture, which is connected to the original fandom and often visit fan conventions in their respective roles. Both performance art skills and crafting skills are required because only a few costumes can be bought, but the majority of them is handcrafted and fits the requirements of the user. Cosplay has gained more popularity over the time and the variety of cosplayers ranges from beginners using only simple costumes to professionals spending a considerable amount of money and time on their builds (meaning hi-tech elaborated costumes). This kind of fan labour can become also an occupation. Jessica Nigri is one of the world best-known cosplay artists, who consider cosplay her occupation or profession, but even in the Czech Republic, there are famous cosplayers, for example Kuromaru, who performs roles from Final Fantasy series and also the witcher Geralt of Rivia. Many cosplayers chose their characters mainly from video games because it offers both the visualization of the character appearance and insight of the character abilities and psychology, moreover the presentation of the character in a movie might not be accurate. Books and other literature can offer a deeper understanding of the character feelings and thoughts, but on contrary offers only minor (or insufficient) description of the appearance. Again, this is a proof of the link between the video games, literature and movies with regards to fandom.

Figure 5 - Geralt of Rivia and Triss Merigold (in-game footage) (CD Projekt)

Figure 4 - Cosplayers presenting Geralt and Triss
([Agcooper73])

3.1.3 VISUAL ARTS

Another vast part of the fan labour are traditional visual arts, computer-aided visual arts and musical arts. Creators of each kind of these arts usually cooperate to create highly valued sets of fan art. Traditional visual arts are created usually by skilled graphic designers, painters or photographers, who work with graphic design or art on a regular basis and they are also a part of some fandom. There are many examples of fan art, thus it is difficult to highlight some of them. Many creators of fan art contribute to the database at DeviantArt.com, which is the largest gallery of many fan communities and nearly every fan can find some work related to their respective fandom there. The name DeviantArt actually reflects the nature of the works published on the site, they are – more or less – deviations from the original content, often with sexual nature. Fan art can have various forms, ranging from simple sketches, computer-aided graphic design, or single photographs up to sets of combined arts of a high value.

Some cosplayers cooperate with small film production companies to create short videos utilizing their costumes and performance on screen. In the Czech Republic, we can find one great example – a group called DiffView focuses on producing short life-action films aiming at presenting different video games in cooperation with the best cosplayers in the Czech Republic. Their video published on YouTube.com was captured entirely in cooperation with Czech cosplayers (Kuromaru, Juriet and ArashiCZ, presenting Geralt of Rivia, Cirilla and Yennefer) in Brno and its surroundings (namely Rytířská krčma and Hády). It gained a huge popularity among the Czech cosplay scene and placed among the best Witcher cosplay videos on YouTube.com. ([DiffView], 2015)

3.1.4 MUSIC

In the case of music production, the situation is slightly complicated. Firstly, there are not many musicians, who are part of some fandom and secondly, the music production is a more complex task than graphic design. Concerning the musical fan art, one of the most popular works is the makeover of the theme song Let it go from *Frozen*, written by Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez, performed by Idina Menzel, called F*ck it All (Honest Final Exam Version) by LeendaDProductions, which has more than 5 million views on YouTube.com. ([LeendaDProductions], 2014) This music video combines musical art, computer-aided art and also performance art. Nevertheless, this video is rather a comic one. The true nature of musical fan art can be exemplified on another music video. In 2015, when *The Witcher 3* was released, only subtitles were translated into the Czech language, with the lack of dubbing. The story was centred around the Wolven Storm (Priscilla's song) at one point and every major language has

its own native version, with (more or less) correct translation and rhymes in comparison to the Polish original. One Czech group of musicians, called Deloraine, decided to translate and perform Czech version of the song. The song was released with a video featuring cosplayer Kuromaru as Geralt of Rivia and other cosplayers and re-enactors in historical costumes as the background. They managed to cover the atmosphere of the song itself and also recreate the scene from the original game very accurately. Since the song is comprehensible only to the Czech and Slovak audience, it gained 26,978 views ([Deloraine], 2016), which can be seen as a huge success, because 35,000 copies were sold on Czech and Slovak market as of January 2016. (Doskocil, 2016)

The largest and also wide known fandoms are those of *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*. They grew an immense popularity and are considered the best even among other fandoms. Fans of those movies and TV shows formed fandoms in nearly every country and gain popularity through the general public. For example, fan labour of the *Star Wars* fans can be a costume play (cosplay) and so-called Stormtroopers are valued part of some actions, where they serve as an appreciated variegation. Another example of a fine fandom related activity is Klingon language, originating from the *Star Trek*, later developed by the authors and also fans. Several people are also capable of speaking this language fluently since it is an actual constructed language. But all these examples are the result of the long development of the respective fandom.

On the other hand, speaking of *The Witcher*, which is rather new, some fandoms focus more on the sharing and deepening the knowledge of the object of the fandom. Fans of *The Witcher* do not have enough opportunities for developing further yet, thus they concentrate more on using their knowledge. The fans focus primarily on fan fiction and cosplay and because fan fiction is a popular way to express one's feeling and attitude towards the object of the fandom, countless amounts of books, short stories, or poems can be found on the internet and some also in other popular media. Many authors also encourage their fans to write fan fiction and the stories can be used as an inspiration for further original work, which creates a canon, in return.

3.2 E-SPORTS

E-sports or professional video gaming (usually abbreviated as pro gaming) is a new growing trend among the video games, which was popularised during the late 2000s and early 2010s. It originated from multiplayer modes of video games, which allowed multiple players to compete or cooperate in their preferred and favourite video game. Currently there are many popular genres of video games, which allow online multiplayer mode – ranging from FPS

games (*Counter-Strike, Battlefield, or Call of Duty*), RTS (*Warcraft* or *StarCraft*), through e sport tournaments in arcade simulations (*World of Tanks, War Thunder*), up to rather new concepts like Massively Multiplayer Online (MMO) games (most notably *World of Warcraft* – a MMORPG) and Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) games (*DOTA 2, League of Legends, Heroes of the Strom*).

From the players' point of view, it is always better to enjoy a video game with or against real players. The internet allows people from all around the world to play in the real time, compare their skills and participate in different leagues, tournaments or championships. Many players find this interesting or enjoyable and some of them avoid single player games or their modes entirely.

From the video gaming industry viewpoint, these kinds of games often employ a Free to Play concept – one can download the game and play it free of any charge or subscription fees. But every video game was funded somehow and this cost needs to be returned in the form of income, which is often generated through microtransactions. A player can buy better equipment, boosters and many other in-game items and pay with the real currency, which grants them an advantage over regular players who actually play for free. Other games are sold relatively cheaply (in comparison with single player games), but the player has to pay subscriber fees, which are used to maintain online servers and develop the game.

From the sociologic point of view, this can also cause problems – young people does not seek real life interaction and tend to stay hidden behind their online avatars. Cyberbullying is also one of the most dangerous phenomena connected to online video games. Regarding the risks arising from e sport pro gaming, some players can suffer from occupational burnouts and other mental health problems. Also reports of widespread use of performance-enhancing drugs are not uncommon. These problems are slightly beyond the scope of this thesis, thus they are not described further.

Successful online multiplayer games pervade during the time into e-sport games, while some video games are designed from the very beginning of their existence as comparative e-sport games. Large gaming events, with many participants, are held regularly, namely *League of Legends* World Championship, the Battle.net World Championship Series or the Intel Extreme Masters. The pro gaming can be seen as an occupation, since the competitors can be paid (in the form of salary) and compete for prize money or other prizes. In 2013 the prize pool of *DOTA 2* tournament was USD 2,874,380. The total of 71,500,000 people watched

competitive gaming in the same year and, for example, League of Legends World Championship Season 3 counted more than 32,000,000 viewers. (Warr, 2014) Major League Gaming reported that viewers of their events were aged mostly 18-34, predominantly male (85%) but the portion of females is also great. ([GamespotStaff], 2012) This can be seen as a proof that e-sport is not only a competition, but also a lifestyle, occupation, or a platform for advertising due to the number of visitors and viewers.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, it has to be mentioned that the connection of video games, literature and movie adaptations is a complex problematic, worth a deeper understanding. The knowledge of this topic can contribute to improvements in the fields of advertisement, marketing, video game design and many others.

Regarding the video game design, it may seem difficult to develop a video game, but theoretically it is not a problem. Many indie games[6] are very popular, even though they are made only with minor funding, because they are based on an innovative idea, however an AAA title still requires many skilled professional designers and well-prepared scheduled development. Players are an essential part of the whole system since they generate immense income for the gaming industry and thus allow developers to make other new games. In the case of games based on literature, adapting the book by skilled scriptwriters and game designers is a crucial part of the whole development and must not be omitted to assure success. Sometimes cooperation with the author of the original work is not actually needed, but it is certainly necessary to achieve a permission to use the original work as a source. After the whole production stage, when the game is released, the first week is important from the marketing point of view and the number of copies sold biases the entire fate of the respective video game.

Only a truly great trio comprising video games, movies and literature can form and sustain a large subculture composed of true fans of the title. These subcultures can live their own life and share their ideas and fan labour among themselves or they can create immense amounts of work originating from the fan labour (like fan fiction or fan art) and present their fandom to the general public. It is also necessary to understand that fandom is composed of people skilled in different fields and thus it can be beneficial for various companies in the entertainment industry or show business to hire them as specialists for example in marketing, advertising, graphic design and others, due to their extensive knowledge of the topic and experience. Cosplay, as a part of fan labour, is a great opportunity to express one's fondness for a particular fandom, as well as a relatively cheap form of advertisement, which can be used for example during presentation of a new product of the franchise, which is beneficial for both the cosplayers (in form of salary) and the production company (in form of reducing the advertisement costs).

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[6] A common name for independent video games

The link between original literature and the corresponding work of the entertainment industry also cannot be omitted, since it can generate income for the author or publishing house after a release of the work originating from the literature in return. Some authors deny that the derived work is anyhow connected to their own work in a form of sequel or prequel, while some are enthusiastic about this topic and support the developers and encourage the customers (readers and players) to buy products of the franchise.

In the end, the topic of the entertainment industry and the relations within it will grow in popularity in future and thus it is necessary to deepen our knowledge about it and cooperate or share our findings and ideas to improve it and think about it as a new field that should be explored.

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