

Internationalization of Small Mobile Game Developers: The Obstacles and Tools for Overcoming Them

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The objective of this study was to find out what type of obstacles small mobile game developers encounter during their process of internationalization and then determine which tools should be utilized to overcome those obstacles. Main subjects of this study, the small mobile game developers, can either be thought of as individuals or small companies. Common with both of them is their need to internationalize which is more of a norm than an option in mobile game industry nowadays.</p> <p>This study was conducted as a qualitative research and the approach chosen to support it, was phenomenological approach. The theoretical section of this study covers the small mobile game developers' experiences of internationalization. Additionally, it portrays a set of generic marketing tools, concepts and earlier research conducted. Primary data section handles the results collected through semi-structured theme interviews with four participants strongly connected to mobile game industry. The purpose of the interviews was to gather together a more explicit understanding of small mobile game developers' experiences and knowledge of internationalization. The interviews were analyzed by content analysis.</p> <p>This study enabled the obstacles identified in the interviews to be allocated into five groups with distinct contents. The participants offered several different tools for overcoming these obstacles.</p> <p>The main conclusion was that there are differences between the game developers. This affects their views of the obstacles as well as their decisions of choosing which tools are suitable for overcoming the obstacles.</p>		
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<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Tämän tutkielman tavoite oli saada selville minkälaisia esteitä pienet mobiilipelikehittäjät kohtaavat kansainvälistymisprosessinsa aikana sekä määrittää minkälaisia työkaluja kyseisten esteiden ylitsepääsemiseen on käytettävissä. Tutkielman pääkohteena olleet pienet mobiilipelikehittäjät voidaan käsittää joko yksilöinä tai pieninä yrityksinä. Yhteistä molemmille oli heidän tarpeensa kansainvälistyä, joka on tämän päivän mobiilipeliteollisuudessa lähes välttämätöntä.</p> <p>Tämä tutkielma suoritettiin laadullisena tutkimuksena, jonka tueksi valittu lähestymistapa oli fenomenologinen lähestyminen. Tutkielman teoria käsittelee pienten mobiilipelikehittäjien kokemuksia kansainvälistymisestä, sekä esittelee yleisiä markkinointityökaluja, konsepteja ja aiempaa tutkimusmateriaalia aiheesta. Tutkimusaineisto koostuu neljästä teemahaastattelusta. Haastateltavilla oli vahva yhteys mobiilipeliteollisuuteen. Haastatteluiden tarkoitus oli kartuttaa täsmällisempi ymmärrys pienten mobiilipelikehittäjien kokemuksista ja tietämyksistä kansainvälistymistä kohtaan. Haastattelut analysoitiin sisällönanalyysillä.</p> <p>Haastatteluista havaitut esteet voitiin tämän tutkimuksen avulla jakaa viiteen sisällöllisesti erilaiseen ryhmään. Haastateltavat tarjosivat esteiden ylitsepääsemiseen useita eri työkaluja.</p> <p>Johtopäätöksenä todettakoon, että pelikehittäjien väliset erot vaikuttavat heidän näkemyksiinsä kansainvälistymisen esteistä sekä valintoihin työkalujen ja esteiden yhteensopiisuuden suhteen.</p>		
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1 Introduction

The idea and meaning of this thesis is to dive into the world of marketing around mobile gaming. What is marketing actually and is it any different in mobile gaming than anywhere else?

According to McKenna “Marketing is everything” (McKenna, 1991). What McKenna meant with that phrase was, in short, that everything one does and every action visible to the outside affects the business and therefore acts as means of marketing. Whether it is the general way of greeting people, answering an email or the overall appearance in public, it all has an effect on how other people see and form opinions of the company, its representatives and its products. (McKenna, 1991.)

Now, Agrawal (2016) argues that marketing and especially the marketing methods themselves have changed tremendously over the years, however, he also mentions that the basic idea of bringing yourself forward and creating an image of yourself hasn't. The same values still exist to date (Agrawal, 2016), and that is partly what this thesis is about to show.

So what is it that is so special about mobile games and their marketing? Compared to conventional video games made for PC or consoles, the first difference is usually seen in the game itself. Mobile games, as the genre calls, are mobile, meant for smartphones and tablets, devices which are usually not meant for gaming entirely and may not even have the capacity to do so. The games themselves are smaller in size and in price, which is the first big change. There is a huge difference whether a 0,95€ mobile game is downloaded a few hundred times compared to a 20€ to 30€ PC or console game having as many downloads. The second difference comes with the audience. PC or console gamers are more likely to be actively looking for a new game to play, whereas mobile gamers are not. The games need to be brought to them. However, the threshold for them to pick up and try out a game is much lower. (Chamrad, 2016.)

The last factor which has an impact on the result of this thesis is discovering what is different in going for international markets instead of domestic markets. Going for the international markets brings in a bunch of new barriers and challenges. Not only

does one have to be concerned about the language of another country but also the fact that every country and continent has its own culture which has a certain effect on the game. (Gendrot, 8 lean tips for taking your mobile game international)

To approach the subject of marketing I'm taking the perspective of small sized mobile game developers or mobile gaming companies who may not have the same enormous marketing budgets some of the bigger corporations do. This will show how it is for them to try and engage the international gaming markets, how they manage it and if they do, how do they maintain their position. In other words, to be put into research questions, they look as follows:

1. What sort of obstacles do small mobile game developers run into when going for the international gaming markets?
2. What type of tools could a small mobile game developer utilize while engaging international gaming markets?

With the help of these research questions I'm going to tackle the core problems and obstacles one might encounter when going for the international gaming markets. At the same time, I'm going to work towards the solutions and tools which have already been of help to some and could help the rest, as well as the tools no mobile game developer has yet tried. All in all, it is imperative that someone look into these problems and bring to light the quirks and tricks behind the business of mobile gaming and marketing.

2 Theory and Knowledge Base

This chapter is about the different obstacles a small mobile game developer might encounter on their journey towards the international gaming markets, and the tools known to be helpful when marketing this type of business. Both the obstacles and tools vary extensively depending on different factors, such as location, the type of the game, people, culture etc. There are the obstacles common to every mobile game developer, and then there are the ones a developer going for the international markets has to face. Same goes for the tools that help. The more common tools

could be applied to many types of businesses, while the more specialized tools are involved more directly with mobile game business itself.

Internationality in mobile game business is not anything extreme or special nowadays. It's something one has to go for if one wants to be successful in today's mobile game business. However, the size of the global mobile game market is \$36.9 billion in value (Newzoo, 2016), which means it is not an easy task to find one's own niche in a market that vast. Many of today's mobile games are born global, and being in the mobile app markets of many different countries may seem obvious, but it doesn't come that easy. There are various obstacles to overcome and a colossal amount of work to be done.

2.1 Obstacles in Entering the Mobile Game Markets

As stated above, the obstacles a mobile game developer encounters trying to market their game, are many. There are the more common obstacles that concern every developer, and then the ones concerning the developers trying to go global. Going global is more a norm than a mere possibility nowadays. These more common obstacles start out with one which might be even a little too obvious.

The Game Itself

Make a good game (Chamrad, 2016). Easier said than done, perhaps. Making a good game doesn't mean it should be made according to what people's tastes are in gaming. The game itself could be any genre, really any type of game. In other words, it doesn't have to please everyone. Some people may love *Candy Crush* and hate *Clash of Clans* or the other way around. Making a good game has a deeper meaning to it. The game has to work and it has to have the core mechanics in order, so that it is playable (Chamrad, 2016). Depending on what genre one is going for, one of the obstacles in making a good game is doing the research on the "must-haves" which appear in the games of a particular genre. The tricky thing is to differentiate between the "must-haves" and the factors which would make the game the same as everyone else's. (Luke, 2015.)

First Impressions

Right behind making a good game follows the first impression. Everybody knows it exists but most don't know just how big an obstacle it is. According to Pitts (2013), when meeting someone new you have seven seconds to make a first impression. With mobile games it is most likely longer than seven seconds, since during that seven seconds one might not get farther than the first loading screen. Worldgame01 states that the time one has to impress a gamer with a mobile game is "30 seconds or less" (Worldgame01, 2016). This could very well be true since it takes those few extra seconds to actually get into the game. One of today's biggest hits has made a lot of controversial first impressions. Trainer Tips channel on YouTube shares his first impressions of *Pokemon Go*, and it is clear that he is more than happy with how the game answered his expectations based on what had been leaked beforehand (Trainer Tips, 2016). Other YouTube channel Sacred shares his first impression of disappointment. His first impression was ruined by a buggy user interface and the generally slow and inconsistent performance of the *Pokemon Go*. (Sacred, 2016.) As can be inferred, the gamers' personal expectations and commitment to the game have a significant impact on their first impressions.

Discoverability

To give a first impression to a gamer, said gamer has to have the product on their hands. Therefore, the next obstacle of a mobile game is visibility and discoverability. With discoverability comes great visibility. Improving the discoverability of a mobile game is easier for gigantic mobile game corporations with enormous marketing budgets and their own marketing crew. The CodeFuel Staff, however, points out that for a small time mobile game developer, those types of resources are nowhere to be found, and as a consequence this obstacle might start to seem bigger and bigger. Discoverability is something Bhatti (2013) says is experienced as one of the biggest obstacles in marketing a mobile game. The larger mobile game corporations are crushing the competition. This is where overcoming the before-mentioned "making a good game" obstacle might not matter so much after all. A lot of good games are not found, whereas the successful ones are (Hagler, 2013; Venturepact, 2015).

Competition

Competition is the next obstacle. The size of the global mobile game market is humongous, which means there is also a great deal of competition. The mobile game markets are flooded, providing games for every possible gamer and audience. The challenge is to stand out in a crowd of thousands of games just alike. (Julkunen, 2016.) Julkunen (2016) claims it doesn't really matter how much effort is put into making a game different than the competition; there's always going to be someone trying to win the hearts of the exact same audience. This obstacle is such a great challenge partly because of the sheer amount of money and hours a thorough research of the competition takes. Money and time are two things most mobile game developers lack (CodeFuel Staff, 2014). Another side of this obstacle, the competition, is the audience – the gamers themselves.

The Gamers Themselves

Mobile gamers are special in that they have a shorter attention span than many other gamers and that they are always on the look out for a new type of game to feed their addiction (Sukhyani, 2015). Acquiring knowledge of the gamers is equally important as it is of the competitors, only, time and money and possibly even the expertise to run such research might be hard to come by among many mobile game developers (CodeFuel Staff, 2014). Seufert (2015) states that those types of resources are of easy access to big mobile game corporations, whereas accessing them as a small mobile game developer requires innovation.

Trends

Again, an obstacle which requires time and resources, mostly just time. A marketing team named *Subsplash* puts it perfectly: "Don't get comfortable". It might feel uncomfortable and time consuming to stay up-to-date with the latest trends (Subsplash, 2015), but this is an obstacle that is important to overcome. There is almost nothing worse than to keep thinking the game is up-to trends, when those trends are in fact from a year back, or in the worst case from a different decade (Subsplash, 2015). Staying on top of currently prevalent trends is something every mobile game developer should do.

Metrics and Analytics

Many developers are met with another obstacle, which is monitoring the game. Metrics are something that help track the performance of different variables (Phillips, 2008). According to Han, in mobile game business they can provide information for example on “first purchase trigger, tutorial completion percentage or average play session” (Han, 2013). This goes under the same category as the other time consuming obstacles. Both monitoring the game and the metrics it creates take time. Monitoring and analyzing the results may seem overwhelming. (CodeFuel staff, 2014). There are tons of different metrics to be followed, and choosing the right ones isn’t easy. Everyone has their own method of choosing the metrics most suitable for them and their mobile game. (Morrison, 2013). These methods and people’s opinions on the most effective ones vary. According to Williams, the challenge is to accurately determine what it is one wants to follow and keep record of (Williams, 2013). Another developer's experience is that before facing the challenge of finding the right metrics, one might face something every developer knows, that is, limited monetary resources. Han (2013) is positive that this will drive developers towards innovation and self generated metrics.

Localization



Figure 1. Mobile Game Localization. Source: Oneskyapp

Nowadays, this is probably one of the biggest obstacles a mobile game developer might face. Localization is a theme which is quite often overlooked and missed. This is due to not understanding the true value and meaning of it. Lack of a localization

strategy could cut the journey towards global success very short. (Chan, 2014.) What could be easy with this obstacle but many times becomes difficult and costly, is starting early. Delaying the localization process until the very last stage of mobile game development and marketing is an expensive mistake to make. Starting the localization early on, already at the beginning of the development of a mobile game, might feel like another unneeded piece of a puzzle, but it could actually be the thing that saves the business from wasting resources and takes them to success. (Chan, 2014; Anja, 2016.) It starts all the way back with coding. Including localization into the coding of the game is one of the first steps in winning localization. The important factor in coding is to not make it an invincible obstacle. (Anja, 2016; Yip, 2015.)

The next part of localization, translation, can be accessed through coding. Greenbaum Kasson (2013) predicates that while many mobile game developers think localization is basically just translating the contents of their game into the target language, it is not. Translation of the mobile game will have a monumental effect on how it is perceived by the audience (Anja, 2016). One challenge in getting help for translation is determining where to get it. Professionals provide quality service but it can be expensive. On the cheaper end of things, there is nowadays the possibility of crowdsourcing, provided by fellow gamers and developers. (Crowdin Blog, Overcoming the challenges of mobile game localization.) In the case of crowdsourcing, a time limit cannot really be set as the people are volunteers, and it can require some extra effort to try and motivate them into translating the contents. (Crowdin Blog, Overcoming the challenges of mobile game localization.) Managing the timeline can turn out to be quite a challenge in the case of crowdsourcing, mostly because it is difficult to tell how fast a non-professional can translate the text. A professional translates approximately at a rate of 2000 words per day (Yip, 2014; McKay, 2011.)

Conducting diligent research of the target markets and the audience does not mean just finding the translators and the languages in which to translate, it should also concern gaining deeper knowledge of the culture, habits and lifestyle of the local people. (Greenbaum Kasson, 2013; Anja, 2016; Chan, 2014.) This culturalization is an important part of localization, one of the factors Chan (2014) mentions is not necessarily even understood as part of localization. As can be seen in the picture above, language translation is only the tip of the iceberg, and the rest of the localization

process lies beneath the surface (Chan, 2014). The last important obstacle to overcome is localizing the monetization strategy. People in different countries around the world have unequal income levels and distinct habits of handling currency (Chan, 2014).

2.2 Tools for Overcoming the Obstacles in Market Entry

The chapter above shows the different obstacles many small mobile game developers face. This chapter is about the tools which could be used when encountering mentioned obstacles. These tools vary from one end to another. They range from the more general tools utilized in any type of marketing, to the ones more specific to mobile game marketing and the immediate world around it.

2.2.1 The Marketing Tools

Marketing tools provided in this chapter are instruments which help create a broader picture of what a business and its products actually are. According to Vierula (2009, 31) marketing is the single biggest factor in creating success. He continues that marketing isn't only the job of sales and marketing unit but a joint operation of the entire company (Vierula, 2009, 32). Vuokko (2003, 151) specifies that the objective of marketing determines which tools should be used. Selecting these marketing tools could be conducted by studying and monitoring the business and the product itself. Some of these tools are presented below. Using these tools makes it easier to market the product as they render crucial data, such as the unique selling propositions of the product, as Wigmore (2013) names them, and the surrounding business. These tools are present almost nowhere in the mobile game business. Although they might not be usual tools, they could be of great help in marketing a mobile game.

Business Model Canvas

A set of marketing tools to use when heading towards the gaming markets includes a few tools linked to each other. A good starting point could be the "Business Model Canvas". According to Martin (2015), the BMC is a basic tool to discover what a business consists of. It is a way to find out what are the key factors affecting the business and what is the value it brings to the end customer (Martin, 2015).

The BMC is built up by analyzing nine different segments of the business (Martin, 2015). Not all of these might be that crucial for a mobile game company but it certainly is a useful tool for any company.

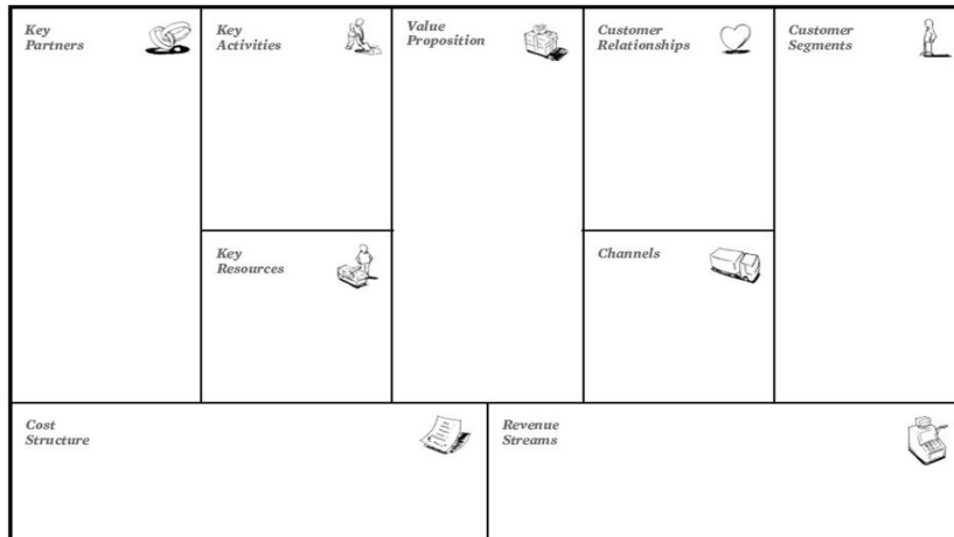


Figure 2. Business Model Canvas. Source: Wordpress-innovatively.rhcloud.com

First off, the customer segments. It is important to know who exactly the product is aimed to please and to prioritize the different customer segments, so that it is easier to make sure they are provided with the right type of content (Martin, 2015; Cowan, 2013). According to Vuokko (2003, 142) targeting the correct segments provides the product the best opportunity.

Next up is the value proposition. The value proposition, as Cowan (2013) explains, concerns the things which bring value to the product in the eyes of the consumer. It could be the brilliant user interface, a new type of game engine or simply the simplicity of a game. These factors that make a game different and interesting are called the unique selling propositions (Entrepreneur Staff, Unique Selling Proposition (USP)).

The customer relationships section in the canvas is reserved for explaining the ways of preserving the relationship to the customers (Cowan, 2013). It could be achieved through additional paid services inside the game, monthly payments or by blogging so that the gamers will visit the blog regularly to get more information on the game.

Martin (2015) says that the marketing channels are a route through which one can market their product and reach the customers. These channels could be social media, websites, blogging, in-game marketing or even advertising at some point.

The key partners, activities and resources should be strongly connected to each other. The key resources show what is available for use to achieve the end-result. (Martin, 2015.) This could be one's own office, equity, game designers etc. The key activities should then reflect the resources. For example, game designers as a resource equals coding and designing, own office equals domestic product. (Cowan, 2013.) The key partners section shows which activities are better left for someone else to do, better to outsource (Cowan, 2013). Partners could be used for creating marketing material, such as trailers, or to cross-promote a game in other developer's games.

Cost structure shows where the money is going in running the business. Wages/salaries, marketing costs or legal matters are a few of the multiple possibilities the costs could consist of. Revenue streams, in turn, show where the revenue is generated from. App purchases, monthly fees, advertising space or in-game purchases could be some of different factors generating money to support the business. (Cowan, 2013; Martin, 2015.)

Empathy Map

Empathy map is a tool which supports all the other tools by bringing in the perspective of the potential customer. This

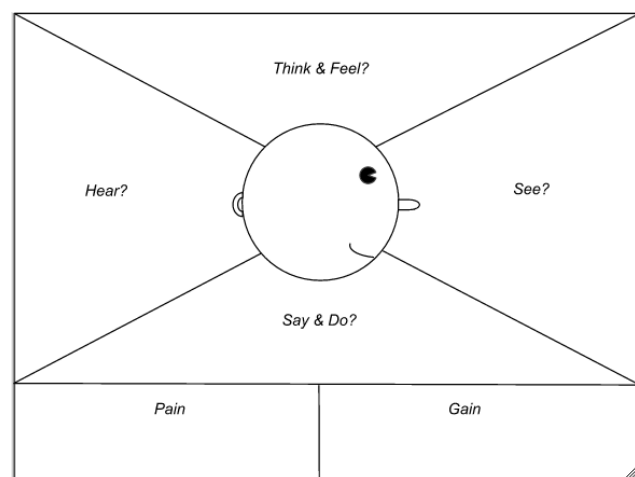


Figure 3. Empathy map. Source: Solutionsiq.com

perspective is created by six different factors. (Bland, 2016; Cao, The Practical Guide to Empathy Maps: 10-Minute User Personas.)

What do the Customers:

- Think & Feel?
- See?
- Hear?
- Say & Do?

What are their:

- Pains → What do they struggle with. Fears etc.
- Gains → What do they enjoy. Needs and Wants.

(Bland, 2016; Cao, The Practical Guide to Empathy Maps: 10-Minute User Personas.)

The Empathy Map is a tool which, if utilized correctly, has the power to provide great insights on the target customers and the customer segment.

Value Proposition Canvas

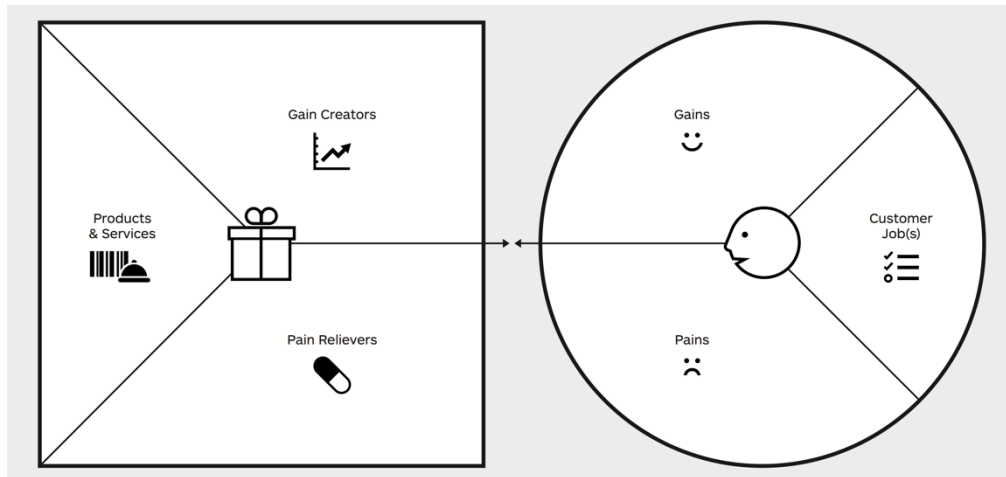


Figure 4. The Value Proposition Canvas. Source: Pinterest

The Value Proposition Canvas is an addition to the BMC which goes deeper into the value propositions of the product and company. For this canvas, the value propositions and the customer segments are taken directly from the BMC. Then by considering the product or company as a medicine of sorts, one can start producing the pain relievers and gain creators for the potential pains and gains of the customers. (Osterwalder, 2012.) Those pains and gains could be taken from the empathy map. On the left side of the canvas is space for the services and products provided. Customer jobs section shows information on what are the problems they are facing (Osterwalder, 2012).

Golden Circle

One way for the business to communicate with the customer is a method called “Golden Circle” (Sinek, 2009). It consists of three different layers, the what, the how and the why layer. The key is to use them in a reverse order, as opposed to what most companies do. So instead of thinking what is offered, how is it going to be offered and why is it offered, it all starts with the why. Why? Because, as Sinek puts it, “People don’t buy what you do, they buy why you do it”. Why one does something inspires people more than what is done. The following demonstrates this with one of Simon’s examples.

The What: *“We make great computers.”*

The How: *“They are beautifully designed, simple to use and user friendly.”*

The Why: *“Want to buy one?”*

(Sinek, 2009.)

Not very inspiring, partly because many times the inner layer, the why, is not understood in the right way. However, when flipped around, it becomes like this.

The Why: *“Everything we do, we believe in challenging the status quo. We believe in thinking differently.”*

The How: *“The way we challenge the status quo, is by making our products beautifully designed, simple to use and user friendly.”*

The What: *“We just happen to make great computers. Want to buy one?”*

(Sinek, 2009)

With this simple change the business will look completely different. Sinek (2009) clearly mentions the goal is to do business with people who believe what you believe.

Design Thinking

Now, one way of using the above mentioned tools is using a process called design thinking. Design thinking is constructed of four different factors

- Define the problem
- Think through all the possible options
- Pick a more refined selection
- Implement

The more people there are involved in the design thinking the better, even more so, if the people are from different layers of the business. (Fast Company Staff, 2006)

Everybody taking part in the process think of all the possible ideas they can come up with considering the specific factor or section they are looking at (for example BMC, part value proposition.) The thinking is done separately, nobody shares their opinion

or judges the opinion of anybody else. The ideas should be short and there should be plenty of them. (Fast Company Staff, 2006.)

After the first round, everybody gets together to discuss and refine the huge selection of ideas. Some of the ideas are most likely in double, maybe even triple or more, some ideas can be combined, and then some ideas may bring new ideas. This is why the first step could/should be repeated to get every new idea there is to get. (Fast Company Staff, 2006.) Fast Company Staff (2006) explains that the last step is to go through the refined selection of ideas, pick the most promising ones and implement them into the tools.

2.2.2 Tools for Mobile Game Business

Next are the tools which are successfully used by different people in the mobile game business. They are more obvious and better suited to marketing a mobile game and overcoming the obstacles a mobile game developer might encounter during internationalization process.

Tools for Making a Good Game

(See p. 5) Making a good game is one of the most crucial parts of a mobile game company's marketing efforts. If the game is not good, it doesn't matter how much money you put into the marketing campaign – people will not buy it. (Chamrad, 2016.) According to Shestakova (2015) there are a few key elements a good mobile game has. A mobile game should be easy to approach, offering the gamer access to playing the game with minimal effort. (Newstead, 2011; Shestakova, 2015.) The user experience and interface of the game should be pleasing to the eye of the gamer. To do this, it is important to stay up-to-date with the latest trends on mobile game designs and outlooks. (Kang, 2016; Shestakova, 2015.) Part of making a good game is keeping it good after the launch. A good mobile game will not be good for long if it's not updated and maintained accordingly. (Kang, 2016; Shestakova, 2015.)

Forgetting the effort of trying to make the game perfect and complete before launching can sometimes be an advantage. Shalel (2016) mentions that making an early launch is also called a soft launch. By launching the game early, one can get a surprising access to user feedback and other data which would be impossible otherwise.

Gaining access to them will give valuable information on developing the game further. (Shalel, 2016; Shestakova, 2015)

First impressions (see p. 6) go hand-in-hand with the basics of making a good game. To make a good first impression, the experience during those “30 seconds or less” Worldgame01 (2016) mentioned has to be thoroughly planned and well taken care of. Expressing the unique selling propositions as early as possible goes a long way toward making a good first impression (Schab, 2016)

How to Enhance the Discoverability of a Mobile Game

(See p. 6) There are simple ways to make the discoverability of a mobile game better, and then there are ways which require a bit more effort. The simpler ways include making the game attractive price-wise and distributing it to many different app stores, instead of opting only for a few of the biggest. Additionally, app store optimization consists of a careful process of choosing the right name for the game and optimizing the keywords to drive customers towards the game (Nader, 2015; Venturepact, 2015). According to Venturepact (2015) the name should be catchy and at least in some way reflect the game itself.

Cross-promotion is another form of marketing mobile game developers use. In cross-promotion two or more mobile game developers collaborate by advertising each other's games inside the interface of their own mobile game (Goldring, 3 ways to cross promote your game; Venturepact, 2015). A necessity for anyone trying to improve their mobile game's discoverability is going online and creating social media accounts for the mobile game company itself (DellaFave, 2014). Social media channels provide a route to the gamers but also to the members of the press. It is more fruitful to be patient and not trying to approach everybody yourself. Rather, be active and post often, preferably during peak hours from 11am to 11pm EST. Innovative and intriguing posts have a chance of gaining interest from important sources. (DellaFave, 2014.)

Taking part in gaming conventions, be it as a presenter or only as a visitor, is an important part of making oneself visible, easier to discover. It is a great opportunity to make new connections with other developers, but an even greater opportunity to meet and connect with the gamers (DellaFave, 2014). Getting a game presented at a

convention can be both costly and not. Bigger conventions cost up to 2000€ and more, whereas access to smaller conventions could be gained with a smaller budget of only 500€. (DellaFave, 2014; Wu, 2014.)

Discoverability can also be improved by contacting the press. Contacting the press is a task that should be considered carefully. Finding the right press is key to creating contacts. Contacting a magazine specializing in console gaming won't do much for a mobile game developer. It is essential to start with smaller and less know press sources, as they are more likely to want more reviews. The more popular press should be approached only after gaining enough coverage from smaller press sources. Contacting the press should be done in a natural way, not too formally or informally. Bringing forth the unique selling propositions of the game is the way to lure press into making an article. (DellaFave, 2014.)

Defeating the Competition and Captivating the Target Audience

(See p. 7) To get over the obstacle of competition, it is fundamental to know what the competition is. To stand out in a crowd of thousands of other mobile games, one has to be acutely aware of the unique selling propositions of the competing games. The next step would be to study the target gamers. If the gamers are not offered the right type of content, many hours of hard work will have gone to waste. Julkunen (2016) mentions categorizing as a gateway to offering the gamers content which matches their needs. Categorizing means recognizing the category of the game and emphasizing the attributes of that category. A correctly categorized game has a better chance of being well received by the gamers. (Julkunen, 2016.)

Staying Up to Trends

(see p. 7) It may sound obvious, but it is vital to stay up-to-date with the latest trends in order to attract and retain gamers (Subsplash, 2015). Subsplash (2015) points out that staying up to trends has different layers to it, one of which is doing continuous research. He continues by stating that the other layers include implementing the results of the research into the game and experimenting with what could be the next trend.

What to Do with the Metrics

(See p. 8) When trying to delve deep into metrics and analytics, small mobile game developers are often faced with the constraints of their budget (Williams, 2013). Getting metrics of a game can happen via two possible routes, free or paid. This means that one can either generate the metrics “home-made” or have someone provide their analytic tools at a cost. (Moore, 2015; Morrison, 2013; Williams, 2013.) Due to budget concerns small mobile game developers often choose to generate the metrics themselves (Han, 2013; Williams, 2013). At this stage a developer might run into problems with what metrics to choose. By creating a questionnaire of what needs to be known, it is easier to choose what metrics to survey. (Williams, 2013.)

Making Localization Correctly

(See p. 9) To make the localization process easier and to save significant amounts of time and work, it is crucial to make the decision of internationalization early on in the development and create a localization strategy (Anja, 2016; Chan, 2014). A localization strategy determines different factors, such as which markets are suitable for the mobile game in question, is it possible to find local partners in the target market, how many markets is it possible to access and which languages to translate (Chan, 2014; Yip, 2015).

Coding is part of localization, and writing the code in a way that allows, for example, language translations to be done directly into text strings, saves work hours in later stages (Anja, 2016). By coding the text to a separate resource folder instead of the source code itself, editing and providing it to the language translators requires less effort (Yip, 2014; 2015). Sandness (2015) sets out that ideally, coding is done in a way that enables an automatic language detection. Coding is strongly connected to the language translation.

For a mobile game to be translated into another language, some outside help may be needed. There are four different options in translating the text of a mobile game. Going to a professional translator guarantees high quality but the cost will be high as well. Even if it may be expensive to hire a professional translator to do the translation, it could save a lot of time and effort, whereas the cheaper option, crowdsourcing, could end up just the opposite. (Crowdin Blog, Overcoming the challenges of

mobile game localization.) Another option, then, is to search crowdsourced help. The local gaming community of the target market is a cheaper option, if they can be motivated in the right way. The downside is the unpredictability of the quality. The local crowd surely knows the language, but they might not be very good translators.

(Beens, 2016; Crowdin Blog, Overcoming the challenges of mobile game localization.) Third option is to combine professional and crowdsourced options to achieve a quality end product at a reasonable price, downside being the amount of time needed for the process (Yip, 2014). The fourth option is, if the expertise exists, in-house production (Yip, 2015). Whichever translators are chosen, prepping all the necessary materials and providing the translators with the context of the text is crucial for keeping the translation process in schedule (Yip, 2014; Anja, 2016; Wong, 2014).

Culturalization is a difficult task, and the key tool in making it manageable is gaining access to local help. It could for example be the translators or the help of the gaming community which makes this obstacle a lot smaller. (Crowdin Blog, Overcoming the challenges of mobile game localization; Chan, 2014; Facebook Business, 2015.) Culturalization means getting deep into the target market's history and culture, bringing the mobile game experience close to Greenbaum Kasson's statement "for a game to successfully cross borders its attributes must delve fully into a user's ethnicity and culture" (Greenbaum Kasson, 2013). A correctly conducted culturalization process is likely to lead into major changes in the content of the mobile game (Crowdin Blog, Overcoming the challenges of mobile game localization; Facebook Business, 2015). A great example of this is the success story of *Plants vs. Zombies* when planted into Chinese markets. The whole content of the game was edited to better reflect the local culture (Greenbaum Kasson, 2013). The developer didn't only fiddle with the design, but they incorporated local culture into the game by bringing the Great Wall and other local features into it (Chan, 2014; Greenbaum Kasson, 2013). Another part of culturalization is to make the monetization of a mobile game reflect the use of currency in the target market. Adjusting the monetization of a mobile game is done by studying the local culture and people's experiences in the target location (Chan, 2014).

3 Research Approach, Method and Implementation

This chapter introduces the research approach and its justification. What is more, it will go through the methods with which the data was collected and analyzed. The practical implementation section will tie the former two together by explaining how they were put into practice on this project.

3.1 Research Method

A study can either be conducted using qualitative or quantitative methods (Hakala, 2004, 113). Kustula (2015) goes even further by stating that the key difference to quantitative research is the fact that instead of having a random sampling in data collection, qualitative research requires a careful selection of data sources. Where qualitative research has an advantage is in studying objectives which are more round and lack quantitative data, a quantitative research is focused on a more statistical approach to the data and object (Alasuutari, 2011, 27; Vilpas, Kvantitatiivinen tutkimus) and the numerical data (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2001, 24.)

There is no ready-made formula for conducting a qualitative research rather it is always a unique process (Patton, 2002, 433) and a method often used when the subject requires interpretation and understanding (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 5; Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2001, 22). In addition, a qualitative research pursues on studying the objective in a holistic manner (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2009, 161). Because of the reasons indicated above, this study is executed by taking advantage of qualitative research method.

3.2 Research Approach, Data Analysis Method and Their Justification

As this study is focused on investigating the small mobile game developers' experiences among internationalization and its obstacles and tools for overcoming the obstacles, the phenomenological method was chosen as its research approach. Phenomenological approach's main focus is in people's experiences (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, 34). The meaning of this approach is find answers on how people understand and interpret their own experiences (Patton, 2002, 104).

The data analysis method chosen to be utilized in this study is content analysis. It is one of the basic methods of qualitative research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, 91; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, 1277). Content analysis is mainly aimed at creating a summative entity by making sure any key informative points are not missed (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, 108)

The content analysis itself can be divided into three different subcategories which are conventional, directed and summative approaches (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, 1277). According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, 95), the conventional approach develops a theoretic unity of the primary data. In directed approach the existing theory base could act a part in assisting the analysis of primary data, however the existing theory is not the main source for the analysis (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, 96). Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009) articulate that in the summative approach, the primary data analysis is driven by the framework created by the existing theory.

Of these three, the directed approach is the best suitable for this study, because of its characteristics in combining the conventional and summative methods. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, 97) suggest the directed approach consists of analyzing the primary data as its own and then later reflecting it to the existing theory base. This complements the interviews conducted and the primary data collected to be used in this study.

3.3 Practical Implementation of the Research

3.3.1 Data Collection

The collection of data for this study was conducted by carefully gathering qualitative data from different sources. Primary data is something which is gathered by performing research and getting first-hand information on the subject by the researchers themselves (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 77; Moser, 2015, 2). Both Moser (2015, 2) and Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, 77) then explain that secondary data is something readily available and already gathered by some other researcher.

Secondary Data

As already established above, secondary data is information that already exists as it has been collected by someone else. White (2010, 61) goes even further by pointing out that secondary data is something that was once collected to serve the purpose of a specific study, but is suitable later on for the use of others as well. One obvious advantage Moser (2015, 2) brings up is the amount of time and other resources saved when the data from an already completed research can be put to use, instead of having to do the same research all over again. Secondary data's function is to provide a structured base by presenting a summary of the previous coverage on the subject (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka, 2006).

Secondary data is the foundation which supports the primary data (Alasuutari, 2011, 62). Secondary data has to be strongly connected to the research problem, and together they should form a logical continuum (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka, 2006). Alasuutari (2011, 63) indicates that the theoretic framework, created as a result of collecting secondary data, has to work in unison with the primary data. It also affects the decision to choose the right type of analysis method for analyzing the research.

This study focuses on the internationalization of small mobile game developers as a phenomenon. More precisely, the obstacles they might face when going international and the tools to utilize in order to overcome the obstacles. Since this is a fairly recent phenomenon, the amount of literature on the subject is minimal. Also, the nature of this research determines that most of the secondary data acquired comes from different electronic sources. Therefore, electronic sources have to be well utilized and taken advantage of. Another characteristic driving the acquisition of theoretical knowledge from electronic sources is the demand for experience-based knowledge. There is minimal amount of scientific research collections to indicate the obstacles related to the phenomenon or the tools to help overcoming those obstacles. This data has to be collected by searching and then going through the different experiences small mobile game developers and people related to the business have had during their process of internationalization. Some of this data is provided by different agencies, such as research institutes, but most of the data comes from people either working for mobile game companies or working as independent developers.

When evaluating the trustworthiness of secondary data sources, it has to be taken into consideration that even if they are not based on scientific research, the sources are confirmed to be suitable for gathering the experiences from. In other words, the data is acquired from practitioners of the subject studied and thus relevant to the enquiry.

Primary Data

Primary data is something that can be collected through various methods, such as interviewing, observing and experimenting (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 77). Moser (2015, 2) explains that the advantage of primary data lies in the fact that the questions the researchers have prepared are tailor-made for the particular study. Due to primary data being collected by the researchers themselves, problems regarding time and accessibility may arise (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 55). To find the primary data valid, the analysis has to be implemented carefully (Puusa, 2011, 115).

The primary data of this study was compiled by arranging interviews with people either in the mobile game developing business themselves or people who are strongly related to this particular business field. These interviews were conducted in order to capture the experiences, opinions and views people in different positions in the mobile game business have regarding the phenomenon in question.

3.3.2 Interviews as the Source for Primary Data

Interview, as Puusa (2011, 73) puts it, is a method through which it is possible to collect primary data. This primary data then helps to draw reliable conclusions of the phenomenon being studied (Puusa, 2011, 73). To ensure reliable conclusions of the phenomenon, an emotionalist interview research approach is utilized in this study. According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, 79), an emotionalist interview research approach focuses on capturing the authentic experiences of the interviewees.

Capturing these authentic experiences, one of three interview structures has to be selected. The options are a structured, a semi-structured and an unstructured interview. An interview is considered structured when it has a strict plan which is followed closely from one interview to another. A structured interview is the most effective in situations where facts are considered the most valuable information.

Whereas a structured interview has a very strict plan to go through in the interview, a semi-structured interview leaves a bit more room for the interview. A semi-structured interview is guided by the topics or themes but leaves the interviewer free to modify the questions and change the progress of the interview. It also requires a skilled interviewer to come up with more in-depth questions to follow up the set topic. An unstructured interview gives almost total freedom to the interviewee and the interviewer. Unlike the two former methods, an unstructured interview is based on some core concept but may freely move towards any appearing interests. (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 81-82.) Puusa (2011, 83) even describes an unstructured interview to have the nature of an open discussion.

To support this study, a semi-structured interview was chosen. A semi-structured interview goes well with the phenomenon under research because it requires getting to know the experiences people have. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2001, 47) have named the semi-structured interview as a theme interview. Puusa (2011, 81) mentioned that the core assumption in a theme interview is that the interviewees have experience of the phenomenon under research. Theme interview gives the semi-structured interview a certain characteristic which is utilized in this study. The interviews conducted where build around a theme. The theme of this study is the obstacles small mobile game developers face during their internationalization process. The theme interviews are perfect for this study as they make it possible to begin with a vague theme and then get deep into the different subjects the interviewees themselves bring up. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2001, 48) set out that a theme interview might not have the strict wording and order a structured interview has, but it is not as free either as the unstructured interview might be.

Planning the Interviews

Reviewing this study and its nature revealed that a theme interview would be a suitable solution for acquiring the right type of data to support and verify the research, while simultaneously bringing possible new insights into the subject. After analyzing the research problem and the phenomenon in question it was clear what the theme for the interviews would be. To test and prove the concept of the theme interview, the interview structure was put to test as a preliminary interview. According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2001, 72) the significance of the preliminary interview comes

up in reviewing the structure, order and timeline of the interview. Once conducted, the preliminary interview disclosed some shortcomings and problems in the interview structure. These could then be corrected and reworked into the structure of the real interview.

The interview structure is designed to let the interviewee have an open discussion on the starting theme, the obstacles. To carry the interview forward and deeper, the subjects brought up by the interviewee were taken down as notes. After the initial discussion on the theme was concluded, the interview would continue by having in-depth questions seeking an answer to what could be the tools and answers for overcoming the obstacles mentioned by the interviewee.

The participants of the interviews are individuals, as it drives the purpose of this study better. Previous relationships had a part in making those contacts and organizing the first interview. On top of previous relations, a whiff of luck brought in the next participant. This participant acted as a gateway to the rest of the participants as he was able to provide connections and advice on who might be a good addition. After gaining contact and introducing the reason and contents of the interviews to the participants, the interviewees were more than happy to help and bring in their own share of experiences. All except one interview were conducted in a face-to-face manner. One participant was interviewed via Skype due to the busy timetable and inability to find a convenient moment for a meeting. The contents of the interviews were documented by making an audio recording since not all the interviewees would have been comfortable in front of a camera. Pointing a camera at them could also have had an affect on the interviews and made them less conversation like. The audio records were transcribed to provide detailed information for the later coding of contents. The transcribed interviews and the coded transcriptions are available at request. Audio recording provides a great way to review the subject matter, however, what it may lack in comparison to a video recording is capturing the facial expressions of the interviewees. Capturing the facial expressions through an audio recording is entirely up to the interviewer's memory.

Analysis of the Interviews

After the interviews were transcribed they were put through an analysis which was conducted according to the instructions of Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009). Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, 92) believe that coding construes the key elements of the primary data and that it will help interpret the data better. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, 128) simplify that coding means labelling the data, giving each instance its own code.

The analysis was conducted in a directed manner (see p. 21). The directed analysis resulted in coding the contents of the interviews to groups of different themes. These themes were all the different obstacles the interviewees had experienced in their internationalization process as small mobile game developers. A more meticulous examination through coding showed that particular obstacles were experienced as greater or more significant than others.

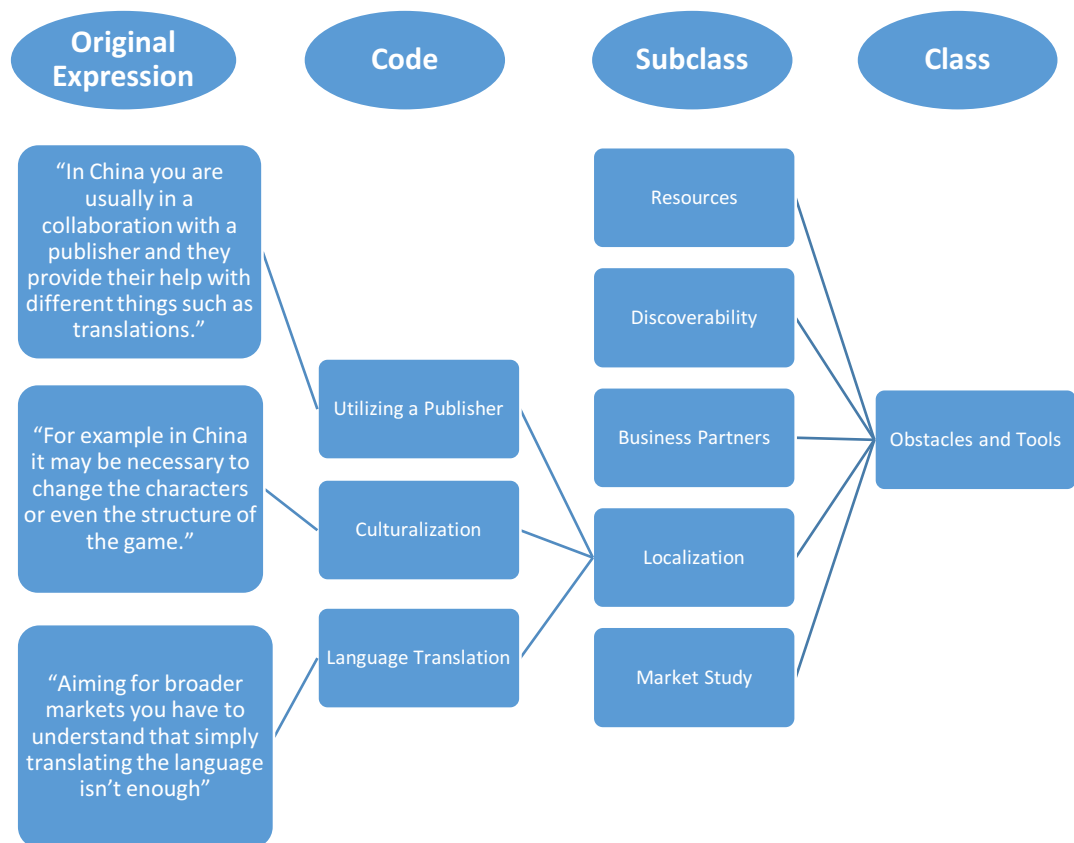


Figure 5. An Example of a Coding Process

3.3.3 Ethics of This Research

Ethics is something which is on board every step of the research and it has a notable impact on the way the research is conducted (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2001, 19). Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2001, 19) indicate that ethics concern both the theoretical phase and the primary data collection phase of the research. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, 127) described ethics in research by saying, “A good research is directed by the ethical commitment.” (Free translation). Supporting the good research ethics is the reliability of the research itself. The reliability is based on the terms of good scientific practice. Part of those terms is to be responsible and well-behaved when conducting a research. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, 132.)

During the theoretical phase the ethics are mostly associated with data collection methods and respecting your fellow researchers. The data collected from other researchers’ materials should be cited and quoted properly. It should also be clearly acknowledged if the data is created by someone else, further meaning that it should not be presented as one’s own if it is not. This is also referred to as plagiarism. (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 73-75.)

Collecting primary data is a sensitive area from the ethical point of view. First of all, Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2001, 20) explain that the acquisition of participants for example for interviews has to be done in good faith. The participants should be both well briefed on the purpose of the study and also treated well. Preserving the confidentiality and trust of the participants is paramount. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2001, 20.)

4 Results

This chapter offers a brief review of the interviewees and the content of the interviews. The obstacles that arose from the interviews are presented first and the according tools after that.

4.1 Information on the Interviewees

The interviewees were all closely tied to mobile game developing. Their positions in the mobile game business varied somewhat, which gave this study an opportunity to

acquire data from different aspects. Altogether four people were interviewed. It was clearly shown that the primary data acquired from them reached its saturation point, i.e. a point where the information started to repeat itself from one interview to another.

Next, a short introduction to the different interviewees who took part in this study. All participants are referred to as *he* whether they were a woman or a man.

Interviewee A

Let's call him *A*. *A* Works as the CEO of a small game company which not only develops mobile games but also provides other companies with services such as gamification or game development.

Interviewee B

B is not a developer himself but has his own marketing company which provides marketing services to small and medium sized gaming companies. The services *B* provides range from sales through management to marketing of gaming companies. *B*'s specialty is knowledge of Asian gaming markets.

Interviewee C

C has expertise in many different fields. On top of having his own mobile game company, *C* works as a marketing coordinator, has a significant role in a game business co-operative and is a member of the board in a professional society committed to advancing the careers of game developers.

Interviewee D

D has his hands on many different fields of game business but ultimately describes himself as a game industry start-up entrepreneur from Jyväskylä.

4.2 The Obstacles of, and the Tools for, Internationalization

Resources

Something brought up in every interview was the resources. According to the interviewees, a considerable concern and one of most common obstacles for a small mo-

mobile game developer is simply the lack of resources. Money is a resource small developers most commonly lack. However, *B* elaborates that money is not the only resource that might be missing. Also manpower and time are usually in short supply for a small mobile game developer.

“The marketing budget is almost nonexistent.” – A

“For small teams the biggest obstacle is that they don’t have enough resources, that means that they don’t have a lot of time and money and manpower.” – B

The absence of resources, especially money, is a considerable factor in creating more obstacles. *A* points out that not having a marketing budget means it is not possible to go and buy discoverability or coverage. A mutual opinion came up as the different interviewees explained that there is really no easy way of acquiring more resources.

“To avoid the need for a big budget, you’d have to be ridiculously innovative.” -D

“Certain small allowances could be applied for, but for example when establishing a firm there is start-up money, however, it is only a once in a life time effect.” – C

C shared that a small developer should bare in mind that the developing itself doesn’t necessary require monetary resources, as for example the game engines are free to use. *A* and *C* both bring up that the cure for the lack of resources is finding methods which either let you use less resources or no resources at all. For this, *A* suggests finding a market niche where competition is less fierce, whereas *C* proposes automatizing different activities, such as a part of social media activities.

Discoverability

The information gathered from the interviews clearly shows that another phenomenon experienced as an overwhelming obstacle is discoverability. *D* states that it is important to remain patient from the start and understand that it is very difficult to gain visibility when there are hundreds if not thousands of new mobile games launched every day. *C* goes even further by articulating that a small developer

shouldn't even aim at the top ten in the App store, since reaching the top 100 is still good business. Two of the interviewees said that becoming global is easy but getting the game noticed is much more difficult.

“Easy, you can just put your game into App store and Google Play and it's international. However, that alone is not enough because the discoverability is the biggest obstacle.” – A

The role of social media as a tool for better discoverability divided opinions somewhat. The common thought was that social media is one of the easiest and cheapest ways of making a name for the game and reaching new levels of visibility. In the best scenario, the game goes viral, which in turn creates much needed talk of the game.

“Word-of-mouth is one of the best tools for an indie dev. Meaning, get a hold of social media right from the start.” –C

However, according to D social media's role for marketing mobile games might not be that significant. He explicates that this has to do with mobile gamers being less active in building communities than for example PC or console gamers. Also, this has to do with the addictive mindset of a mobile gamer. Afterwards he mentions that there are exceptions to this rule, the bigger and more complicated mobile games.

“They are looking for quick pleasure. It has to be a quick and easy satisfaction.” –D

It is brought up by C that using social media is not only about reaching out to the gamers but others as well, such as people working in the mobile game industry. The interviewees made it very clear that even though we're living in a digital era, going online is not enough in itself; one has to go on the spot. Conventions and trade fairs could also act as a tool for improving visibility. It will cost some money to put up a stand but it is guaranteed to bring visitors and people to see what the game is about.

Another cure for discoverability problems brought up by the interviewees is finding a reliable publisher. In some countries such as China it is necessary to have a publisher due to both legal and cultural reasons.

“A good publisher could take you under their wing. They could deal with marketing, discoverability problems and possibly even provide a complete customer base.” –C

Business partners

When it comes to partners, utilizing their help is crucial for a small developer. There are different partners to collaborate with. A publisher is something every interviewee brought up. Utilizing the help of a publisher received a unanimous vote from all the interviewees. However, A and C both tell that finding a reliable publisher might not be such an easy job.

“The thing about using a publisher is finding the right one, a reliable publisher.” –C

“An ideal situation would be when you have just the type of game the publisher is looking for.” –A

According to C, times have changed and since using a publisher is not the only option anymore, the publishers have had to mold their business in a way that favors developers a bit more than in the past. B points out that using a publisher could free a developer completely from having to do different activities like promotion and marketing. This would be a huge financial advantage. B explains that this is done by sharing the revenue, so it will require a good, profitable game. As mentioned above, finding the publishers is not so easy. For this problem the interviewees provided tools such as actually going and meeting them. Taking part in trade fairs and gaming conventions was an option praised by the interviewees.

“The easiest way to find a publisher is going to a gaming trade fair.” –A

“You might not luck out on your first, second or even the third try, but at some point it is possible for you to gain that connection to a publisher.” –D

D brings into the table a different medicine. He explains that one extremely important factor in getting a publisher for a mobile game is having its analytics in order.

Analytics give crucial data of the performance of a game and they are an incredibly important feature of mobile games nowadays.

On top of utilizing the help of a publisher, A talked about cross-promotion. That is a form of partnership where someone else promotes the game and gets a share of the revenue in return. It could for example be another developer, but starting a partnership with them requires the game to be perfectly aligned with their mindset. These business partners could be reached through the gaming trade fairs and such, just as the publishers.

Localization

Localization as an obstacle appeared in the interviews in different forms. These forms were language translation, culturalization and utilizing a publisher.

The interviewees had clear opinions about localization and its relation to language translations.

“Aiming for broader markets you have to understand that simply translating the language isn’t enough” –C

It transpired that even if a developer cannot translate the language of the game to that one of another country, it may not be that big of an obstacle after all. Some interviewees suggested getting help from the target market’s local community, others suggested taking advantage of professional help. However, it came up that both have their pros and cons.

“The fact is that professional language translation is very cheap, although the type of the game has an effect on the price.” –D

D also expresses the possibility of having someone from the community translate the contents but then emphasizes the guaranteed quality of a professional translator. Furthermore, both D and A highlight that the best solution for language translations might in fact be a combination of the two options. This is due to the lack of the game's context on the translator's part, and the possible lack of professional translating skills on a community member's part.

“Translating a game requires the translator to truly understand the context, meaning that in an ideal situation the translator is playing the game.” –A

Another tool for overcoming the process of language translations, which appeared during the interviews, was to have no text to translate. If there is almost nothing to translate, one can avoid the obstacle almost entirely.

“A small developer could go around the translation process by making use of icons and avoiding the use of text as long as possible.” –C

D brought up that for some countries and in some cases, with more casual mobile games, it might be enough to do just the translation.

“For example when localizing in Germany, the USA and Russia, just translating the language could be enough because the countries' general character is quite similar.” –D

As mentioned before, translation is not the only part of localization, thus translating a game to another country's language is not enough for broader localization. Another part of localization appeared in the interviews as culturalization. One after another, the interviewees mentioned that the localization process of some countries or continents require much more effort.

“For example in China it may be necessary to change the characters or even the structure of the game.” –C

As the name culturalization suggests, it means modifying the game to better reflect the local culture. An important part of a culture is the use of money. Some interviewees explained that activating people to use money for a mobile game or inside it varies considerably depending on the culture. This is called monetization, and C simplified it by making a rough split of the situation.

“Occidental people feel like it is more rewarding to grind a game in order to receive a trophy, whereas oriental people are more willing to pay for trophies and skip trying to earn them.” –C

The interviews made it clear that in the case of a small developer the process of localization should not be rushed. It should also be carefully considered which markets are worth of engaging, as the complexity of localization varies tremendously.

“It may not even be worthwhile for a small developer to go for a market that requires localization, such as changing the content.”-C

C continues by recommending small developers to wait until they have a foot hold in the markets and only then think about broader markets and more extensive localization.

As with so many other problems faced by small mobile game developers, the interviewees see publishers as a tool for conquering localization. Publishers are able to provide their help in the different sectors of localization.

“In China you are usually in collaboration with a publisher and they provide their help with different things such as translations.”

–A

“My expertise may not be that comprehensive in culturalization but I’d hope that for example in China, the publisher would take part and give instructions on culturalization.” –D

Market Study

The last obstacle consists of the right markets and the business culture. Some of the interviewees experience was that it is difficult for a small developer to study the markets while trying to develop a game at the same time.

“At some point you have to spend some money to know the market.” –B

Picking the right markets emerged as a subject in some of the interviews. It was mentioned that it is crucial to bring a mobile game to the right markets, but it will take time and resources. Luckily the interviewees had their tools for this.

“You just have to find the right channel and the right markets. Segmentation is important in helping you to find out who you are really making the game for.” –C

Segmentation means dividing the prospective customers in segments with similar needs and wants. On top of segmentation, *C* and *D* brought up that a soft launch, where the game is put through a test to show how it would perform in the real markets, is another good tool for choosing the right markets. According to *D* soft launch tells if the game actually works and if it would be profitable when put into the markets. *C* goes further by stating that it will also provide guidance towards the right markets.

“If you want to go to the USA, the soft launch is done in Canada, meaning that the soft launch should be done relatively close to the markets you’re going for.” –C

It was mentioned in the interviews that another challenge in being active in the international markets is doing the actual business. The cultural differences in conducting business could result in unwanted or unpleasant surprises if not studied properly.

“In Finland we discuss the profit distribution first and then decide if we should continue discussions, but in China every detail and every possible thing is discussed first and then, after the decision has been made, the profit distribution is discussed.” –A

B states that studying the markets takes time and effort, but the outcome will be worth it.

5 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the internationalization of small mobile developers as a phenomenon, as well as the obstacles they face during the process and the tools they have utilized to overcome the obstacles. This chapter will first address the results, then examine the reliability and quality of this study and end with thoughts on further research on the subject.

5.1 Conclusion

Conducting the interviews definitely gave a broader understanding of the phenomenon but also of the overall situation. Born-global is a term used by one of the inter-

viewees. Even though it is possible for a game developer to target only domestic markets, the prevailing thought in today's world is that if a mobile game is developed, it is going to have to go global. This means that internationalization is more a rule than an exception nowadays. It also seems that game developers have a rather tight network and meet collectively almost every month.

The first research question is aimed at investigating the different types of obstacles small mobile game developers encounter during internationalization. The results indicate that the most significant obstacles are resources, discoverability, finding business partners, localization and conducting market studies.

The second question covers the tools developers have used to overcome the obstacles. The results collected show that the developers have various tools to overcome each obstacle. For example, lack of resources can be overcome by finding a way to avoid the need for resources. Another example, localization process could be made easier by targeting markets who only need language translation, furthermore, language translation costs could be cut down by utilizing icons instead of text. The data from the interviews brought out the answers quite clearly.

Here the results are presented one by one. Resources are definitely the most notable obstacle small developers have. Without the lack of resources every other obstacle would be easier to overcome. Better discoverability could be paid for, finding partners would be easier, localization could be outsourced and market studies could be bought from someone else. Of course, money isn't the only resource the small developers lack, but it could help in bringing together rest of the resources by hiring more man power and saving some extra time by for example buying a market study. There is no easy access to better resources, thus the secret to success lies in avoiding situations where significant resources are needed.

The results of this study indicate that if there are no considerable resources available, there is usually a way to work around the problem. Often this other way means utilizing the help of a partnership by sharing the revenue with them. All in all, partnerships, especially a collaboration with a publisher, seems to be one of small mobile game developers' best tools for internationalization. Depending on how big a share is negotiated, in the best case scenario the publisher does everything from promotion

to gaining visibility and to sales. If willing, the publishers can help by sharing knowledge of local markets and giving advice on localization. They are also likely to have an existing customer base they could market the game for. The role of a publisher seems to be the key to success. The only problem is finding a good, big and reliable publisher. The best practice for this is going to meetings, conventions and trade fairs and meet the publishers face-to-face. Once there, talk to them, create connections and make an impression. It is a tremendous help if the publisher and developer see eye to eye about the future and if the game fits the publisher's agenda.

Other obstacles faced by small mobile game developers are discoverability, localization and market study. All the obstacles and the tools to overcome them seem to be closely related. One obstacle leads to another, whereas the tools work in harmony to overcome the obstacles. For discoverability there seems to be no simple tool. One interviewee even mentioned that if there was, he'd be a millionaire. Social media activity and its innovative use could result in people seeing the game, which could in turn create word-of-mouth for the game. Another cure is the much loved utilization of the help of a publisher.

Localization is something that can be put into parts. One type of localization is targeted at areas that are more neutral and share similar cultural aspects. These areas do not necessarily need anything more than a language translation or taking advantage of sophisticated icon use so that only some or no text is needed. Another type is localizing in situations where the culture which the game has been designed for is significantly different from the target market. It was argued that situations like these might not even be worth the effort until the concept of the game has been proven.

Market study is a problem among small developers. On one hand it is not understood how important a thorough market study is. On the other, conducting a thorough market study requires the man power and time not that many small developers have.

5.2 Quality Assessment

According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, 136) validity of a research means that it studies what has been said it studies, whereas reliability concerns the repeatability of the study's results. The validity of this study is well maintained as it follows a strict structure, the content is coherent throughout the study and the results and outcome correspond to the purpose of this study. The reliability of this study might be affected due to data being experience and opinion based. Even so, it has to be remembered that the purpose of this study is specifically examining how the obstacles and tools of internationalization appear to the developers themselves. Also, the reliability of this study will probably deteriorate in time due to the subject being so strongly linked to it. In other words, gaming industry is in such a hectic phase that it is constantly developing, which causes the whole internationalization as a phenomenon to change continuously.

Every developer's knowledge and experiences differ from the rest, and an obstacle someone considers impossible might not even be an obstacle for another, in addition to which one developer's tool might not be fit for the obstacle of others. Those differences in experiences might affect the quality of the primary data. However, even though the amount of participants wasn't high, the interviewees were in different positions, which brought data from different aspects. Also, compared to secondary data acquisition, the interview method gave an opportunity to examine the participants' experiences and opinions more thoroughly. As for the secondary data, it was more difficult to determine what was the aspect the sources had. Because the secondary data on obstacles and tools was gathered with an eye on the experiences of the developers, the above mentioned differences in experiences might have affected the outcome. However, the amount of secondary data sources is so large that it will most likely rule out a situation where information on the obstacles and tools is left uncovered because none of the chosen secondary data sources felt it was an obstacle or a fitting tool.

This study is a good eye opener for small mobile game developers. This might give them ideas on which tools could be used and what obstacles they are likely to en-

counter during internationalization, but the study also acts as a gateway to other developers' experiences during their journey.

5.3 Further Research Possibilities

Even though gaming and its marketing represent a new age and even though it might seem that it requires entirely new methods, traditional marketing tools and methods might come in handy too. There is definitely a possibility for further research in studying whether the traditional marketing methods deserve a place in the fast developing world of mobile game developing and internationalization.

Another path could be to focus on the "what's after". After a small mobile game developer has succeeded in internationalization, how do the obstacles and corresponding tools change when they are not small any more. The focus would be on how is internationalization different for a big mobile game developer company.

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FIGURE 1.

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FIGURE 2.

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FIGURE 5.

An Example of a coding process.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questions

First question handles the general information of the interviewee and their position.

Who are you and what is it that you do?

What is your relation to mobile game developing?

Introduction to the theme.

What is your view on the obstacles internationalization of small mobile game developers'?

Possible additional questions to steer the interviewee back into the theme "obstacles".

Are there any other obstacles you have encountered?

In-depth questions to find out the tools for the obstacles the interviewees brought up? (Examples of few of the questions).

You mentioned localization, what are your tools to overcome that issue?

Is there any tools for gaining the better discoverability you mentioned?

What was it you did to get help from a publisher?

Wording and structure of the questions vary a little in semi-structured interviews.