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# International User Acquisition Processes of Mobile Games

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>This thesis is about the user acquisition of mobile games, more specifically marketing them in different regions of the world. The main research question was “How to successfully market to different parts of the world from the point of view of user acquisition”. The objective of the thesis was to research the differences in user acquisition marketing in different regions of the world. The focus was on bought media, specifically user acquisition done through user acquisition agencies and networks.</p> <p>Relevant literature and internet sources were researched for the theoretical part of the thesis. The different methods and channels of user acquisition were introduced thoroughly explained. Monetization and the most common user acquisition metrics were discussed as well.</p> <p>The main research method used for the study was qualitative, and research was carried out by conducting interviews with representatives of companies that do user acquisition. Secondary data from online resources was also gathered to support the interview data.</p> <p>The study shows that for a major part, the same base marketing materials can be effectively used globally for user acquisition. The biggest differences are shown in the markets' spending habits, and game genre preferences. The specific strategy for each desired target audience is essential to plan comprehensively and in cooperation with the user acquisition partner. The field of user acquisition is constantly growing and developing, so it's crucial to stay up-to-date with the latest trends, challenges and developments. Video marketing is currently very effective in user acquisition, and user targeting gives even smaller companies an opportunity to find their audience despite the recent trend of bigger companies moving on to mobile apps and mobile gaming.</p>		
<p>Keywords</p> <p>mobile games, user acquisition, international marketing</p>		

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<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Asiakashankinta on tärkeä osa mobiilipelien markkinointia. Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli tutkia mobiilipelien kansainvälistä asiakashankintaa, ja asiakashankintaprosessin mahdollisia eroavaisuuksia maantieteellisten alueiden välillä. Opinnäytetyön pääpainona oli maksettu mainonta, eli asiakashankintamarkkinointiin erikoistuneiden yritysten ja verkostojen avulla tehtävä asiakashankinta.</p> <p>Teoriaosuudessa tutkittiin laajasti asiakashankinnan markkinointia käyttäen kirjallisuus- ja internet-lähteitä. Mobiilipelien asiakashankinnan eri vaiheita ja kanavia on käsitelty, ja optimointia sovelluskauppoja varten tutkittu.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyön laadullinen tutkimus suoritettiin haastatteluilla. Haastateltavat ovat asiakashankintaa tekevien yritysten työntekijöitä, jotka ovat erikoistuneet tähän. Haastattelujen perusteella tehtiin lisätutkimusta poimimalla haastatteluista olennaisia ja tärkeitä osa-alueita, joiden ymmärrystä ja tuntemusta lisättiin ja laajennettiin hakemalla toissijaista dataa internetin artikkeleista ja statistikoista.</p> <p>Tutkimus osoitti, että maailmanlaajuisesti voi tehokkaasti käyttää pääasiassa samoja markkinointimateriaaleja, ja suurimmat erot eri alueiden välillä tulevat esiin ostokäyttäytymisessä sekä pelimieltymyksissä. Tarkempi strategia on kuitenkin suunniteltava jokaiselle kohderyhmälle ja –alueelle erikseen, ja läheinen yhteistyö ja suunnittelu yhdessä asiakashankinnan partnereiden kanssa on tärkeää. Myös alan trendejä sekä kehitystä on tärkeää seurata.</p>		
Keywords mobile games, user acquisition, marketing		

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ABSTRACT

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Mobile games are very popular in this day, and it is a constantly growing industry. In the book *Apponomics*, Saltz (2014, 32) writes: “The avalanche of apps is creating serious bottlenecks in app discovery. Popular apps rise to the top ranking, while the others are lost in the heap”. This is what companies need user acquisition for. And even then, it is not as simple as that; one marketing strategy is not enough to reach new users globally. The gaming habits, preferences, and most common channels for installing are not the same in every part of the world. Each region has their own, and there can even be significant variety within a region. For this reason, it is important to research these differences in order to find new, effective ways to market mobile games internationally.

The theoretical framework of the thesis contains a fair amount of the thesis writer’s own deliberation. These insights are based on the writer’s personal experiences with mobile games.

### 1.1 Research Background

When I began searching for a commissioner for my thesis, I already knew what I wanted. I was hoping to find a game company to co-operate with me with a marketing-related commission. I am very interested in the game industry, video games have been a dear hobby to me for decades and I am very intrigued about how game companies work, as I hope to someday work for one in the business or marketing department, so it was only logical for me to find a thesis topic related to games.

The commissioner of this thesis is Nitro Games Nitro Games is a Finnish game company, founded in 2007, specializing in strategy games. Their most recent development is the free-to-play mobile game *Raids of Glory*, released this year for Apple and iOS, for which they are planning to have a large-scale user acquisition campaign in the near future. They were interested in getting more information about international marketing from the point of view of user

acquisition. The main research question this thesis is based on is “How to successfully market to different parts of the world from the point of view of user acquisition”. During the process, sub-questions were also discovered. These sub-questions are “What is the most effective type of advertising in the user acquisition process” and “how to improve the user retention time in mobile games apps”. The objective of the thesis is to find information regarding international user acquisition that is relevant to the research question, and to analyze this data, ideally finding valuable insights about the global user acquisition marketing of mobile games.

## 1.2 Structure of the Report

Chapter 1 of the thesis serves as the introduction chapter of the study. The topic and commissioner of the thesis are introduced, and the objectives are briefly discussed. The main research question is established, and the structure of the report explained.

Chapter 2 collects the theoretical framework relevant to the understanding of the topic. The theory chapter begins with core customer acquisition theory, going forward to introducing the core aspects of user acquisition, such as the different methods of user acquisition, and the importance of user retention. The important metrics of the topic are also explained. International user acquisition differences are also discussed from the point of view of Japan, Korea, and China.

Chapter 3 describes and justifies the methodology of the thesis, and why the particular methodology was chosen. The processes of primary and secondary data gathering and analysis are described and justified.

Chapter 4 collects the qualitative data collected for the research. The qualitative interviews conducted for the thesis are discussed and analysed. The interview analysis has been divided into logically structured subchapters.

Chapter 5 collects the secondary data gathered through online research. Several topics that arose as important aspects in the interviews were looked into more deeply, and explained in greater detail.

Chapter 6 of the thesis is the conclusive chapter, building a conclusion of the information gathered and analyzed. The information gathered from the collected data is summarized and discussed conclusively. The limitations to the study are discussed and suggestions for further research are given. The validity and reliability of the study are evaluated, as well as the writer's own process.

## 2 USER ACQUISITION

This section collects prior information relevant to the topic of user acquisition. The literature review covers the basics of the customer purchase process, after which the focus is on research regarding mobile application user acquisition. The metrics most commonly seen in the field of user acquisition is also explained in this section.

### 2.1 Customer Purchase Process

Before going into researching the topic of mobile user acquisition, it is good to discuss some general marketing theory. A suitable core theory for the customer purchase process is the purchase funnel. The purchase funnel, a concept created in the late nineteenth century by St. Elmo Lewis, is still valid to this day, and functions as a credible basis for research about acquiring customers (Cotton and Fields, 2012. 124).



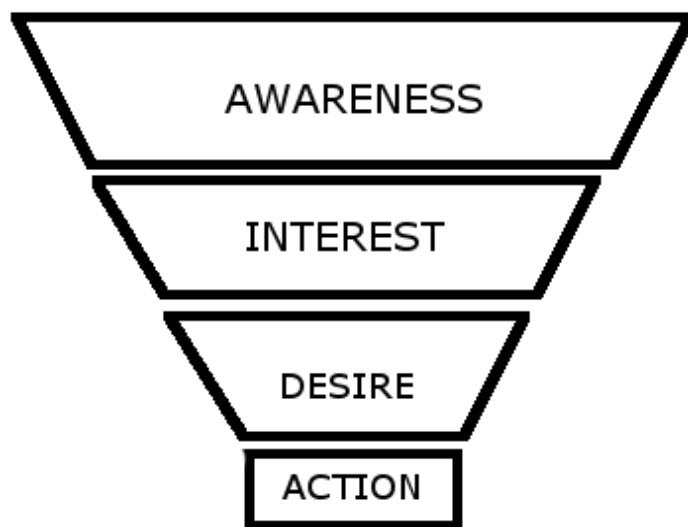


Figure 1. The customer purchase funnel (Cotton and Fields 2012, 124)

As seen in figure 1, the four main components of the classic purchase funnel are awareness, interest, desire, and action. The first component, awareness, refers to the consumer's awareness of the product. In order for the process to go further, the potential customer must have knowledge of the existence of the product, and what it is used for. After awareness, interest is something the consumer must have in order to proceed further. The consumer needs to be interested in using the product. The next step to be fulfilled following interest is the desire to buy the product of interest from the particular brand. Finally, after the other components are filled, the action to accept an offer that will fill that desire is left.

Like the funnel shape shows, as the purchase process proceeds further, the amount of people decreases. The purchase funnel is a valuable concept in the field of marketing, where it is important to aim for a situation where as many potential customers as possible reach the end of the funnel. It can function well as a base reference for planning a step-by-step marketing strategy.

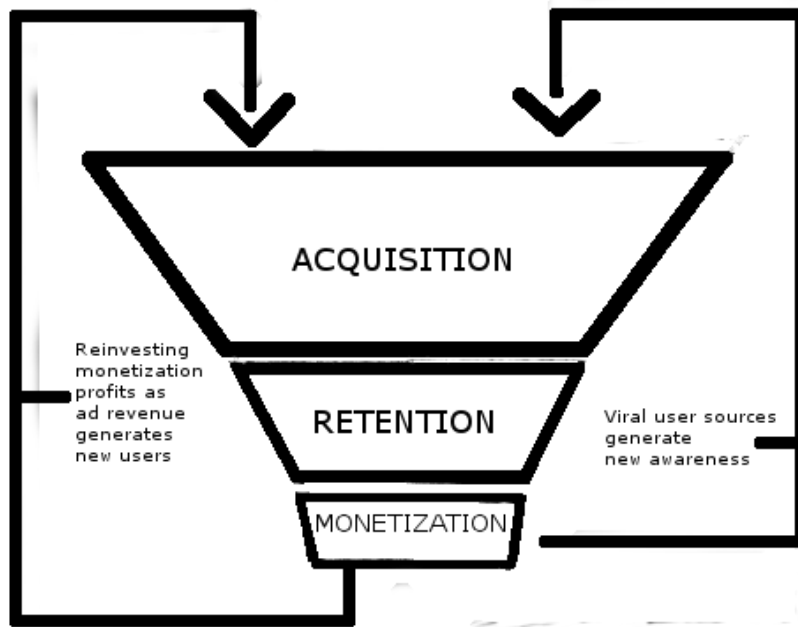


Figure 2. The ARM model (Cotton and Fields 2012, 126)

As figure 2 shows, some modifications can be made to the funnel in order to more specifically apply it to mobile application marketing. Research group Kontagent has adjusted the classic funnel into an alternative model they call the ARM model, consisting of acquisition, retention and monetization (Cotton and Fields, 2012, 126). This model works well for free-to-play games, for which it is not necessary to pay anything to simply play. The first two steps, awareness and interest, can form the acquisition of the new users. Desire can be modified to be the retention of the players, to have them keep returning to the game. Monetization, which is the need to get the players to use money on the application, can be used as the final operation instead of action.

Each step will be explained further throughout the literature review. However, as the research is made from the point of view of user acquisition, the focus will be on the user acquisition process, and monetization will be discussed more briefly.

## 2.2 Customer Retention

To keep and develop the customer relationship, following the relationship is needed. This is called customer relationship management. In the customer

development relationship, the central aspects to observe are customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and customer profitability (Bergström and Leppänen 2009, 484).

The observation of customer satisfaction is crucial. It is important to act immediately when a problem in customer satisfaction is found, and without observation these issues will not be noticed early enough. Customer satisfaction is most commonly monitored with customer surveys aimed at the current customers. The focus of these surveys should be on finding out the functionality of the product and service compared to the customers' expectations (Bergström and Leppänen 2009, 484). In addition to surveys, spontaneous feedback from the customers is the most essential form of feedback. It is important for the company to encourage the customers to give feedback, and make it as easy as possible for them (Bergström and Leppänen 2009, 484).

Loyal customers are the preferred and most profitable type for a business to have, and it is important to strive to gain and keep the customers loyal. There are several ways of making this happen, beginning with good products and services that cause customers to develop loyalty by habit (Jenkinson 1995, 116). Marketing communications play a crucial part in retaining the developed loyalty, and the loyal customers should be rewarded by contacting them with information and offers regarding new products and services, using several channels to do this and allowing the customers to decide which channels they wish to use (Bergström and Leppänen 2009, 481.). Customer loyalty can also effectively be enforced by branding. Jenkinson (1995, 113) quite accurately defines brand power as "the ability of the brand personality to positively alter a customer's experience and perception of the product relative to those he or she would have if the brand source was not known". By having a strong, inviting brand that operates in ways that encourage loyalty a company can significantly increase the amount of loyal customers.

Customer profitability is measured in order for the business to estimate the value of the customer to the business now and in the future (Bergström and Leppänen 2009, 490). This is commonly done by observing, measuring and

comparing the amount of customers and the amount of profit, and creating individual categories to have more detailed information (Bergström and Leppänen 2009, 491). Profit and loss can for instance be measured by product, brand, or channel. An article in Chief Executive (Customer profitability 2003) describes that measuring by product or brand furthers the understanding of the product's performance, give new ideas for developing new products and pricing, and creating individual goals aimed at products, while measuring by channel can help perceive how to reach the customers most efficiently, and where to invest resources.

Customer retention in mobile app marketing is its own, fascinating field, and while it uses the basic methods of customer retention, comprehensive understanding of the world of mobile apps and gaming is required.

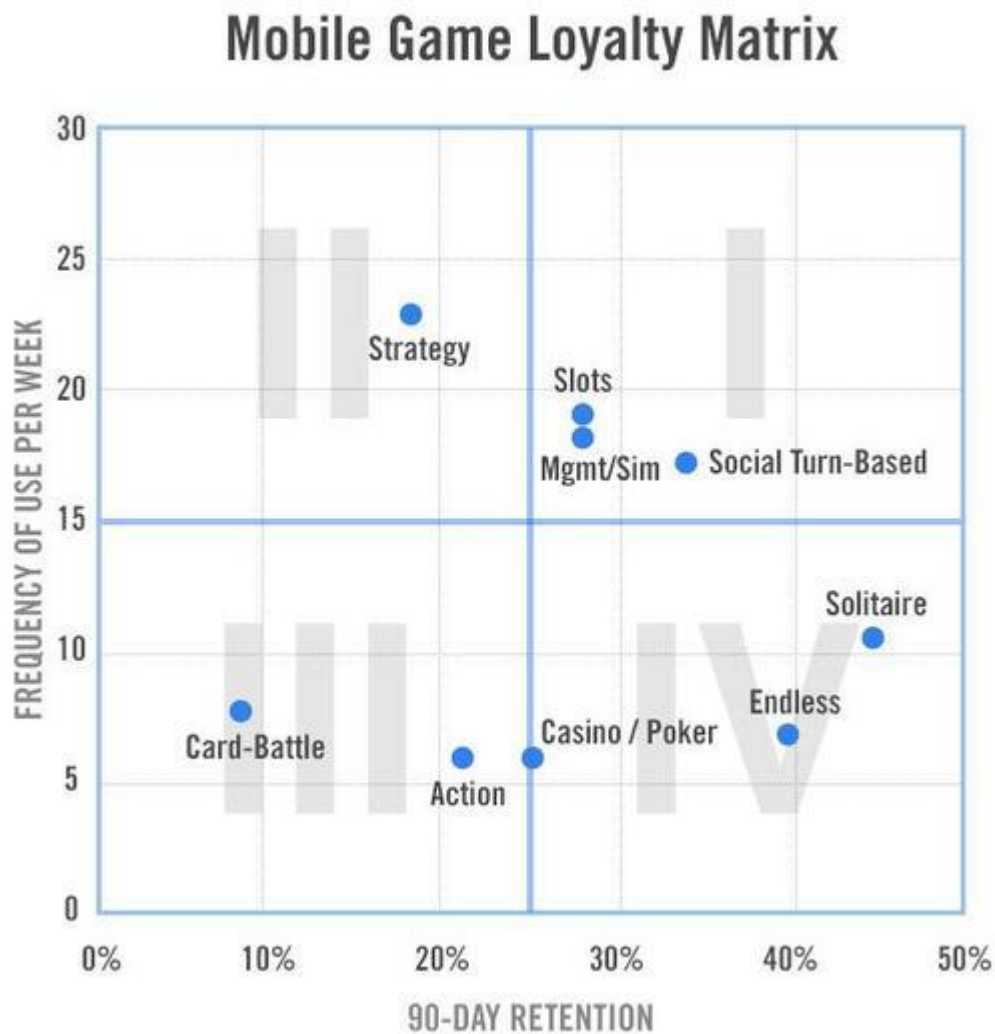


Figure 3. The Mobile Game Loyalty Matrix (Laughlin, 2012)

As figure 3, the Mobile Game Loyalty Matrix, based on Flurry's research through over 300 million free-to-play game consumer samples (Laughlin, 2012), shows, the user behavior differ according to the type of game. The loyalty matrix is divided into four quadrants. The first quadrant is the one desired by developers, where the frequency of usage is high, as is the retention time. The second quadrant has the most all-out and intense usage, but for a fairly short time. The third quadrant is the least desired position, for it has the lowest placements for both measures. The fourth quadrant has the games that have some of the most loyal players, but a lesser frequency of usage.

The current game of the thesis commissioner, Nitro Games, is Raids of Glory. It falls under the strategy game genre, which is the sole genre in quadrant two, and means that players might have the tendency to abandon the game after a short time of very frequent playing. Pearce (2014) asserts that the key to retention is having a game that users simply want to play. She describes a game with excellent retention levels to be one that satisfies the users' competitiveness, and ones that has a challenge level that is just right. High-score lists and leaderboards are valuable ways to fill this hunger for competition. To increase retention time, it is also essential to constantly be ready with new content to keep the game fresh and interesting. One common way to do this, in addition to adding new stages, is to build in-game events. These events should feel rewarding to play, for example by offering in-game currency or items as rewards for achievements in the event.

## 2.3 User Acquisition

User acquisition is the practice of marketing, which aims to gain new loyal users. When beginning to plan the user acquisition strategy, the company must look into the different possibilities of media. User acquisition can be processed through three different media divisions. These are bought media, owned media, and earned media.

Bought media refers to advertisements and media purchased through third party ad networks, agencies or platforms. Owned media means media owned by the company itself, such as their own website. The third and least used type is earned media, which refers to a third party, such as a popular blog, acting as a referral source. (Wireless Industry Partnership, 2013, 37.)

The most effective way to advertise and acquire users is to combine all three methods, but before that, it is crucial to carefully establish each type of media, and decide and implement the methods and channels that are desired to use. After this has been done, it is easier to put the pieces together for a wholesome, functioning strategy, where each part of the whole support each other.

### 2.3.1 Bought Media

Bought, or paid media, is as it sounds; you pay an external source for this type of media. Tools such as Google Adwords, which gives more visibility for your website through google, and search engine optimization, the target of which is to help the company's website to appear among the search engines' first results, are some good, often used examples. All forms of bought advertisements are bought media as well. This media strategy requires thorough planning and execution for maximum quality and usefulness.

Bought media used to be the essence of digital marketing, but as of today, people have gained more interest in involvement with the brands they prefer. Companies might also want to get more involved in the process, themselves, and bring their company and product closer to the users in addition to establish a closer relationship. (Wireless Industry Partnership, 2013, 37)

In the mobile application industry, networking and relationships are important. Advertisement networks are commonly used to boost user acquisition, and buying traffic from them is a common practice. Paid promotion ad networks and agencies are experts in the field, and have the needed technology and knowledge to help with the advertising of the app. Bought media could be

described as the recommended, comprehensive first step to take in user acquisition marketing.

Even within mobile advertising networks, there exists several kinds. The mobile marketing solution company mobiThinking has published a guide to mobile advertising networks (2013), which introduces us to the different network types.

Blind networks tend to be the biggest in size when it comes to publishers, advertisers and impressions. Blind networks commonly give the buyer some targeting options, such as country, and the type of channel, such as beauty or gaming, but they generally do not allow the choice of specifications for which websites will be used. These networks focus on doing performance advertising, which is paid for Cost per Click (CPC), making it a good choice for those who wish to have the focus in banner clicking advertising. There is also the possibility of non-targeted advertising, which is the cheapest option. Some of these networks also offer brand advertising, which is ideal for those who wish to bring their new product to people. The company can use self-service tools to track and optimize the campaigns. The revenue share for the publishers is estimated to be around 55-65 percent of what is paid by the advertiser.

Premium blind networks are smaller in size than blind networks, and have a higher share of premium publishers, such as newspapers and broadcasters, and big-traffic mobile sites. These networks are ideal for brand advertising, and the cost metric used is cost per thousand impressions (CPM). The advertising remains blind for the major part, targeting channels, but premium prices allow buying more specific spots, and choosing the website. Performance advertising is also an option, as can be search advertising that is based on keywords. These are commonly paid for by CPC.

Premium networks are concentrated on a limited number of premium publishers. The dominant, possibly the sole method of cost is CPM, as for the most part the campaigns are brand advertising. The companies attracted to

these networks tend to be big brands, which are willing to pay high prices for the highest quality services.

The first step in dealing with acquisition networks is specifying the type that fits the desires and needs of the company and product. After that has been determined, it is highly important to get familiar with the possible networks, in order to find a reliable provider that can reach your audience.

### 2.3.2 Owned Media

Owned media refers to all the content created and owned by the business. It's the content featured on the official website, the company blog, and any other offerings of the company itself. This also includes the content shared on the company's behalf across social media sites, such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Social networking sites are great at connecting with fans after a fan base has been built (Newman, 2014).

For the success of owned media, it is essential to have very strong social and marketing strategies. The company website should be meticulously designed to attract users, while retaining a highly usable user interface. The website content should be designed with user acquisition in mind as well, and should include links to all the channels that the user can get the app from, but also tell about the company to the customers, and make it easy for them to spread the information through copy-pasting or social media (Wireless Industry Partnership 2013, 38-40). Once the company has gained a following, owned media is a very strong marketing asset to have, but as a first step, it is not the recommended one.

### 2.3.3 Earned Media

Earned media could be regarded as the more modern version of word-of-mouth marketing, as described by Newman (2014). A blog reviewing your product is one example of earned media. Comments, tweets, any virally shared material that mentions the company or product, and any other outer, non-related sources marketing and mentioning the company are included in earned media. Earned



media rarely works by itself, and tends to need the support of bought and owned media to work as an asset.

## 2.4 Monetization

Monetization is all the means to get the user to pay. There are four major monetization types: retail purchases, subscription models, in-game microtransactions and digital downloads (Cotton and Fields 21). The most relevant ones for mobile game applications are the latter two types, in-game microtransactions being the most important one, as a fair amount of mobile games are free-to-play, and rely on in-game purchases to get paid by the users. Patrick Minotti from Flurry, quoted by Au (2012), states that the rule of thumb is that if the user has not spent money on the app within two weeks, they most likely never will. Thus, it is vital to find the right strategies of monetization.

In order to accelerate the monetization of the players, the game developer can encourage competition between players with a PvP (Player vs. Player) possibility within the game (Laughlin 2012). Monetization is also enhanced with in-game purchases, which is a very common trait in free-to-play mobile games. In-game currency must be designed to feel valuable enough so that the player is willing to spend money on it. The in-game purchases can be new levels, equipment, and so on. Users are often given the possibility to spend real money, most commonly with a credit card, to add to their in-game currency.

## 2.5 Cross-promotion

Cross-promotion can be a very useful, free way to advertise an application and gain more users. Cross-promotion is the practice of setting up apps to promote each other to their respective audiences. App developers can work together to advertise one another's apps by having in-game placements. This method is highly recommended for developers that wish to find a low-budget solution.

However, this is not the only way to handle cross-promotion. In case of the developer having more than one mobile application, they can implement cross-

promotion by advertising their newest development in their already existing, older apps. (Saltz 45.)

There are also networks specifically for cross-promotion. These vary in type, and offer several different possibilities for cross-promoting, the two main types being direct cross-promotion and app network exchanges. Direct cross-promotion partners you app with a single other app, and whenever you generate an install for them, you get one in return. App network exchanges have you earning credit for each install you generate for another. With this credit, you can then allow your ad to generate a download for your app. (Reynolds 2013)

## 2.6 Optimization for User Acquisition

The mobile application business is constantly and rapidly growing, and it isn't easy to get noticed in the sea of apps on app stores. In 2013 Matthäus Krzykowski from the app search company Xyo reported that a shocking 5% of apps accounted for 92% of downloads (Saltz 2014, 33). The most effective way to get noticed is getting the app to the top list, and this can be advanced by App Store Optimization (ASO), which is the process of improving the visibility of an app in the app store

However, criticism for the practice of ASO has emerged as well. Wilcox (2013) feels that a darker side to optimization has begun to emerge. He asserts that only those who pay for the top spots can afford the needed measures to stay there, causing the rankings to stagnate. He stresses that the owners of app stores need to ensure a fair, honest market.

### 2.6.1 Acquisition Optimization

Making a striking first impression is required in order to set an app apart from the crowd. The icon of the application needs to stand out from the crowd of icons, and be tempting as well as relevant to the purpose of the app, as it is the first impression the possible user gets while browsing an app store (Saltz 2014, 56). The title of the app is best kept short and to the point, but it should imply what the app is about, for example by usage of keywords (Rampton 2014). The

description of the app also requires throughout planning. Only the first five lines of the text will be visible at all times, so the beginning of the description needs to be interesting, and should make the reader want to learn more.

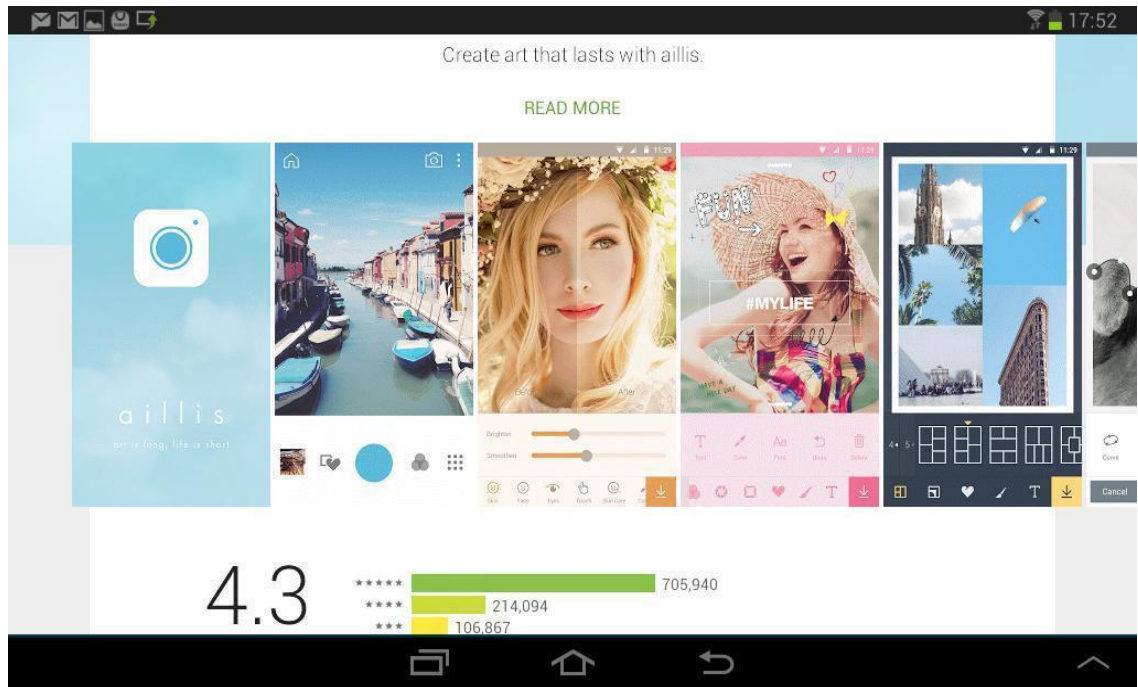


Figure 4. Screenshots of the camera app Aillis on Google Play Store

App Stores allow the developer to share a few screenshots of their app. This is a good opportunity to showcase the app in a very tempting light. Shown in figure 4 are various beautiful screenshots of the camera app Aillis as they are seen on Google Play Store.

App store reviews can also be optimized. The potential users will see the reviews and app ratings on the product page, and asking the users for a feedback can result in better results. The frequency and timing of requesting for feedback can be optimized. It is not recommended to ask for feedback in the middle of experience. It will annoy the user, and instead it is more convenient to ask at a time when it's ideal for a positive review. In addition, the question should be formed in a way that encourages and motivates the user to answer. (Galligan 2014)

## 2.6.2 Activation Optimization

The process of activation means turning the new app downloader into a frequent user (Oliver 2015). After making a good first impression within the app store, the app itself also has to succeed in doing the same. A good quality for an app to have is easy playability, which means no long-winded explanations without activating the user, and no registrations as soon as the app is opened for the first time (Johnson 2015). In mobile games, when the user opens the game for a first time, they are commonly met with a gameplay tutorial, in which the player can experience the gameplay right away while the game guides them through the basic functions. Once the tutorial has finished, the player gets to fully explore the other functions.

The possibility to go forward and learn new aspects of the app is also something that catches the interest of the player. The app should encourage the user to advance further to get new information about the more advanced functions and features (Johnson 2015).

### 2.6.3 Retention Optimization

The increase of retention can also be aided by optimization. You can optimize how your app uses push notifications. Push notifications are mails and notifications sent by the app when for example someone sends you a message in-app. However, the permission for these notifications should always be asked, and is it mandatory that the user has the option of turning them off.

Push-notifications are recommended to be optimized in ways that encourage the user to become a long-term user (Oliver 2015). Push notifications should forward the user to actions that enforce this, such as major updates and events, and rewards.



Figure 5. Push notification from the Japanese rhythm mobile game, I-Chu

You can customize in which way the push notification contact happens. Sometimes there might be an on-screen message, or a notification on the top of your screen. The example shown in figure 5 is not a much recommended kind of push notification, as it appears on the screen without warning, possibly interrupting something else the user is doing, causing irritation. As seen in the figure, the app also makes a push notification in the device's notification space, so the pop-up is not really necessary. A good push notification allows the user to decide when they pay attention to it, and tempt them to react to it and continue using the app.

## 2.7 Mobile App Industry Metrics

Good knowledge of acquisition metrics is essential in order to plan a good strategy for retaining the users. The app industry is brimming with abbreviations. The following ones, thoroughly explained in their book by Cotton and Fields (2012), are the most relevant ones when we are researching user

acquisition. With these calculations, you will notice if there are needs to increase the retention of the users.

Daily Active Users, DAU, is used to measure the amount of unique users for the application per day. The period used to calculate this is commonly seven days. To qualify as a DAU, the user only needs to start the app. Monthly Active Users, or MAU, calculates the number of active users in the span of 30 days. MAU can be calculated either with users in total, or with unique users (MAUU).

To best take advantage of these two metrics, the relationship between them should be monitored. By calculating DAU/MAU, you get a measurement of how many of the users are active at least once per day. The desired result is to have a number as high as possible. This number is very valuable, and by implementing these calculations after updates and changes, it gives a good insight on how the application is doing at the moment. It is also good for indicating the success. (Cotton and Fields 2012, 64)

For advertising, cost measurements are what to look for in order to be able to build efficient advertising. The ones most commonly used in user acquisition are Click-Through Rate and Conversion Rate.

Click-Through Rate, CRT, measures the efficiency of a clicked advertisement. This is done by dividing the number of clicks by the number of people seeing it. This can be used to evaluate the general interest.

Conversion Rate, CRV, is the conversion from the aforementioned interest to the potential user installing the application. The value of CRV is commonly described in percent. For example, if you have placed an advertisement for your mobile game, and 1000 people have clicked on it, but only 100 people go as far as to install the game, it places the percent of CRV at 10.

There are also three cost metrics that are often seen in discussions regarding app marketing. Cost per Click, CPC, is a performance-based metric, and the publisher only gets paid whenever the advertisement is clicked (Kneen 2010). Cost per Thousand Impressions, CPM, is a pricing method in which the price is based on 1000 impressions. CPM is preferred by publishers due to it being an

inventory-based product rather than a performance-based one (Kneen 2010). Cost per Install, CPI, refers to the costs of the company per one install by a user. The development costs are usually excluded in this metric. To get the CPI, the total market costs is divided by the number of total installs.

## 2.8 Global App Marketing

Mobile gaming is a global business, but the same methods or marketing will not work in every part of the world. It is recommended to research the revenues, usage, and market in the target counties, as well as the app user profile. For some countries, localization of the app is also in order. (Saltz 2014, 184.)

The topic of differences in mobile game markets and user acquisition is one that has not been specifically researched yet. However, the most data and insights by far exist for the Asian market, which has notable differences even within the continent.

### 2.8.1 Mobile App Market in China

China has a lot of competition between app stores, so it isn't simple to reach a consistent download source. China's government also has banned google, and relies on its own major app stores, such as Tencent and Baidu, the biggest search engine in China (Giggs 2015).

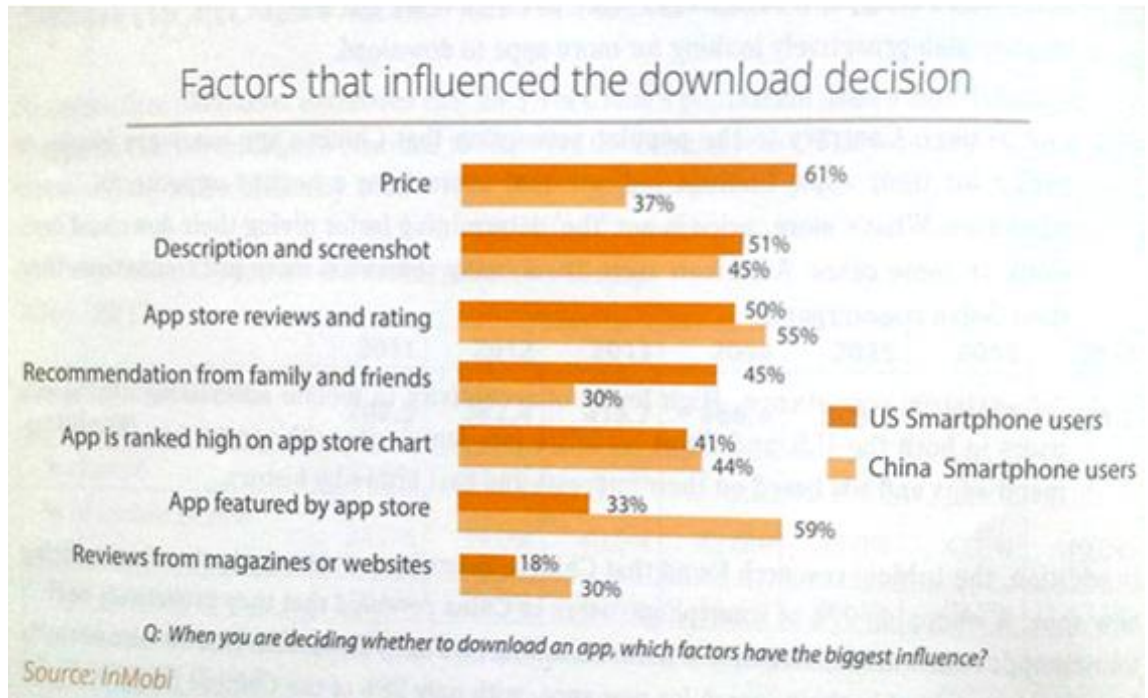


Figure 6. Factors that influenced the download decision (Saltz 2014, 190)

As Saltz reports (2014, 189), in 2014, InMobi conducted a research about the Chinese app consumer behavior. Perhaps rather surprisingly, the app preferences are fairly similar between China and the US. As figure 6 presents, both Chinese and US people make their decision primarily based on what they see in the app store. The research findings also reveal that in China, consumers are also willing to pay for in-app purchases, and furthermore do not have price as the biggest factor when deciding on a purchase. Moreover, they tend to have a positive reaction to advertising, and are receptive to recommended apps. Chinese are also revealed to be heavy app users, while constantly looking for new apps to download as well.

### 2.8.2 Mobile App Market in Japan

For Western developers, Japan has for a long time been regarded as a challenging market to enter, with their cryptic consumer preferences and prior failures by Nokia and Xbox for instance (Karjalainen, Lehtonen and Niipola 2014, 234.). However, the recent developments in the app industry show that it is indeed possible to reach the Japanese market as well.



### Combined iOS App Store & Google Play Monthly App Revenue

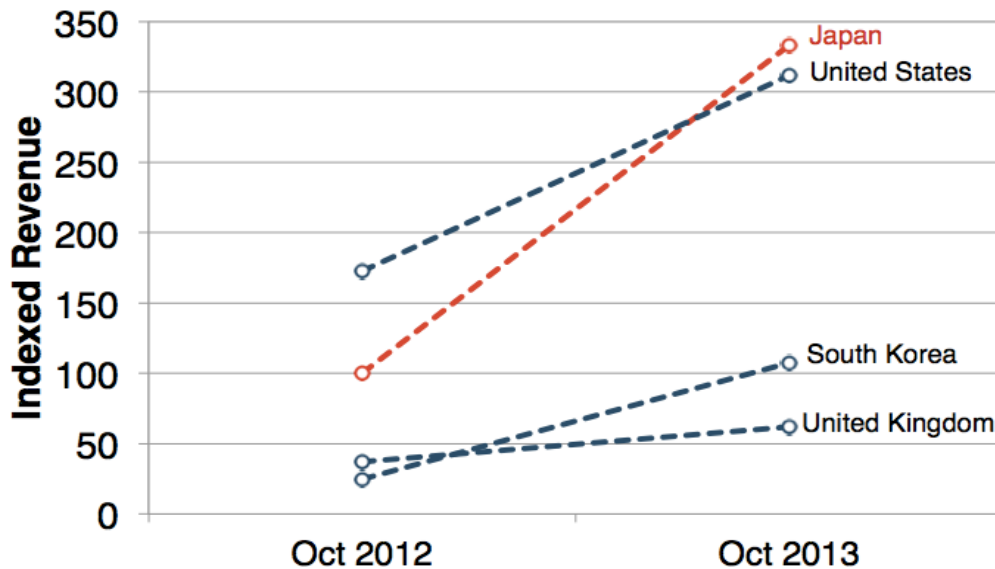


Figure 7. Combined iOS App Store & Google Play Monthly App Revenue (Mirani 2013)

Mirani (2013) reports that a study conducted by App Annie shows that the Japanese App Store revenues have seen a significant rise between 2012 and 2013. As figure 7 presents, the market grew from indexed revenue of 100 percent to nearing 350 percent in the span of a year, surpassing even the United States. This growth is believed to be driven by television advertising; after television commercials, the downloads of the top hits rose substantially (Mirani 2013). Japan is also reported to be the only country in the world that has equal usage of google play and iOS, making it a golden opportunity for Google Play apps (Karjalainen, Lehtonen and Niipola 2014, 235.).

Japan's app stores are brimming with games by local developers, many of them being strategy games and role-playing games that often also have a strong focus on collecting; several games, in addition to having the main gameplay elements, have you collecting cards using the game's currency. This encourages monetization, and it is not surprising to learn that Japanese spend on mobile apps the most in the world. However, having such a large quantity of apps of their own, it isn't simple for an international company to break into the market. Japan is also reported to be the only country in the world that has equal usage of google play and iOS, making it a golden opportunity for Google Play apps (Karjalainen, Lehtonen and Niipola 2014, 235.).

### 2.8.3 Mobile App Market in Korea

Koreans, similarly to Japanese, are avid mobile game users and spenders. Saltz (2014) refers to a report from App Annie, which revealed that South Korea places third in the world in the percentage of app money spent on games, with 95% of the money spent in their Google Play store going toward games. The main channel for Koreans' mobile app downloads is T Store, an Android app store developed by the local mobile Operator Telecom, while surprisingly Google Play is not nearly as widely used by the public (Saltz 2014, 213). The Korean market segment could be described as mature but very varied, with an audience for both hardcore role-playing gamers and casual puzzle games, but the highest value is in easy, addictive gameplay (Saltz 2014, 215).

## 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 The Research Design

The method chosen for the research methodology is qualitative research, carried out by semi-structured qualitative interviews. Qualitative research is good for addressing a research question starting with "How", "Why", and "What" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011, 3), and as the main research question "How to successfully market to different parts of the world from the point of view of user acquisition", and "What sort of differences do regions have in user acquisition advertising". The method used is inductive, which, as Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011, 9) put it, means that the project begins with accumulating specific data, which is then analyzed in order to gather more general understanding of the topic. The questions are commonly open-ended, allowing for a wide variety of findings.

### 3.2 Sampling and Procedure of Data Collection

The research was conducted by qualitative interviews with professionals working in companies that handle user acquisition. The

interviewees specialize in user acquisition and advertising in their companies. The chosen sampling method was purposive, and the interviewees were chosen by the thesis writer for their expertise on the field.

The potential interviewees were contacted by e-mail, with a message that introduces the research and requests an interview. As the companies are international, located abroad from Finland, the method preferred for the interview was Skype call, as it is easy to use, free of charge, and preferred by a lot of professionals as well. Online interview is an efficient method in this case, due to its flexibility. The appointments can flexibly be agreed upon, according to what best suits the interviewee; employees have limited time for extra activities (Kananen 2015, 85). The audio of each interview was recorded with an audio recorder, as well as a PC program for audio recording, to verify that the recording will be successful.

After the interviews were analyzed, the research was expanded with secondary data research. Several intriguing and important main topics and themes from the interviews were selected, and existing data, such as statistics and recent discussions and information regarding these topics were researched online.

### 3.3 Interview Objectives

The objective of the interviews was to discover the regional differences of user acquisition. In addition to general information about the topic, there were some more specific questions. When collecting (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 80) qualitative interview data, the type of the interview should be decided. Here, the type of research question defined the ideal type to use.

The interviews carried out were semi-structured, which is used for both “what” and “how” questions. In this type, the topic outline and theme is

prepared beforehand, but keep the possibility of changing the wording or order of the questions in each respective interview, which allows the interview to be comprehensive and systematic, but also to keep the tone fairly free and informal (Eriksson and Kovalainen 82).

The questions were for the major part open-ended, allowing for comprehensive and detailed answers. The interviewees were asked for their consent to record the interviews, and to publish their names in the study.

### 3.4 Data analysis methods

After each interview has been conducted, the recording was listened to several times in order to understand the answers well. The interview was then meticulously transcribed in order to have all the data in writing for reference. The process of transcription is also useful because it gives the opportunity to get even more familiarized with the interview (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008, 85).

In the beginning of the analysis stage each interview was coded, meaning the process of finding themes and categories in the interview in order to organize the information so it is easier to analyze (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011, 223). The interviews were first analyzed separately, after which the interviews were coded, compared and analyzed together.

## 4 PRIMARY DATA GATHERING AND ANALYSIS

This chapter summarizes and analyses the interviews that have been conducted with user acquisition professionals. The interviews had questions about the international user acquisition process in general, such as what is important in the planning stage, and what is the current situation with the field. There were also questions asked about the advertisements, especially in-app

advertising and videos, as the commissioner is interested in these aspects.

There were two interviewees. Patrik Lehti is a Sales Manager for Fiksu, and has worked for the company for three years. Joëlle Böhme is the Business Development Manager for a user acquisition agency, and has worked for the company for a year and a half. Each interview was approximately 30 minutes long.

#### 4.1 Regional differences in International User Acquisition

The first question was about the general differences between the different regions, when it comes to user acquisition. The regions mainly questioned about were Europe, USA, and Asia.

Lehti described the USA as the number one market for mobile developers. From the point of view of user acquisition this means that there are a lot of different agencies, networks and services that concentrate on user acquisition. The USA has a lot of casual players, but also has a market for strategy role-playing games. Europe is considered a challenging market due to a lot of differences within the region. Lehti suggested that the first objective should be to have success in the USA, before expanding to Europe. Like USA, the major audience in Europe is for casual gaming. A rising trend in Europe and the USA is an increasing number of older women playing. They tend to have high amounts of extra money to use, and from this segment games can get monetizing users.

Böhme named Latin America as one of the regions where people do not spend much money within games, and which does not have a strong presence in user acquisition. The markets of USA and Europe do not have notable differences in their gaming habits. The mobile game users in USA tend to spend a lot on

games, and the lifetime value is good, with a lot of valuable, active users. Europe is quite diverse as a region. Germany, United Kingdom, and France are the strongest countries when it comes to in-app spending, while some, such as Italy and Spain, do not monetize as well.

These answers from the interviewees show that USA and Europe are considered to be rather alike, and similar strategies can be considered. From both interviews it can be asserted that Europe is a region with a lot of differences between the countries. As such, for Europe it is crucial to target certain types of countries instead of the region as a whole.

When it comes to Asia, Lehti would differentiate China from the rest of the region. In his words, “what works elsewhere in the world, does not work in China”, and a mobile game developer should have a local publisher in order to succeed marketing to China. In Asia, role-playing fantasy games are popular, but they have their own strong culture, which is hard to break into. Asians spend high amounts of money on their mobile games, so it is a very good market if a company succeeds in entering it.

Böhme considered the Asian market to be notably different from the USA and Europe. In Asia, the consumers like to see a different style to characters in the games, preferring artwork similar to the style of Japanese manga comics. Western games do not work very well for the Asian consumers, and the same typically goes for Asian games in the western market.

Both interviewees agreed on Asia being a very differentiated market. The Asian popular culture seems to notably affect their preferences with gaming, making it challenging for a western game to make good results in the area.

## 4.2 Planning International User Acquisition

The next topic of the interview was the planning of an international user acquisition campaign. Lehti asserted that it is essential for a company to create a thorough strategy. The objectives for the user acquisition campaign should be planned meticulously. It is extremely important to define the LTV, Lifetime Value of one user. Once the users' behavior is understood, it is possible to make the needed decisions and justify the costs. A common mistake is to have a LTV window that is too short; game studios should understand to give the user acquisition companies at least 20 days to track the user behavior. In the past year and a half, Lehti estimated, the process of User Acquisition has seen some changes. Since the costs for user acquisition have increased significantly, it is not possible to try out different networks like in the past, meaning the preparation is highly meaningful in order to make successful user acquisition.

Böhme also gave an insightful answer, from the point of view of the user acquisition company. When a user acquisition company is planning a user acquisition campaign, it is important to research and take into account the goals and achievements of the client: where they want to go with their campaign, and what they want to achieve. Their target is also important to know, it can be a lot of volume in order to reach the top charts, or new valuable users that increase the activity in the app. More than what the target country is, it is essential to take into account what type of game or app is in question, and what kind of an advertisement will engage the users of the specific app.

For this question, the interviewees' point of views in their answers were quite different, but both had valuable and relevant insights to the question, and as a whole give a good description. The key to planning a good international user acquisition campaign is

thorough planning, understanding of the consumers, and working closely together with partners.

#### 4.3 The Advertising in User Acquisition

The topic of the next questions was advertising. The most commonly used and preferred advertisements were asked about, as well as the usage of video advertising.

Lehti responded that all types of advertisements work globally. The main types consist of video, static banners, GIF animated banners, and offer walls. An offer wall consists of an icon and a small description, and a link for a download. All of these types can be used in in-app advertising, or through other channels. Lehti would recommend the usage of all of these together.

Böhme stated that the majority of user acquisition marketing is conducted with in-app advertisements. The most frequently used type is the interstitial popup, appearing while the user is using another app. It is commonly a whole page that will give the user some insight and a description about an app.

From these answers, it is evident that a wide variety of advertising options are available in mobile game marketing. In-app advertising is the most commonly used, and a lot of advertisement types can be used even within those.

When asked about video advertising, Lehti stated that advertisement videos have become very popular recently, and they also work the most efficiently. Videos are also very valuable in in-app advertising, due to video impressions giving more money in return, compared to banners. A good advertisement video shows the game in action, and gets the viewer interested so that they desire to download and play it. In his opinion, the video



should also be quite short, and 15 seconds is enough, as it is short enough so that the viewer will not have time to lose interest.

According to Böhme, in Europe and USA, an in-app video advertisement with a promise for a reward works the most effectively. The player is offered in-game currency in exchange for watching a video for another app, and some additional in-game currency for downloading it. This method is effective in engaging the users and making them interested to download and play the game. For these videos, she stated that 30 seconds is a good duration. During these 30 seconds, the story and setting of the game, as well as the main aspect, gameplay, can be shown intriguingly.

It is evident that video advertising is very popular and preferred at the moment. The interviewees' opinions on the length of the videos varied, but both agreed on the contents of the video having gameplay being essential.

The interviewees were also asked about whether the art style of the game itself, or a different one would be effective, and if there is difference depending on regions. It was asserted by Lehti that the art style of the game is regularly used for the advertising of a mobile game, but he recommends that companies should definitely test out a completely different approach as well, naming mobile game Clash of Clans as one which once experimented with a completely different style in an advertisement, resulting in a high success. Böhme responded that the art style can depend on what sort of target group is desired to reach out to, but in general the creative style of the game is used, and the aspects that show the game best, so the right people are targeted.

Besides in-app advertising, other channels can also be used, and the interviewees were asked for their opinion on those as well.

Outside of in-app advertising, the most effective channel is Facebook, Lehti asserted. As compared to in-game advertising, where the player is most likely to be engaged in a game when the advertisement emerges, on Facebook the user is often idly browsing, and able to give a more positive, attentive reaction towards the advertisement. Facebook advertising is highly efficient, but takes a lot of work. A lot of game companies have a full team for Facebook marketing, if they are not using a bought media partner. Facebook is a strong channel in Europe and the USA, and Asia, excluding China.

Böhme also named Facebook as an important channel to consider. It is low-cost, and effective due to being able to target a specific user group. Placements within other games and cross-marketing channels are engaging and common channels for user acquisition advertisements as well.

Both interviewees answered this question with Facebook, which is regarded as an affordable and effective channel. Cross-marketing channels were also briefly mentioned; these channels are quite similar to in-app advertising in nature.

#### 4.4 The Challenges and Development of International User Acquisition

In the last stage of the interview, the interviewees were asked about the challenges, recent developments and current trends of international user acquisition. According to Lehti, the current biggest challenge in the market comes from the fact that the big brands have found mobile platforms. It is not easy for a small game publisher to compete for impressions with big global companies such as Coca-Cola, and the increase of prices adds to this challenge. One interesting, recent solution to this is audience targeting. Each iOS and Android device has its own personal code. With this data, different sorts of profiles can be created. For

example, if a user has downloaded three role-playing games, he is likely to download a fourth one from the same genre.

When asked about the challenges of international user acquisition, Böhme stated that international user acquisition can be challenging, as there is no guarantee in advance that the marketing campaign will work. It is essential to find the channel and partner that works the best, and to let the user acquisition partner take the time to test out the channels and the quality of the users. The biggest challenge is finding the right channels that bring the most valuable users, which can give the return to the company's investment.

When it comes to recent developments, user acquisition is always developing, stated Lehti, with new channels and new media constantly emerging, which can work for different clients. The developments in the past year have been slight, rather than major. The current trend is video advertising for its high value of engagement. The value and importance of re-engagement has also been noticed, and companies are taking more measures to get the LTV of a user to stay as long as possible.

## 5 SECONDARY DATA GATHERING AND ANALYSIS

After the interviews, the study was broadened by secondary research, to further research and clarify the insights given by the interviews. Secondary research was conducted by looking for information online. There have been multiple articles and statistics published concerning the mobile game market.

### 5.1 The current state of the global mobile game market

The interviews indicated that USA is a good target for successful user acquisition with its diverse audience and high population

combined with the readiness to monetize. However, the current situation is not completely optimistic and balanced. A research by Flurry, reported by Dan Pearson (2015) shows that the mobile gaming time is falling in the USA, despite Americans very actively using their mobile phones. There are said to be three factors that have caused this. The first one is the lack of new hit games this year. The same games have been topping the charts all year. The rising trend of game streaming has also affected this, as watching others play games through channels, such as twitch and YouTube, has become increasingly popular. The third factor is the lack of desire to grind through games, instead opting to buy their way to the top of the game. This decreases the time spent in the game, but rises the in-app purchases. (Pearson 2015.)

The current situation is good for monetization, but decreases the Lifetime Value. These results reveal that there are many opportunities for the types of games that don't require intense grinding in order for the player to progress.

The mobile game market in Asia is also seeing some changes, these being positive ones for the Western game developers. Superdata released a report (2015) on the Asian mobile game market, particularly aimed at Western publishers. The report named India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Hong Kong and Singapore as emerging and growing markets, with India growing fast and being a very potential target. The majority, 97 percent of players are said to be under the age of 45, making the younger population a good basis target segment to start from. Android is the dominating user interface in Asia, and it is estimated that the revenue in the emerging target countries is increasing by 2018, with the markets of China, South Korea, and Japan seeing little growth. (Superdata 2015)

The growing and developing markets could be accessible to break in to with a well-planned user acquisition strategy. However, it could also be a good strategy to wait and see how the market evolved, and what the dominating user profile will be.

## 5.2 Audience Targeting

The interview with Patrik Lehti gave insight about the big companies entering the mobile app industry. This is not the case only for non-gaming companies. This year, the major Japanese mobile game developer Konami, famous for several globally well-known game series such as Metal Gear Solid, Silent Hill, and Castlevania, announced their shift of focus to mobile gaming (Shimshock, 2015). Nintendo is also entering the mobile game market with their partnership with the company DeNa, with plans for free-to-play games (Brightman, 2015). While Konami is not as successful outside of Japan, Nintendo enjoys global success. Smaller game developers are not easily able to compete with companies like these, and will need to strategize accordingly to reach their target. Lehti named audience targeting as a development that is effective in acquiring the right users for a game. Takahashi reported (2015) that according to the data from Fiksu the CPI for the acquisition of mobile users rose in July, indicating that companies are ready to pay higher amounts to reach their audiences. While the CPLU, the cost to acquire loyal users went down by seven percent from June, it is still 51 percent higher than a year ago (. With the high pricing of today, it is essential to find the right audiences and partnerships without having to try out too many uncertain strategies, and audience targeting can certainly help with that.

The audience targeting system of Facebook was researched further, as both interviewees discussed it, and found it to be highly worthy of consideration. The system Facebook uses is called

Custom Audiences, which targets groups that have used the company's first-party data, such as their website or mobile app. These groups are worth targeting, as they have prior interaction with the company, and thus there is a higher chance to get them to re-engage, or engage in another product from the same company. The system also allows the choice of not targeting the consumers that are currently using the app. (Yu 2015)

Using the first-party data is not the only option. Facebook also has the Lookalike Audiences option, with which a new audience, similar to the Custom Audience, can be created and targeted. The company using the function can determine how similar they want the new audience to be. (Yu 2015)

The third option by Facebook is Campaign Targeting. Facebook uses third-party partner resources for this method. With this data, the target can be segmented according to several ways such as psychographic and demographic, but also more specific types like preferences in purchase categories and travel destinations. With these options the company can customize just the target they wish for. (Yu 2015)

Facebook also offers several bidding options for its services. Cost Per Click works the best when the aim is engagement. However, this method does not only include the click of a link, but also likes, enlarging photos, and any other clicks. Cost Per Impression has the company setting up a maximum bid for a thousand impressions, and it is recommended to set a higher rather than a lower bid in order to reach more people. (Loomer 2015)

It is highly likely that custom audience targeting will develop further and spread to be widely used by different channels and networks. In addition to helping to compete with bigger companies, audience targeting done precisely and meticulously

can increase the Return of Investment significantly, and also play a valuable part in the re-engagement of users.

### 5.3 Video Advertising in User Acquisition

Another very current aspect that was discussed in the interviews is the usage of advertisement videos. Vidyad and Ascend2 conducted a survey about video marketing, as reported by Jarboe (2015). In the past, video marketing was more commonly used for customer education, brand awareness, and online engagement, but today the effectiveness of video as a medium of increasing sales has been noticed (Jarboe 2015).

One of the things documented in the survey is the obstacles to the creation of successful video marketing. Placing in the top three reasons are lack of a proper strategy with 44 percent, inadequate budget with 41 percent, and the lack of compelling content with 40 percent. (Jarboe 2015). As video advertising in user acquisition is only recently discovered as an effective strategy, the companies may not have as many references and resources to help generating an efficient and suitable strategy, which can also cause the lack of compelling content. The same factor can cause difficulty planning a correct budget as well, but budgeting issues can also arise from the lack of a company's financial assets.

### *What are the most EFFECTIVE types of video content used?*

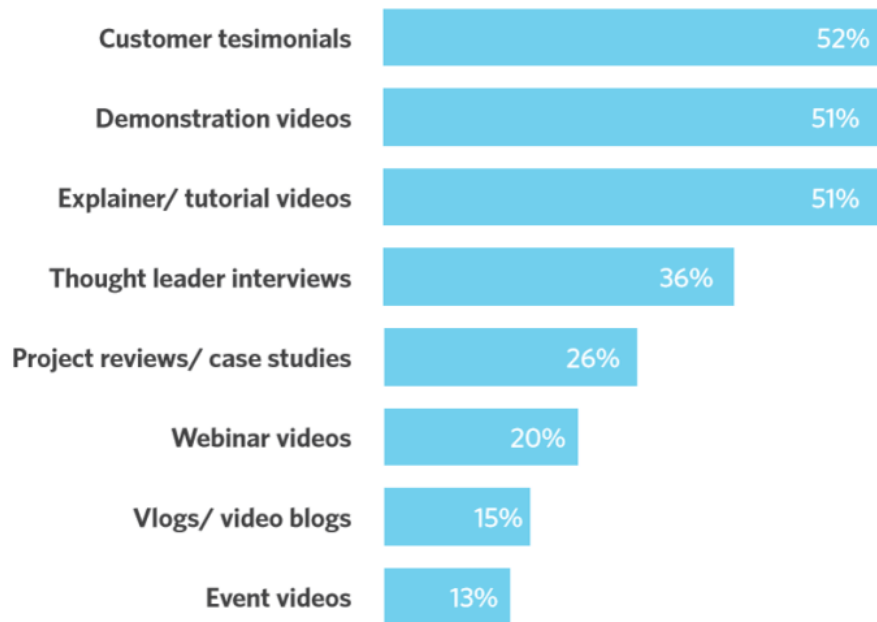


Figure 8. The most effective types of video content used (Jarboe 2015)

As presented in figure 8 (Jarboe 2015), there are certain types of content that are the most effective to have in a video. Potential users are shown to rely and trust in reviews by existing customers, as shown by customer testimonials placing first in the results with 52 percent. Meanwhile, project reviews and case are far behind with 26 percent, and from this it can be deduced that customers are more trusting of an outer party's unbiased view of the game, than the company's own introductions and reviews. Demonstration videos and tutorial videos are seen as essential, being second to testimonials by only one percent. Having actual gameplay footage was also seen as recommended content by the interviewees of the thesis study. This makes it evident that having gameplay in an advertisement video is an efficient way to get a viewer engaged.

The study also reported that for the most part the creation of the video content is at least partly outsourced, with 93% of companies using outside experts to aid in creating the best possible videos, 21% of these companies using outsourcing for all content creation



of the video (Jarboe 2015). This situation might change as video advertising develops and grows, and companies might decide to hire their own teams for video marketing. However, outsourcing has its advantages. With outsourcing, the game developer itself won't have to invest in the equipment and software for high-quality video material. Using another company can also save time from the game developer itself, and bring forth new creative perspectives (Jarboe 2015).

The information found from the study supports the views of the interviewees, and the observations strengthen the view that video advertising is a method to definitely consider, but also one that is still developing and growing, and as such needs to be planned carefully.

## 6 CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

### 6.1 Summary of Main Findings

From the interviews and the secondary data, an overview of the current situation of the field of international user acquisition, and recommended bases and ideas for planning and implementing strategies can be given. There are many aspects that are essential to take into account when planning and conducting user acquisition campaigns internationally. The study showed that while there can be notable differences in the gaming habits and preferences according to region, what really is important is to research and define the target market, and to plan a strategy for the said target. With the base of the campaign planned meticulously, it can be implemented to different regions with not much modifications. However, it is still essential to know the differences between regions, and the countries within these regions, in order to clarify which countries would make the best target for user acquisition of a specific game.

The USA and Europe are not notably different from each other in terms of user acquisition. While USA is a bigger market, and has a lot of opportunities to connect with user acquisition agencies and networks, Americans are regarded as similar to Europeans when it comes to their gaming habits. They could be described as casual gamers. Casual games are games that are simple to play and appeal to a wide audience, and do not need a lot of dedication or precise skills to play. This said, it would be efficient to be able to reach out to the casual gamers. In Europe, a good target to start from would be the big central European countries, United Kingdom, Germany, and France.

Compared to the USA and Europe, Asia is to be approached carefully, as their culture and preferences are vastly different. It is recommended for a game developer to find a native publisher, if they wish to break into the Asian mobile game market effectively. Even so, it is crucial to evaluate whether the game would raise the interest of the audience, and if a suitable target segment will be found. It is also recommended to consider the Asian countries outside the big three of China, Japan, and South Korea, as countries such as India and Indonesia are emerging as new markets.

When it comes to the user acquisition process itself, working closely together and in good co-operation with the user acquisition partner will give the most effective results. It takes time to learn the Lifetime Value and characteristics of the target audience, so the process should be proceeded with patiently. The client and user acquisition company need to establish a mutual understanding of the goals and objectives of the client and what exactly they want from the user acquisition process, but also the methods and possibilities the user acquisition partner can offer. Due to the rising costs of user acquisition, finding the right

solutions without having to test too many options is recommended.

Advertising is, for the most part, seen as global. Each type of advertisement works globally. In-app advertisements are the most used and the most effective. Interstitial popups are frequently used, but video advertising is the current preference. Video impressions give more money in return, making it a valuable method that should be taken into consideration. A video with gameplay material and a hands-on approach would be engaging. For especially Europe and USA, bribery of the player is a good strategy to consider. By offering in-game currency, the player can be motivated to look into a video, and possibly get interested in the game itself. The advertising should be planned so that the player of a certain type of game will get advertisements relevant to their interests. The type and style of the game should be evident in the advertising, so the targeted consumers will find it. However, risks and out-of-the-box ideas can also succeed and become viral, so it is suggested that a company tries a fresh and different approach as well if possible.

While in-app advertising is the most common channel of user acquisition marketing for mobile games, other channels can definitely be taken into consideration as well. In most parts of the world, Facebook can prove to be a good asset. Facebook's audience targeting system is effective for reaching out to the desired audience and large volumes of potential new users. However, when opting to use Facebook for user acquisition, it is recommended that the game developer has at least one full-time employee focusing on the Facebook marketing material.

The current state and developments of the field are also crucial to have knowledge of. Currently big, global companies have found the mobile platform, and user acquisition costs are on the rise.

The situation should be observed and the best solutions for the current situation looked into.

The results of the interviews and the study of secondary data revealed some very good insights from which to build the conclusion to the study. The planning stage of a user acquisition campaign is the most important one for the whole process. After deciding on the target country or region, a more specific target should be decided before moving on with the process. What is important is to make sure the campaign and materials are planned thoroughly and accordingly, and the target market decided specifically. The best way to reach the planned target market also need to be clarified. When all of these aspects have been handled well, the final building block to success is a successful co-operation with a user acquisition partner.

## 6.2 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Study

There were some limitations to the study, caused by the time constraints. The preferred plan would have included a deeper research of secondary data in addition to the primary data gathered from the interviews, but the tight schedule of the thesis process resulted in the focus of the qualitative data gathering, with only a few topics and themes supported by secondary research.

Another challenge proved to be finding willing interviewees. A total of nine professionals were reached out to via e-mail, two of which replied and agreed to an interview. Most of the others did not write back at all, while two replied back asking for more details, but have not replied back anymore at the time of the completion of the thesis. The interviewed professionals could not share company data, such as statistics, but that was to be expected, and the planned questions in the interview had already been designed to

not ask for specific data. The two interviews conducted were successful.

For a continuation of the study, it could be suggested that a higher number of professionals could be reached for more interviews and discussions. More interviews, in addition to giving more support to the prior interview data, and possibly new insights, could result in ideas for new themes and questions for further interviews as well. Europe as an audience is not widely researched, so the study could also be broadened by researching deeper into the region's mobile gaming habits and market. Secondary data could also be expanded on with more statistical information and reports regarding user acquisition.

### 6.3 Validity and Reliability of the Research

It is important to document the data and check the relevance and consistency with the theoretical framework to refine the validity and reliability of the study. In the case of a qualitative study, the reliability is focused on.

The validity of the interviews can be proven by comparing the interview data to prior research. The interviewees were professionals, working for user acquisition companies, and consistent in their answers, speaking with professional confidence, but with the possibility of personal opinions in their statements. The participants seemed open and happy to share the information, and the atmosphere of the interviews was trusting and relaxed. The theoretical framework supports the results and themes found in the interviews. However, due to the low number of the participants in the interviews, it is difficult to measure the validity by comparing the consistency of the interviews.

There are several aspects that support the reliability of the study. The interview questions were relevant to the study, and approved by the commissioner of the thesis. They were also documented clearly, and shared as text to the interviewees as well prior to the interviews. The interviews themselves were recorded with two different methods, and transcribed with writing, after which they were analyzed carefully with the intent of not losing or changing any of the gained data.

#### 6.4 Evaluation of Own Process

I wanted to find a Thesis topic that would support my interests and future ambitions, and I feel that I have succeeded in that regard. The process of the thesis has made me feel even more deeply interested in the field of user acquisition, and I have gained a lot of valuable knowledge regarding mobile game marketing.

The deadlines for the thesis were tough, but I succeeded in continuously following my personal timetable, and submitting each part of the thesis before the set deadlines. Beforehand, the biggest concern for me was for my ability to work independently and with confidence in my progress and ability. While at times I was unsure if I had understood all the instructions correctly, and had some worries about meeting the deadlines and the expectations of quality, these doubts did not become an obstacle, and in the end there was no difficulty with independent work.

The thesis process has strengthened my skills in information searching, researching, and sending business emails. The interview processes were also interesting, and the methods learned in methods classes are likely to be valuable in the future as well. My vocabulary and writing skills have improved as well, and I feel like it did not take a lot of time and writing progress until I found my own voice and style. There were a lot of things I still

wanted to research, learn, and clarify in my thesis, but overall it has met my objectives and expectations, and I can say I am proud of how far I have come.

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## QUESTIONS ASKED IN THE INTERVIEWS

In general, what would you say are the major regional differences in user acquisition?

What are the most important aspects to take into consideration when planning international user acquisition campaigns?

Are there any most common user profiles for potential players in Asia?

USA?

Europe?

Are there notable differences within the countries in these regions?

What type of advertisement works the most successfully for Asia?

USA?

Europe?

Are there notable differences within the countries in these regions?

Are video advertisements common in every region, or do some favor it more than others?

Are there major differences in video advertising, such as the duration of the video?

Is CPI advertising a commonly preferred method?

What is a good in-app advertisement like? Are there differences in which kind of in-app advertising works most efficiently in different regions?

What are the most common channels of user acquisition  
advertising for  
USA?  
Europe?  
Asia?

Are the advertisements commonly done in the style of the game, or  
is a different art style used?

What are the biggest challenges in international user acquisition?

How has international user acquisition evolved over the past year?

What are the current trends, and do these trends differ depending  
on the region?