



Video Game Development Processes that Generate Engagement in the Players: A Case Study of Don't Starve

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Abstract. The digital distribution of video games presents more options than ever, where multiplatform accessibility means a change in philosophy. The aim of this article is to analyse the strategies that allow games to stand out in the market through different aesthetics, the appearance of new characters in a periodic way or the synergy of social media. We have analysed the case of the independent video game series Don't Starve, developed by Klei Entertainment and available on Steam. In this context, reporting mechanisms allow us to extract information on the impact of the video game from the launch and during the use of the product. As a result, through the analysis of data from the Steam digital distribution platform, we have extracted quantitative information about players and gaming sessions, establishing correlations with other games and behaviours linked to the player experience. This has been combined with a qualitative study of the media synergy they have implemented to generate audience participation through their characters and multiplayer mode, narrative and aesthetics, resulting in players identifying with the content and taking an active role as producers and consumers.

Keywords: Indie games · Development · Engagement · Audience · Aesthetic

1 Introduction

According to data from the White Paper of the Spanish Video Game Development 2018, the video game is the main engine of global entertainment and represents an industry that has been able to generate 134.9 billion dollars in 2018, growing by 10.9%, according to company data Newzoo (DEV 2018). The computer market has also grown more than expected, thanks to the explosion of the Battle Royale genre games led by the *Fortnite*, title of Epic Games. In relation to computer games, Steam, the digital video game distributor of the developer Valve, had a relatively monopoly without opposition, since 2003 he practices this business model successfully.

The launch at the end of 2018 of the online store of Epic Games, the developer and editor of *Fortnite*, has generated a more competitive environment in digital distribution, resulting in a decentralization of the market. Epic Games has taken advantage of the

Fortnite audience to attract consumers to the new Epic Games store, while also offering exclusive games and a better revenue division for developers (Gómez 2018). Another of the key strategies is to offer a new free computer game every two weeks, especially indie games.

In a market dominated by large producers, the rise of independent companies is notable, achieving recognition by considering Indie games (Lisanne and James 2011) as its own category in multiple distribution media. Indie video games are characterized by being designed and developed by small teams without financial help. Having a limited budget, these games cannot compete with large productions that invest in special effects or motion capture. For this reason, they have to gain the support and dissemination of the public by making more original and creative bets (Pratten 2015) and involve them in the development of the games through early access.

We will go deeper into the challenges and opportunities that arise from the digital distribution of independent videogames, from the social practices organized around the *Don't Starve Together* game, from Klei Entertainment.

We will start from this indie game to analyze how iterative development methodologies, indie aesthetic proposals, game modes and network distribution influence the consolidation of a community around it, comparing with other indie games and AAA games.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Frameworks Theories for the Development of Video Games

In 2004, at the conference of Video Game Developers in San José, Robin Hunicke, Marc LeBlanc and Robert Zubek, presented a new conception of taxonomy related to videogames that includes a formal approach, trying to bring design and development closer: “What makes a game fun? How do we know a specific type of fun when we see it? Talking about games and play is hard because the vocabulary we use is relatively limited. In describing the aesthetics of a game, we want to move away from words like fun and gameplay towards a more directed vocabulary” (Hunicke et al. 2004). Starting from the idea of specifying the factors that make a video game fun, they develop a framework through the acronym MDA that encompasses Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics, proposing a methodology that strengthens the iterative processes of developers, academics and researchers. They suggest that while designers build the game from mechanics to aesthetics, the player experiences it from the end of aesthetics to mechanics, understanding aesthetics as the sensory experience that emerges from the video game. The classification by aesthetics establishes an approach to the experience and emotions of the player. The authors of the MDA explain that any design change that alters the rules and mechanics affects the game decisively, since they expose that video games generate behavior and are not mere audiovisual media: “*Fundamental to this framework is the idea that games are more like artifacts than media. By this we mean that the content of a game is its behavior - not the media that streams out of it towards the player*” (Hunicke et al. 2004).

Johan Huizinga, Dutch philosopher and historian recognized for his studies and publications in relation to the game and its social and cultural factor, such as the book *Homo*

Ludens, was the first to introduce one of the key concepts of video game development, the circle magical, that is, the virtual world built by the video game and its limits, different from those outlined by the real world (Huizinga 1938). Eric Zimmerman and Katie Salen adopted the term and made reference in their book *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*, explaining that it is necessary to differentiate between the virtual and the real world since, when players voluntarily accept the rules of a game, there are certain actions that we do not consider adequate in the real world, such as killing, but are essential for the gameplay (Salen and Zimmerman 2003). Another fundamental proposal was put forward by Roger Caillois in his *Game Theory*, in which he considers the game as a voluntary activity, uncertain, unproductive and capable of creating fictions. Caillois also orders the games based on two antagonistic poles, *paidia* and *ludus*. While the first is defined by fun, unbridled and uncontrolled imagination, in the second the exuberance of the game is channeled through rules and conventions that establish a series of objectives to reach the goal (Caillois 1958). In this way the dichotomy between whether video games should be considered from ludology or narratology is established. Since the beginning, video games have served as a means to tell stories, although not always explicitly. We consider relevant the creative processes that both users and developers establish, redefining discourses and participation (Cortés et al. 2016). The proposal of Navarrete et al. (2014a, b) in relation to the abductive thinking generated by the player during a game, exposes the differences between videogames as a narrative medium and the narratives of other audiovisual media such as cinema, beyond formal construction (Navarrete et al. 2014a, b).

2.2 Aesthetics and Graphic of Video Games

Video games represent an emerging mode of animated art, adaptable to the digital resources of the 21st century, new aesthetic experiments, which transform the screens into a medium for very accessible innovation, which offers emotional experiences to the player. As Henry Jenkins puts it: “The category of aesthetics has considerable power in our culture, helping to define not only cultural hierarchies but also social, economic, and political ones as well.” (Jenkins 2005). Gilbert Seldes explained the arts and aesthetics through his ability and immediate affective power (Seldes 2003).

Often, there is a tendency in the video game industry to consider graphics and aesthetics the same. There is a dichotomy that becomes evident when we compare an AAA game to an indie game. The graphics that the first one can offer, whose general tendency is realism with the latest movement recognition technologies, cannot be matched by an indie title, whose financing is very limited and are small development teams. However, the aesthetics of indie games, even with the limitations, are more likely to last over time by making more intimate, creative and evocative proposals. The graphic power allows an infinite number of details, but it must be taken into account that the graphic quality alone does not build a good video game. The aesthetic includes the interaction between different aspects such as style, soundtrack, movement architecture, characters, environments and artistic techniques, being as a whole. Gordon Calleja analyzes and exposes the concept of immersion by proposing a more concrete player participation model that reflects the relationship and commitment that exists between the gamer and the game, consisting of two phases. The first, the involvement of the player in the same moment of

interaction during the gameplay, and the second, the player's participation in spaces and times outside the direct relationship with the game, its long-term involvement, through other platforms (Calleja 2011). Eriz Zimmerman, game designer and co-founder and CEO of the independent game development studio Gamelab, argued in 2002 that video games should return to aesthetics in essence and remove the cinematic effects, which subtracted gameplay. He exposed that independent video games they would really work when network distribution was a reality (Zimmerman 2002). Even large companies, seeing that the audience demanded more creative and evocative proposals, and criticized the commercial trend, although it stood out for implementing the best graphics and technological options, began to make more intimate proposals taking as reference the indie experimentation, such as the company French Ubisoft, developer and distributor, with titles such as *Child of light* (Ubisoft 2014) and *Valiant Hearts: The Great War™ / Soldats Inconnus: Mémoires de la Grande Guerre™* (Ubisoft 2014), which stand out for their aesthetics, with graphics simulating illustration, watercolor and comic techniques, unlike the titles they usually make of realistic 3D graphics.

The art of video games can't be a mere reproduction, since it is a medium rich in resources to surprise and innovate, especially in the indie games sector, as Steve Pool explains: "*Whereas film - at least naturalistic, 'live-action' film - is tied down to real spaces, the special virtue of videogames is precisely their limitless plasticity. And only when that virtue is exploited more fully will video games become a truly unprecedented art - when their level of world-building competence is matched with a comparable level of pure invention. We want to be shocked by novelty. We want to lose ourselves in a space that is utterly different. We want environments that have never been seen, never been imagined before*" (Poole 2000).

2.3 Characteristics of Digital Video Games that Involve the Public

In this section we will analyze some aspects that make it possible for a videogame to generate engagement in the audience:

Early Access Games: It is a way to develop videogames with the participation of the audience. It facilitates the consolidation of a community. It is an iterative process that allows developers to get quick feedback from the direct audience of the game. The audience takes an active role, ceasing to be passive consumers and being prosumers of their own experience (Olin-Scheller and Wikström 2010), emphasizing literacy (Zagalo 2010). In this way, games in development grow and evolve in parallel to the community. That the video game is available in the initial stages of development implies involving users and building engagement towards developers and their products.

Crafting Games: This game mode is within the action and survival games, but not to be confused with the current Battle Royale phenomenon, which is characterized by very fast and short games in which you have to find weapons and eliminate the opponent. Crafting games stand out for extending to infinity, gradually increasing the difficulty of survival. One of the main handicaps of indie games is the short duration, so this game mode, in which the gameplay extends a lot in time because each game is different, is an interesting factor for indie developers. They are active video games, if you don't act and

look for a strategy, you die. The environments are wide and provided with useful items for survival: Map, clock, tools for cutting, building or cooking, etc. Another feature is that by combining resources, the player can create a new element, useful for more productions. It is common that developers do not explicitly give the player how to achieve these elaborations, since the idea is that it be learned through experimentation, which generates player forums and values the community. Salen and Zimmerman analyze the emerging narrative as the narrative that emerges from the interaction, being characteristic of this modality. The narrative experience changes from one player to another and each game is different. The term “*emerging*” has given rise to many debates. Jesper Juul, at the Computer Games and Digital Cultures Conference Proceedings conference in 2002, explained that there are two basic structures of game modes, emersion and progression. In his opinion, improvisation and the variety of opportunity that facilitates emersion, which is not predesigned, and the infinite combinations of play are preferable (Juul 2002). According to Henry Jenkins, the emerging narrative encompasses implicit environmental elements, such as items, characters or soundtrack that generate a narrative when the player interacts with the video game: “*Wright has created a world ripe with narrative possibilities, where each design decision has been made with an eye towards increasing the prospects of interpersonal romance or conflict*” (Jenkins 2004a, b).

Multiplayer: This mode stands out for allowing a large number of users to play in the same virtual world. They are characterized by having a cooperation theme, being able to establish alliances. They stand out for being real players whose performance is not marked by a narrative, which determines that each game is different. It encourages sharing experiences as environments in which strategy and action predominate. It is a success factor because it helps the public to try and share it. It allows greater dissemination by users on streaming platforms and social networks, which increases the number of players. It is also a resource to compensate the level of frustration when losing a game, since competitiveness facilitates the recovery of the level of flow of the game, as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi explained that success is in maintaining a balance between boredom for ease and the frustration for the difficulty (Csikszentmihalyi 1990).

Based on these areas we can conclude that they provide a gateway to the world of video games that expands their access possibilities, the versatility of their game modes with other players and cooperation. These factors guarantee the success in the market that is reflected in the distribution platforms.

3 Research Methodology and Objectives

As we have indicated at the beginning of this work, the main objective is to analyze from different perspectives the social phenomenon of Don't Starve Together, the independent game available on the Steam platform, and the factors that have favored audience participation before a market full of titles that offer similar content. This objective is complemented by the following specific objectives:

- Analyze how horror survival aesthetics and character design with narratives generate audience engagement through media synergy.

- Analyze and compare some of the main competitions and establish what preferences the public has when the games are in equal accessibility (free weekend).
- Study the role of users as active players and critics of video games, trying to discover how they continue and participate in the development of the game.

Taking as a starting point specific situations to explore how indie games can be significant, we focus on the Steam digital distribution platform of the developer Valve, since although decentralization has begun with the appearance of other distribution companies, so far it is the most complete platform in the industry. On the one hand we adopt a point of quantitative and qualitative investigation (Sampieri 2018; Denzin and Lincoln 2012) which we understand as a situated activity that places the observer in the world and immersed in meaning construction processes, on the other hand, we use a virtual ethnographic research (Boellstorff et al. 2012) method to conduct ethnographic studies of communities and cultures created through social interaction in digital ecosystems.

Digital distribution platforms such as Steam allow you to monitor player audience data through Big Data (Kitchin 2014), which becomes a fundamental analysis tool. Statistics can be generated that measure how often a title is played and compared to others, what times of day are most popular demographically, and the impact of complementary actions such as additional discounts, the launch of new DLCs or the inclusion of new characters or elements in the game.

We will analyze the data of a monitoring generated by a selection of indie games on the SteamDB platform, obtaining data since the moment they were published. The chosen video games have leaked from the platform's "Indie" tag. There has been an increase of 9163 titles in one year (36490 registered on July 30, 2019 compared to 45653 on July 24, 2020). In this sense, it highlights the need for this type of monitoring from the launch of a video game and over time, as it allows to understand patterns of behavior of players and how they react to changes and as reflected in the scope of the video game. It has also been filtered by average user score, number of players online at the time of analysis and the highest peak of registered players. This analysis can provide information to the developers of the selected video games, address their content from the platform and implement new strategies to capture the attention of the public. SteamDB provides markers in relation to changes in the number of users, which allows to locate the impact of the strategies carried out. After identifying behavioral patterns in the global top charts of the most demanded indie games to date, we have deepened in the process of creative development and the strategy to generate engagement in the audience, of the game *Don't Starve Together*, since it experienced an increase 461% of online players, going from 12182 to 68418 in four days in the month of May 2019, being very remarkable figures in the indie game sector.



4 Analysis of Research Results

4.1 Steam Global Top Charts

The idea of approaching the game from various platforms and the multiplayer possibility that allows you to connect with friends and family, remains a key value for the players. Within SteamDB, which allows you to order under the label "*Indie*" the titles in relation

to the number of players online at the moment and the highest peaks of players online since its launch, *Stardew Valley* and *Don't Starve Together* have similar figures in these aspects and also in relation to the average user rating, as shown in Table 1, and both independent titles being among the top 10 in the ranking of the highest peak parameter of online players on the Steam platform.

Table 1. SteamDB platform data on Steam users. Last update of the registration data on July 29, 2019, own source.

Game	Rating	Player count right now	Player count all time
 Stardew Valle	95.98%	10.559	64.427
 Donit Starve To-	94.96%	10,180	68.418

Stardew Valley is a rural role-playing game (RPG) that stands out for its 8-bit and 16-bit style aesthetics. As recorded by the SteamDB platform, the average total game time is 53.7 h. Following the start icon of “Developed by ConcernerApe” is Eric Banore, who has written the story, designed art and sound and programmed the entire video game, in a four-year process, and launched on the market on February 26, 2016. Tom Coxon collaborated with the multiplayer version that is available since 2018 for PC and Nintendo Switch. As the creator explains, he had as main reference a video game that marked his childhood, *Harvest Moon*, from Nintendo launched in 1996 (Grathwohl and Lachausse 2016). When starting we will be in an attractive place in the middle of nature, without the burden of the city. We will hardly see people at the beginning, in fact the stores restrict their activity to business hours. You have some tools that serve to break stones, cut down or remove grass. It is also a crafty title with *Don't Starve Together*. Eric Barone refused to use Steam’s Early Access program to be available in beta, and only released the game when it was complete. After that, he continues to work on the game, enriching it with more content, such as the multiplayer option, and correcting technical failures.

As shown in Fig. 1, the results of the market launch and diffusion strategies of both *Stardew Valley* and *Don't Starve* are reflected in the number of players since the games were launched. In comparison to the high public expectation for the *Stardew Valley* launch, *Don't Starve* gets the player peaks not at the beginning but years later.

Under a very careful Pixel Art aesthetic and thanks to having shared the entire development process in his blog, he has stood out since its launch. In a month at Steam he had accumulated a total of 1,246,837 in the player counter, with a peak of 64,427 on March 7, 2016. It is also worth noting, alliances with Humble Bundle, charity games packages frequently developed by independent studies, which resulted in an

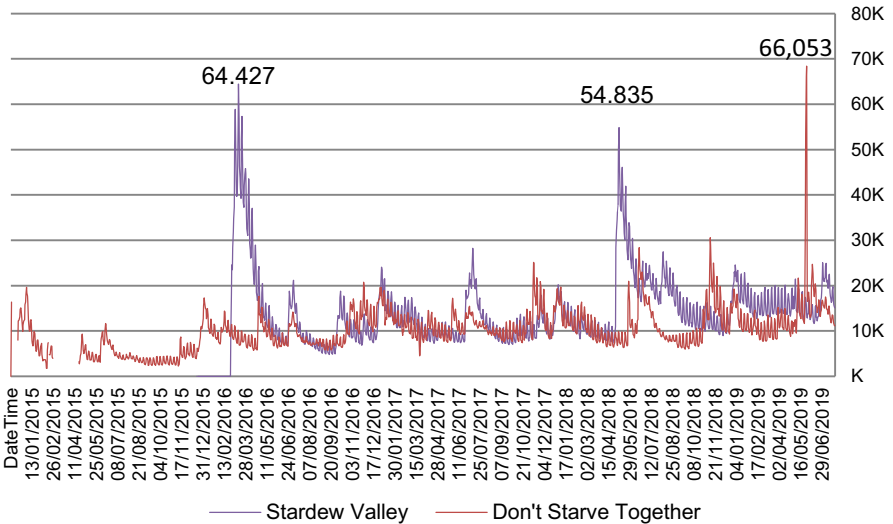


Fig. 1. Graph of comparative data of the SteamDB platform of Stardew Valley and *Don't Starve Together* users on Steam, own source.

increase in players, as reflected in graph 1 in the marking. But the biggest increase experienced on the Steam platform by the game, since its launch, was on April 30, 2018, when the publication of the multiplayer beta phase was announced in the game blob and social networks, reaching a peak of 54,835 in a single day (ConcernedApe 2018). In comparison, *Don't Starve Together* did not generate great expectation in the player community as it was a game in development, and progress was gradual as they had an iterative methodology. When analyzing its figures, it oscillated with a trend of between 5,000 and 20,000 registered players on Steam presenting peaks of periodic increases of around 10,000 players during that time.

However, the most representative for the statistics of *Don't Starve Together* happened in the month of May 2019 when it has experienced an increase 461% of online players, going from 12182 to 68418 in four days, accumulating a total of 308,005 in nine days, following the Free Weekend - May 2019 by Steam, which made available to users 7 free games from May 24 to 28. *Don't Starve Together* excelled the second after *Dead by Daylight* as shown in Fig. 2. It is not the first game to experience a tremendous increase in the participation of major players PC when its price is reduced. Epic Games Store, is key to attracting new PC strategy gamers, offering a free game every fortnight. The first game was *Subnautica*, an indie game developed by the Unknown Worlds Entertainment company. According to Newzoo data, after two free weeks in Epic Games Store, it increased its numbers of PC players worldwide from 0.4% to 2.9%, “obtaining a monthly growth of + 625%” (Weustink 2019). However, the relevance of the exponential increase that *Don't Starve Together* experienced during the Free-weekend-May 2019, lies in the opponents of that weekend. It was under the same conditions with 6 most popular multiplayer games of the moment, three of them indie game too (Table 2).

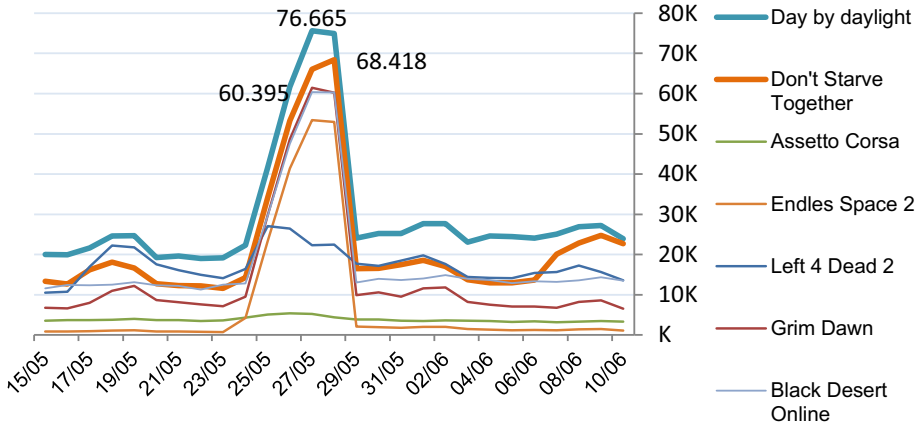


Fig. 2. Graph of comparative data of the SteamDB platform of users on Steam during Free Weekend - May 2019, own source.

Table 2. SteamDB platform data on Steam users. Last update of the registration data on July 28, 2019, own source.

	Game	Rating	Player count register 28/07/19	Player count all time
	Dead by daylight	76,90%	18.290	76.655 (Free-Weekend)
	Left 4 Dead 2	95,77%	14.869	162.399 (23/12/2003)
	Black Desert online	65,65%	10.810	60.395
# Indie	<i>Don't Starve Together</i>	94,96%	15.337	68.418 (Free-Weekend)
	Assetto Corsa	85,02%	3.158	7.067
	Grimm Dawn	89,58%	6.981	61.435
	Endless Space 2	79,13%	1.377	53.435

Left 4 dead 2 of the company Valve, whose highest peak was in 2013, is the only AAA video game that achieves better user ratings than *Don't Starve Together*. In relation to the number of online players, Dead by Daylight developed by Behavior Interactive, has similar values to *Don't Starve Together* during the Free Weekend of May 2019. It should be noted that the indie games on this list were developed in access anticipated, being *Don't Starve Together* again the one with the best rating and the most played online.

In order to analyze the impact, it had on the game rankings, we have analyzed the average number of players before and after the free weekend. During the previous three months, the average was 13457 online players. After the peak of 68,418 players, the

next three months reflected an increase of 17.52%, 15815 gamers. We have continued to monitor throughout 2020 until it was higher again on free weekend, in order to see if there were any more player fruictions. The average increased by 33% over the previous year, with 15815 players on average.

4.2 Don't Starve: Single and Multiplayer Modes

Since 2012, Klei Entertainment has used Early Access as a tool to gather feedback and build our games in collaboration with their community, producing games like *Don't Starve* and the spin-off *Don't Starve Together*. Jamie Cheng and Jeffrey Agala, the founders of Klei Entertainment, set out as an experiment to do something really economical, in short time, and that could be self-published. They took as a methodology the cyclic iterative design of the game. In the development of independent video games, the processes tend to change very frequently, so this methodology allows them to have some flexibility under a low risk. In the case of Klei Entertainment, they took as a starting point a concept of a survival game that emerged in a Game Jam that they had done as experimentation. A production timeline of 2012 was established in which they would carry out the prototype during spring, stealth launch in Chrome Store in summer for free, in autumn commercial launch in Chrome Store doing a two for one, in winter the pre-launch to Steam also two for one and in the spring of 2013 the complete one. They established some pillars of the game to specify the style on which to develop the video game. They were interested in dark humor and took LucasArt video games as a reference source. They were not interested in the heroic of “*the more you have the better*” and leave becoming more powerful. They were captivated by the idea of how a character with a strange personality would interact through the stories of his past. Similarly, they decided that the game structures in which the player must explore, worked very well, such as the Roguelike games, which they used to play. Finally, the last factor would be the mystery, since it is the best way to create expectation, and people comment on the lore and spread the video game better. Also, they started from the theory that the early access could improve QOL (Quality of life): if you can change the game every two weeks and include updates, and adapt it to events, you expand the narrative and the gameplay. During the experimentation phase of the prototype production, they followed a video game aesthetic that condensed the general tastes of a casual audience, with warm and friendly colors. However, for the type of levels and category of game they had in mind, it did not follow the same aesthetic. After the experience of production in their previous games, as Kevin Forbes indicated in the Game Developers Conference® (GDC) of 2016, they aimed to make a style less polished, faster and more efficient. In this way, it evolved from a friendly and colorful concept to a raw graphics of dark and mysterious sketch, reminiscent of the style of Tim Burton, the Quay brothers or the *steampunk* style (Fig. 3).

They started with C++ code that they already had from their previous games, Shank (2010) and Sugar Rush (unreleased). They were also clear that they didn't want a Head-Up Display (HUD) loaded with items that could generate software error or bugs. They decided that the funniest story would be to not starve and survive, so they chose the crafting mode in the survival category. Don't starve consists of many items in the same environment, very easy to understand and implement. The loops always occur, being



Fig. 3. On the left, the first concept of *Don't Starve*, on the right, the final aesthetic of the video game (Agala 2012).

interesting as the player establishes the sequential of the items that are found, and the combinations and new resources that are obtained.

4.3 Engagement Custom Audience

The evolution that has experienced since 2013 with the expansions has been decisive thanks to listening to the demand of the public and making an iterative title. The most significant was *Don't Starve Together*, the multiplayer game that allows players to socialize, build, and strategize throughout the gameplay, maintaining the aesthetic and genre of the game. The cooperative multiplayer opportunity provides the option to enjoy an estimated total of 26.1 h of playability according to Steam DB. It is presented as a multiplayer strategy crafting game where every action player makes can affect the player's future. The player enters a strange and unexplored world full of strange creatures, dangers and surprises, with a style art unique from other games. The player must gather resources to make objects and structures that adapt to his survival style. Dying implies losing everything obtained and having to start over, with the only background of our experience. Although a priori it was a great defect to start from scratch without save points, it is presented as an incentive in multiplayer mode. It has three game modes: The first, survival. It is intended to be the most difficult in cooperative mode and is the default mode. It is designed for dead characters to become ghosts that persecute the live players. Each death will have an impact on health, unless an amulet is used, which brings life back. When all players have died, a two-minute countdown starts and if no player is revived, the game is restarted. The second mode is Desert, in which random players are generated throughout the map. When the character dies, it reappears in a random section like another character, characteristic only in this mode. There are no resurrection items and the world is not restored as in survival mode. Finally, the endless mode, proposes a more relaxed gameplay that does not require cooperation, the world will never restart

and revive as many times as they want. However, if the mechanics of death and revival are used repeatedly, it will affect the maximum health, as was the case in survival. No one map is alike, thus making players explore until they can no longer go anywhere further. The story is meticulously hidden so that the player becomes more immersed in the action of the game itself. Progressing through the game to piece together the story, makes *Don't Starve Together* interesting and rewarding to play.

It should be noted that the game has evolved from its beginnings to its multiplayer expansion. There was in the first version a boss who appeared in the winter season of the game, and with two attacks you beat him. Subsequently, more bosses were added but with similar mechanics. In the cooperative version, there are seven new rare bosses with high health performance and more ability to harm and a great aura of madness. They are the biggest threats to players in the virtual world *Don't Starve Together* (Fig. 4).

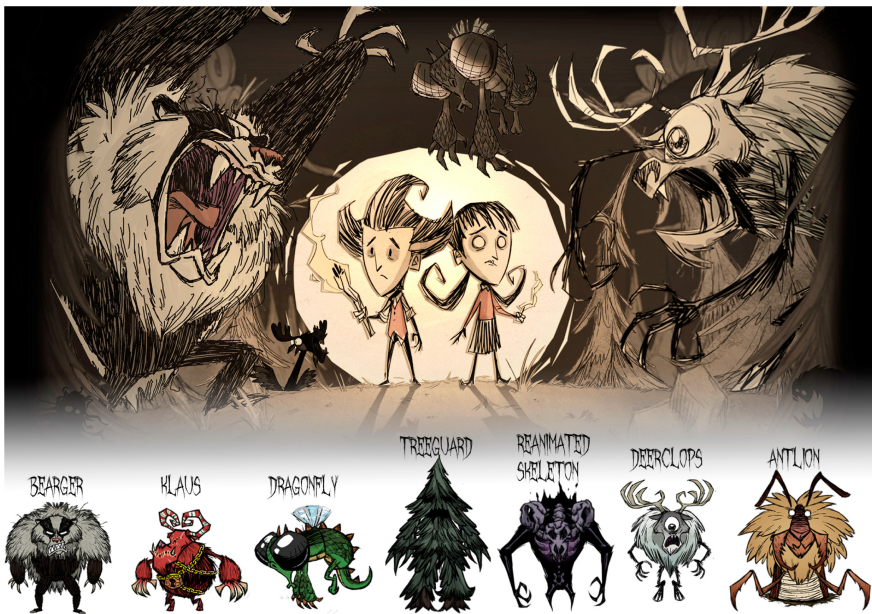


Fig. 4. Own composition of the seven rare bosses of *Don't Starve Together*.

Developers and the community of players explore and build the tradition of the game. The support of mod is also very important for Klei Entertainment, so they made available to the players the Steam workshop option, so that they continue creating once the early access has finished (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. On the left, a played mod of Shaggy Rogers from Scooby-Doo for Don't Starve Together made by a gamer, on the right, video game and movie characters with Don't Starve Together style by the artist Jeff Agala (Agala 2012).

One of the strengths of Klei Entertainment's video games is media synergy. The story of Don't Starve Together characters is shown by animation shorts clips in Klei Entertainment's YouTube channel and Steam's profile. The first cinematic they used to introduce the video game was presenting the main character, Wilson, in 2013. From then on, they made more movies but using gameplays and captures from the video game itself. However, since March 7, 2019, they have made a total of 10 cinematics with new characters that have been introduced in the game modes (Fig. 6).

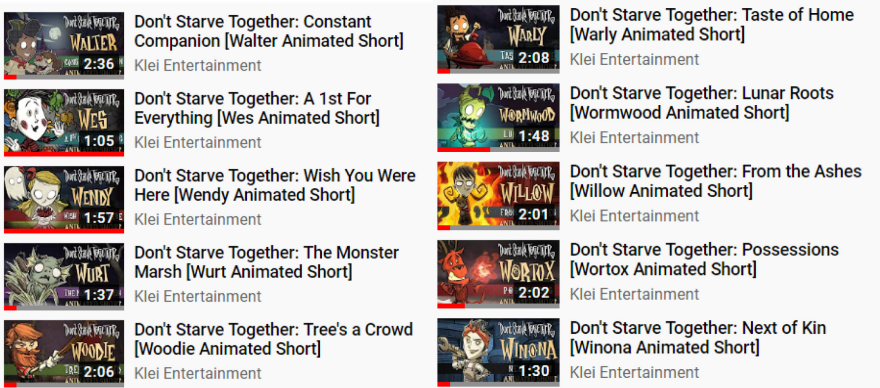


Fig. 6. Character cinematics of Don't Starve Together

In this way, it not only generates extra content that makes it easier to reach new players in other ways, but also makes the characters known beyond the game's skills

and mechanics: they acquire entities such as characters with history and past, and justify how they appear in the game environment.

5 Conclusions

The decentralization of network distribution is breaking the uniqueness of PC games when only Steam existed. The future of videogame distribution presents more options than ever, where cross-platform accessibility means a change of philosophy with respect to current game modes. With the definitive implementation of the Internet for general use, digital purchases became popular, and in this way the concept of independent video games was consolidated. They were not designed to market millions of physical copies, but to enter many computers through digital stores. It reflects the reality of an increasingly less traditional digital ecosystem. The personality, the aesthetic indie, and the innovation of the lore, have been shown to be differentiating and successful factors that facilitate highlighting in a sector collapsed by titles.

Early access is an increasingly used strategy in the indie gaming sector. Indie developers who have limited budgets, can't always afford the method of AAA developers to invest in large specialized teams to test the video game before its launch. Titles recognized as Minecraft or PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds were consolidated as social phenomena thanks to early access, both with full version today.

Together with social networks, videogames and the Internet facilitate the creation of social groups that become communities, that is, spaces of affinity where to interact and share with other players the concerns, experiences and curiosities about the game (Gee 2004; Jenkins 2005; Knobel and Lankshear 2010). The active role of the audience in the development of the industry, especially the indie, and the feeling of community, is key to the evolution of the sector.

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Steam, although with more competitors than ever, has consolidated resources that favor public participation. Labels, comments from players on the platform, workshop modes and early access are some of the keys offered to the player community and independent developers. In the case of *Don't Starve Together*, those resources implemented from the beginning, have facilitated that years after its launch, they continue to stand out against other titles. Klei Entertainment is one of the many studios that started on Steam and is now beginning to diversify, having put the option of early access to Oxygen Not Included, in the Epic Games Store. The full title has been published recently, on 30th July of 2019, after being in development since 2017. The player reviews section is very important in Steam at the moment of launch, since during two years the users of early access have seen its evolution and once it has been launched, they make very exhaustive and positive reviews, which facilitates that new players trust and pay for the game, unlike the Epic games Store, which has not developed the ability to make reviews so far.

A convergence between effective modes of development and engagement of the audience that goes beyond the multiplatform, gives rise to a new meaning of the indie games that are distributed digitally.

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