Assessing Customer Satisfaction at Electronic Arts: Challenges and Opportunities

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What is the problem?

Electronic Arts is one of the largest companies in the industry. However, even with this statistic, they also rank as one of the lowest companies in terms of customer satisfaction. How can one of the most grossing companies in the industry also be one of the worst-rated? It all lies in their efforts to please their customers. This is not to say that Electronic Arts fails at delivering quality games that look great. The issue with this company is that even with the game looking great upfront if you glance a little deeper you can begin to understand some of the issues that we will discuss. Problems such as server issues, similar successors, and rare feature updates are just a few to name.

An example that we can take a quick look at is their sports franchise. Video games such as Madden and Fifa have a cult following that will buy the video game no matter what. Even if there is little to no change in the gameplay besides a roster update. While this does help the company gain profit, it does not help keep players interested in the game throughout the game's cycle.

The main problem is that the customer's needs are not met the majority of the time. For instance, players have been begging for a game engine overhaul for both Madden and Battlefield. Battlefield 2042 was the latest edition in the franchise and has already been shunned by all. As described by IGN (2021), "Currently ranked as the ninth worst-reviewed game of all time on the platform (Steam), Battlefield 2042 has seen over 30,000 of its 42,000 reviews on the platform come back negative."

Madden has also been a topic widely discussed by the video game industry calling Electronic Arts "Lazy" because each addition is a rehash of the last. Kotaku, a video game blog states the following about the newest addition Madden 23 (2022), "Another year, another

Madden. This time around, however, EA devs promised the "most polished version" in years. The reality appears to be much different as negative reviews pour in on Steam and Metacritic. In fact, even some NFL pros featured in the game are trashing it."

Research Purpose

Electronic Arts have developed and established its reputation among many around the world globally. However, the company may be missing certain factors that could be changed to increase their consumer's willingness to keep purchasing Electronic Arts products from year to year.

The objective of this research being conducted is to find out and narrow down what are the most influential factors to current and new consumers for buying Electronic Arts products. We want to dig into what consumers have experienced back then and what they have experienced within Electronic Arts now to get a better understanding of what could be changed to entice the customers.

For a company that boasts about its six-key values, Creativity, Determination, Learning, Passion, Pioneering, and Teamwork, it is quite simple to understand that something is not right, which is why we wanted to conduct this study. Pushing our study forward will help us get a better look at some specific problems and from there, we can conduct and develop a marketing strategy that will benefit Electronic Arts. We want to restore the Electronic Arts brand to what it was before. A booming and innovative company that takes pride in creating worlds and experiences that players truly enjoy.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

Ho: Highly satisfied customers' recommendations do not differ from low-satisfied customers

H1: Highly satisfied customers' recommendations differ from low-satisfied customers

Hypothesis 2:

Ho: Frequent gamer's satisfaction does not differ from non-frequent gamers satisfaction

H1: Frequent gamer's satisfaction differs from non-frequent gamers satisfaction

Hypothesis 3:

Ho: There is no association between brand loyalty and favorite Electronic Arts franchise gaming company

H1: There is an association between brand loyalty and favorite Electronic Arts franchise gaming company

Each of these hypotheses was created with separate questions in mind. For the first hypothesis, we wanted to test if having higher customer satisfaction would boost the overall company attractiveness but also to see if having a higher customer satisfaction would help such a large company that already is very established in the industry.

For the second hypothesis, we wanted to focus on the spending portion of the company. What if Electronic Arts were able to spend more of its assets on providing a more welcoming environment in its customer service section? That was our mission with this hypothesis. We aim to use the data we collected to determine whether this is a prudent course of action or not.

For the final hypothesis, we wanted to know if players/consumers would be more willing to come back to playing and engaging with their favorite gaming franchise company based on their most recent gaming experiences with the franchise as a whole. For example a franchise game such as Madden. Consumers and current players who do indulge in this game year to year could possibly be more likely to continue playing this game based on the franchise's reputation throughout history, so much so that they would be involved in what is known as "gamification"

in which then they (the players) would participate in brand loyalty mechanisms such as; playoff trophies, points, personal money winnings, etc year to year.

For this study, we used two main research methods. These include a questionnaire that we have published online for those who are interested in taking it and content analysis from several well-known faces in the industry discussing the current situation with Electronic Art's key issues. The survey we constructed involves various questions revolving around the company. These questions have been thought up and have been shared with each group member to assure that we all believe that the survey is up to our standards.

Once we completed the creation of the survey, we all sent the survey to each of our separate classes, to our friends and family, and even on Reddit through several subreddits related to either the company or survey takers.

The content analysis research method was the first research method we used. When deciding what we should base our study on, we agreed that Electronic Art's customer satisfaction was the main issue. Once that was set, research began about how large names in the industry feel about Electronic Art's practices and issues.

Excluding the survey, this was the fastest way to gather up-to-date information about the company. We accessed several secondary data sources such as Youtube and multiple news outlets that had some data that we thought could fit our research.

The next portion of this paper will dive into the data that we have collected based on the questionnaire and the content analysis that we discovered.

Data Analysis

Based on the data that was collected, many different factors can play into overall customer satisfaction, including what game is played the most, interactions with customer

service, and more. According to the survey results, Madden NFL was the most popular game with 26% of respondents stating that this was their most played game. Below is a pivot table that shows the frequencies of most played games:

Row Labels	Count of Q3 Code
Madden NFL	13
FIFA	12
Apex Legends	2
Star Wars Battlefront	3
Battlefield	6
The Sims	7
Other	7
Grand Total	**50**

This variable is important to customer satisfaction, as a most-played game would show where most of the consumer's time is spent. According to this frequency table, Electronic Arts should spend more time and resources on Madden NFL and FIFA, as they account for 50% of the responses. After respondents answered the question about their favorite game, they were then asked to rate their satisfaction with that game. The table below shows the descriptive statistics for this question:

Q4

Mean	3.22
Standard Error	0.157247
Median	3
Mode	4
Standard Deviation	1.111902
Sample Variance	1.236327
Kurtosis	-0.98726
Skewness	-0.08529
Range	4
Minimum	1
Maximum	5
Sum	161
Count	50

The mean satisfaction based on the respondent's most played game is 3.22. The median, which is the middle number, is 3, which would be considered "Neutral" on the question. The mode, which is the most frequent answer, is 4, which would be considered "Agree" on the question.

To analyze the hypotheses in the previous section, two statistical techniques were used: the Chi-Square Test and the Difference in Means Test. The Chi-Square Test is used to see if there is any association between categorical variables. The null hypothesis will state the variables are independent and are not associated, while the alternative states that they are not independent and there is an association between them. For the Chi-Square Test, the variables "Brand Loyalty" and "Most Played Game." These two variables were chosen to determine if players were playing these games just based on their loyalty to the franchise and not on gameplay, online experience, etc.

The Difference in Means Test is used to determine if the mean in one group is different from the mean in a different group. For the first difference in the means test the variables of "Frequent Gamers" and "Satisfaction" were used. The "Frequent Gamers" group was split based on those that played frequently and those who did not play frequently. This was created as a dummy variable, as those that played for less than one hour - between 1-2 hours were considered "non-frequent gamers" and was given a zero. Those that played between 2 hours - more than 5 hours were considered "Frequent Gamers" and were given a 1. This was used to test if there was a difference in satisfaction between frequent gamers and non-frequent gamers.

The second T-Test was run using the variables "Positive Satisfaction" and "Recommendations" Positive Satisfaction was a dummy variable used to create the two different groups, with those who answered strongly disagree - disagree were considered "Not Positive" and classified as 0. Those that answered neutral - strongly agree were considered "Positive Satisfaction" and classified as a 1. These variables were used to determine if recommendations differed based on consumer satisfaction.

Results

To determine the results, a 95% confidence level was used (5% significance level). For the Chi-Square test, the P value for the Chi-Square test was 0.57, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. This means that the null is accepted, which states that "there is no association between brand loyalty and favorite Electronic Arts game."

The difference of means tests also used a 95% confidence level (5% significance level). The first T-test was to determine if there was a difference in recommendations between highly satisfied customers and low satisfied customers. The P value for this Two Sample T-Test: Assuming Equal variances is 1.88E-6, which is smaller than the significance level of 0.05. This means we would accept the alternative hypothesis, which states that "highly satisfied customers' recommendations differ from low-satisfied customers."

The second t-test that was conducted was to determine if there was a difference in satisfaction levels between frequent gamers and less frequent gamers. The P value for this Two Sample T-Test: Assuming Equal variances is 0.26, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. This means the null hypothesis, which states that "frequent gamer's satisfaction does not differ from non-frequent gamers' satisfaction" would be accepted.

Recommendations

Based on the data analysis, it is clear that Electronic Arts have a lot of room for improvement. Luckily, because of the company's massive following and consumer base that they have acquired over the years, they have a large reserve of resources available to them that enable the company to improve on a global scale. Unfortunately, because the company is such a dominant player in their market, the process of improvement may be very costly and time-consuming. However, while this may be true the bottom line for the company will surely see

drastic improvements, and in the long run, the company will see an immense benefit. Customer satisfaction. The main area where Electronic Arts seem to struggle would be the primary area to focus improvement efforts on. Doing so will increase brand reputation and separate Electronic Arts Sports from other competitors. Improving the company as a collective will also require an extensive marketing strategy to promote company-wide changes to its large audience. The data that we have gathered is very beneficial in allowing us to create recommendations for Electronic Arts regarding what they can do specifically in order to fix their troublesome consumer satisfaction issue.

The first recommendation for Electronic Arts is to promote an overhaul of servers company-wide. Servers are critical for games and allow users to play with and against each other all around the world. In fact, for most Electronic Arts games, users will actually spend most of their time playing online requiring complete server functionality. For this reason, when users were asked to specify "what makes a quality video game" the number one listed answer, with an astounding 68% of the vote, was "online playing experience". Seeing how negatively impactful the current state of Electronic Arts servers is dedicating the majority of resources towards better-stabilizing connection and improving connectivity should be the company's number one priority. Also advertising what would be groundbreaking changes will only cause the brand reputation of the company to absolutely skyrocket.

The second recommendation for Electronic Arts would be to provide incentives and create new gateways to increase satisfaction for users who play for extended periods of time per day. The reason for this sounds simple in theory, users who play games most frequently are the users who will be most willing to buy games. However, this is not actually supported by statistical evidence. Conducting a t-test to compare the relationship between the frequency of

playing video games with consumer satisfaction, we we are unable to prove this with certainty. As stated previously, the resulting t-test produced a two-tail p-value of approximately .26. Because this value is higher than the significance level of .05, we cannot reject the null hypothesis that gaming frequency does not relate to user satisfaction. The question for Electronic Arts to figure out is what they can directly implement into their games to increase satisfaction for users with high screen times. Some elements that we believe would be beneficial in doing so include the addition of virtual currency incentives and more transferable game progress. In talking about virtual currency incentives, if a certain amount of screen time is reached whether it be over a week or per day, then the user would be rewarded with some form of virtual currency depending on their respective game. This would give users with high screen times the ability to unlock features that they would have previously had to pay for giving the user more freedom in their gaming experience. As for transferable game progress, this is something that has been implemented in only a few games in the market. If Electronic Arts were to include transferability of progress in all gaming franchises they could surely see strong boosts in satisfaction. For a game to have transferable progress, this would mean that the progress or advancements users make in a video game or resources that the user acquires in the said game would carry over between different editions of the game across the entire franchise. Whether it be the virtual currency, player accomplishments, or the acquisition of unlockable features, having these different aspects of the game become transferable will increase user engagement thoroughly. Users will likely be eager to build upon progress from year to year and will thus be more satisfied in dedicating more time to playing the variety of Electronic Arts gaming franchises.

Lastly, the customer service experience needs to be retooled. With all of these issues regarding gameplay that users around the globe have experienced over the years, there has been a

need to resolve these issues through professional help. Users from all around the world are able to get in contact with the Electronic Arts support team 24/7 to address any problem that they are facing in their individual gameplay experience. To handle all of these issues successfully, the customer service experience needs to be top notch and that is not the case with Electronic Arts right now. Consumers have had issues with many elements of Electronic Art's current service including response delays, vague feedback, and limited methods of provided communication. These issues can be proven in the response to the survey question asking directly about customer satisfaction. Over 79% of total respondents who had contacted the Electronic Arts customer service team reported their satisfaction with the experience as being "neutral" or worse. Because the general customer service experience is negative, consumer satisfaction as a whole is limited severely. In order to improve customer service there needs to be a better dialogue between the corporation and its consumers. Taking steps such as expanding the customer service team, retraining current support team staff, and providing more virtual mediums of communication such as 1 on 1 text chat between the service representative and the customer can go a long way in improving customer satisfaction. Marketing this would be fairly easy as you can encourage the customer to reach out at any time with a guarantee to actually resolve their problems. If a problem were still somehow unable to be resolved, full refunds or credit could be reimbursed to the customer.

Conclusion

In conclusion, although the results we have received can be helpful in figuring out people's opinions on Electronic Arts, there are still a few limitations with our set of data. First off, we do not have a large enough sample size. In total, we had a little over 50 responses which are simply not enough given the large number of people that play anything related to Electronic

Arts. The argument can be made that these results do not really signify what people think about Electronic Arts as a whole. Also, there is a sample error with our set of data because it does not represent the entire Electronic Arts population given that the people in our research were randomly selected. All in all, our set of data gives us a good idea of what people think about Electronic Arts; however, one way we can improve the accuracy of our data is by getting more people to respond to our survey in the near future.

Appendices

Questionnaire

Figure A1:

Figure A2:

Figure A3:

Statistical Tests

T-Test Satisfaction

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	Negative Satisfaction	Positive Satisfaction
Mean	2.0625	3.59375
Variance	0.595833333	0.958669355
Observations	16	32
Pooled Variance	0.840353261	
Hypothesized Mea	0	
df	46	
t Stat	-5.455436671	
P(T<=t) one-tail	9.39937E-07	
t Critical one-tail	1.678660414	
P(T<=t) two-tail	1.88E-06	
t Critical two-tail	2.012895599	

T-Test Gamers

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	Non-Frequent Games	*Frequent Gamers*
Mean	3.3125	2.941176471
Variance	1.254032258	1.058823529
Observations	32	17
Pooled Variance	1.187578223	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	47	
t Stat	1.135331708	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.130996522	
t Critical one-tail	1.677926722	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.261993043	
t Critical two-tail	2.011740514	

Chi-Square Test - Loyalty

Row Labels	Sum of Q13 Loyal	Sum of Q13 Not Loyal
1	12	1
2	10	2
3	2	0
4	2	1
5	4	2
6	6	1
7	7	0
Grand Total	43	7

Most Played Gam	Loyal	Not Loyal	Total
1	11.18	1.82	0.26
2	10.32	1.68	0.24
3	1.72	0.28	0.04
4	2.58	0.42	0.06
5	5.16	0.84	0.12
6	6.02	0.98	0.14
7	6.02	0.98	0.14
Total	0.86	0.14	1

Column1	Column2	Column3	Column4
1	12	1	13
2	10	2	12
3	2	0	2
4	2	1	3
5	4	2	6
6	6	1	7
7	7	0	7
	43	7	50

Chi-Square Test
0.574932299

List of Articles/Resources

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