

# Future gaming genres, trading platforms and marketplaces

Availability of games is still the biggest driver of hardware choice amongst gamers, but how is this going to change in today's digital world?

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With console manufacturers increasingly shouting about accessories such as motion sensors, blu-ray drives, huge storage capacity for media and a variety of online options for their

new hardware, it's important to reflect on the key reason why consumers buy consoles in the first place.

A recent survey by GfK NOP Technology indicated that the list of games they can access is still by far the biggest driver when deciding which console to purchase next – 73% cited the range of games as the most important feature in influencing their next console choice (See Figure 1).

With this in mind, we thought we'd take a quick look into the software side of video games and try to predict how things will develop in the short term. Having asked a series of dedicated gamers, here are our three favourite ideas:

## 1. Trading of digital games

A platform where gamers are able to buy, sell and trade digital games. With digital games becoming more freely available (research by NPD shows that 20% of games are purchased digitally

by online gamers) through the likes of PlayStation or Xbox's online store, but the price of games increasing, it seems inevitable that gamers are going to look for ways to share titles between them (similar to the large second-hand market in gaming stores across the land). This may not seem like an appealing idea for software developers, but if it can happen in a tightly regulated environment with the software developers heavily involved, they can look to take a small percentage of any trade that takes place. This would mean the revenue from any games could be continually renewed, with the added benefit that it keeps the market fresh for gamers.

## 2. User generated games/ open marketplace

As an extension, a trading platform for games could also be used for developers (be they small independent companies or a lone programmer in his bedroom) to develop and sell a wide array of new titles. Apple has already proved the success of a similar model with their App store. Such an approach would ensure that all niche gaming interests are catered for and developers can compete to come up with more innovative titles. The result? Gamers get access to the wide, continually updating range of games that they desire, while the owner of any such platform could again be rewarded from a small percentage of any sale.



## 3. Innovative gaming

Of course, the most important aspect must continue to be the quality of the games themselves. As *Heavy Rain* has so spectacularly shown, games can be designed with a specific target audience or interest group in mind, offering up a more 'sophisticated' experience, worlds apart from the instant thrills of a first person shooter.

And for developers, the inherent risk in developing such 'different' gaming propositions as *Heavy Rain* is, well, perhaps not such a risk any more. GfK's study has shown that approximately 70% of UK households now have access to some sort of gaming platform; offering software houses a huge potential gaming audience from the dad on his interactive murder mystery movie title, the mum on the Wii-fit board, the teenage son on the first person shooter and the pre-school daughter with her first pet simulator.

Let's hope that games such as *Heavy Rain* receive the success they deserve and that from a gamer's perspective the game trading platforms and third party marketplace emerge as feasible business models. I know that I for one would encourage any developments in these areas.

## Figure 1 - Drivers to Purchase

Most important features in influencing purchase decision when come to buy a new games console

Range of games available	73%
Brand of console manufacturer	31%
Hard drive/storage for media such as films and music	29%
Motion sensor accessories (e.g. accessories that recognise movement and allow you to control games with your body)	27%
HD video playback/ Blu-ray player	23%
Ability to download games directly to your console	23%
Ability to play games online with others in different parts of the world	23%
Easy web browsing service	22%
Access to video on demand services over the internet (similar to BBC iPlayer)	14%
Compatibility with 3D video content	9%
Access to your favourite social networking services	9%
Compatibility with 3D video content	9%

Notes on the research

\*1000 online interviews were conducted by GfK NOP among a UK representative sample of internet users.

