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**THE SONY PLAYSTATION!**  
**Consumer Marketing the world's most popular  
interactive entertainment home console.**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the Degree of  
Master of the Arts in Media Studies  
at Massey University  
Palmerston North, New Zealand.

Raymond Tung  
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# Contents

	Page
Abstract	
Acknowledgments	
List of Illustrations	
Introduction .....	1
Chapter One	
<b>Literature Review</b> .....	4
4 Marketing Strategies .....	5
Target Audience.....	16
Chapter Two	
<b>Methodology</b> .....	19
1) Qualitative Research.....	19
2) Textual Analysis.....	22
3) Structured Questionnaire .....	23
4) The Sample Size .....	25
5) Sampling Methodology and Criteria .....	26
6) Subjects.....	28
Chapter Three	
<b>Research Findings and Discussion</b> .....	29
1) Pricing Strategy .....	29
2) Communication Strategy.....	33
A) The Promotional Role of Magazine Publication.....	33
B) Television Advertising.....	44
3) Product Strategy.....	46
A) Branding.....	46
B) Packaging.....	52
4) Distribution Strategy.....	54
Target Audience.....	57
The PlayStation Genre.....	61
PSone.....	67
The Film Connection.....	69
The Celebrity Drawcard.....	74
Conclusion.....	75
Chapter Four	
<b>Case Studies</b>	
PlayStation 2.....	76
Medievil/Medievil 2.....	91
(C-12) Final Resistance.....	100
Cricket 2000 .....	106
Conclusion.....	115
Chapter Five	
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	116

Appendices

**Appendix 1** Questionnaire to Sony New Zealand .....120  
**Appendix 2** List of Advertisements on Video Tape.....123

Bibliography ..... 124

## Abstract

The focus of this thesis is the marketing methods used for the Sony PlayStation. Marketing in the video game industry has been ignored by a number of theorists, who tend to concentrate on the influences and effects of video games on children and youth.

There are two research methods used. The first is textual analysis of selected video games, in terms of the availability of related marketing material. The individual marketing techniques used by Sony for each game are outlined and discussed.

The second research method used is qualitative research via questionnaires on the marketing of PlayStation games. Respondents were asked a number of questions about marketing techniques used by Sony. This method was used to gain information from the most important factor in marketing, the consumer.

The results from the questionnaires and case studies revealed that communication strategy and pricing strategy were the most important features in marketing the PlayStation. The advertising for PlayStation games promotes and informs the consumer and the price of games is an important factor for the purchaser.

As with every promotion or advertisement, the trademark logo of the Sony PlayStation are visible in television ads, magazines, store displays and posters. The logos and brand trademarks provide Sony with a business image that can be identified. Essentially, Sony have used different forms of media technology to market their products to the consumer.

The content and material from a number of PlayStation promotions is ambiguous. Sony are prepared to create advertisements where consumers are expected to make the connection between the content within the advertisement and what is actually being promoted.

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## List of Illustrations

	Page
1. Advertisement of elderly couple .....	40
2. Advertisement of man pushing trolley .....	41
3. Advertisement of man and dog .....	42
4. Advertisement of the two faces .....	43
5. Fig. 1 The four PlayStation symbols .....	51
6. Fig. 2 The P and S Logo .....	51
7. Fig. 3 The Sony Diamond .....	51
8. Photo 1 Instore display promoting PlayStation 2 .....	89
9. Photo 2 Instore display promoting PlayStation 2 .....	89
10. Advertisement for Medieval .....	94
11. Advertisement for Medieval 2 .....	97
12. Photo 3 Instore promotion display for Medieval 2 .....	99
13. Advertisement for C-12 Final Resistance .....	103
14. Advertisement for Cricket 2000 .....	112

## Introduction

The video game console industry is massive. It is a worldwide industry and is continuing to grow. With the new consoles available on the market (Sony - PlayStation 2, Nintendo - GameCube and Microsoft - X Box both in 2002), the industry is now becoming more competitive than ever. Kotick insists that "video games are finally being taken seriously . . . and are one of the fastest growing industries in the United States", (Kotick, 2001 : 34). Gardner believes that "the console industry is exploding as makers Sony and Nintendo and now even Microsoft plan to release next generation consoles that take direct aim at PC gaming's strongest assets", (Gardner, 2000 : 192-200).

The video game industry is now a multi-billion dollar business. Electronic companies like Sony are making huge profits. This thesis will analyse the marketing techniques and strategies used for selling electronic home video games. Marketing is extremely important and an essential element in the video game industry. Distinctive marketing techniques and promotional content are used by Sony. Marketing is a mechanism that connects the attraction of video games with the consumer. It is a calculated attempt to use the power of persuasion on the consumer to purchase the software and to isolate a specific element or theme of a game that will remain in the memory of the consumer.

The focus of the thesis is the Sony PlayStation. Not only is it the world's most popular home video game, Sony is renowned for their home entertainment technology. About "85 million PlayStation units have been sold globally since its 1995 launch", (Elkin, 2001b : 4). Since the launch of the PlayStation, the video game industry has fast become the fastest growing segment of the entertainment industry.<sup>1</sup> And with PlayStation 2 on the

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<sup>1</sup> Business : playing with the big boys. (1999, May 15) *Economist*. vol 351, iss 8119. pg 65-66.

market since 2000, it is important that Sony promote the console to the greatest effect to gain greater success than its predecessor (PlayStation) and to out sell their competitors.

A reason for selecting marketing is that there have been past studies and research compiled on other aspects of video games. These aspects include youth, gender, violence and ethnicity and how they relate to video games. Work on marketing is almost nonexistent. As there is little literature that investigates marketing in any analytical depth, there is an opportunity to examine strategies that the video game industry utilize.

Furthermore, apart from the fact of being an owner of a PlayStation, my knowledge of the PlayStation far exceeds that of Sega and Nintendo. Also, marketing is an enormous subject to cover, it would be impossible to investigate all of the video game companies. Concentrating on one console is appropriate for this research project.

Chapter 1 is a review of literature, which identifies the four tools of marketing. Each section identifies different strategies in marketing. It is these strategies which are the crux of marketing :

- 1) The first strategy is *pricing*. The focus here is on the price charges for video games and how price can influence the consumer.
- 2) The second strategy is *communication*. Common attributes include advertising and promotion of video games. Discussions include the different forms of media used in promotions for video games.
- 3) The third strategy is the *product*. Concentration will not be on the product itself, but on its *branding and packaging*.
- 4) The fourth strategy is *distribution*. This relates to how and where PlayStation games are sold.

One aspect of marketing is the importance of the target audience. Marketing for a target audience is a major factor even though it is not considered as part of a four section strategy. It seemed important to include this as it is a major factor in marketing decisions.

Following the review of literature, Chapter 2 outlines the methodology used for this project. This chapter focuses on the type of research methods used. Discussion includes the use of qualitative research, textual analysis structured questionnaires, sampling size, sampling methodology and criteria, and subjects. These topics are analysed and discussed in detail where they were utilised in researching the topic.

Chapter 3 is the discussion which explores the findings from the four areas of marketing. This includes the marketing strategies used to promoting PlayStation games. Also, the results from the questionnaires conducted will be the nexus of the discussion.

Chapter 4 is a selected number of PlayStation games that have been employed into case studies. These games were selected on their wide exposure of promotion and the marketing techniques used. A selection policy was used to determine which games would be studied.<sup>2</sup>

There is also a case study on PlayStation 2.

Chapter 5, the conclusion addresses the key issues from the data collected and whether or not the data supports or contradicts the relevant literature.

Included at the end are two appendices. The first is the questionnaire that was sent to Sony. The second is a content list that is on the accompanied video tape.

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<sup>2</sup> There are certain titles that are given wider promotion than others. Selection was based on choosing the most publicised games and what material was available at the time.

# Chapter 1

## Literature Review

This review of literature is strictly bound to the parameters of the Sony PlayStation. It provides a general overview on the marketing techniques Sony uses within the video game industry (where applicable). Limited resources and material has resulted in a constraint selection on marketing video games. Selected work include the research of Eugene Provenzo and Robert Scally. Provenzo's book *Video Kids : Making Sense of Nintendo*, describes similar marketing techniques used by Sony. Scally is a journalist for *Discount Store News* who has continuously published information and details on the latest developments in the video game industry. As information on the topic of video games is limited, marketing researchers have been included.

The video game industry has expanded within the last six years. Not only are video games progressing in technological advancement, it has become accepted as part of mass culture. "Our industry has moved far beyond Pong to become a mainstream force in American culture", (Scally, 1996). The result of becoming a growing mainstream in modern technology, "the industry is no longer just about video games and kids", (Scally, 1996). Multimedia now embraces a vast array of formats, genres, consumer markets and retail channels.

Video games have become accepted as part of the popular culture in western societies. Technology will not slow down as there are those who are seeking new ways to improve lifestyles. Provenzo states that "video games are playing an increasingly important role in our popular culture", (Provenzo, 1991 : 118).Cunningham further comments that "the moving of computer games play from the arcades to into the bedrooms and shopping centres has significantly changed the experience of game playing. This changing context

has to be recognised in any account of computer game culture", (Cunningham, 2000 : 223 - 224).

The technology of the new generation gaming consoles have revolutionized the way we spend our leisure time. With the versatility of the likes of PlayStation 2, Xbox and GameCube, these technological devices may become apart of home entertainment system. The home computer ignited the digital age where the internet is currently accessed by most people. To gain the latest information on almost any topic or subject, the computer allows for immediate communication between people around the world through electronic mail.

#### **The 4 Marketing Strategies**

##### **1) Pricing Strategy**

There is limited literature on pricing strategies of video games. Instead, most authors state the price of past video game consoles and provide numeric figures of profit. Hence, they focus on the price of video games and revenue from sales. They ignore how video game pricing influences consumers. This may be caused by the lack of competition in the video game industry in the past compared to the competitiveness in the gaming market today.

The cost of video games today is competitive as there are a number of titles available for the different consoles. The price of a video game may or may not have a direct effect on buying decisions. When pricing decisions are confirmed by companies, there must be considerations including "the nature of the market and demand, competition, and other environmental factors", (Kotler, Chandler, Brown, and Adam, 1994 : 321).

When comparing the price of current video games and that of 20 years ago, it is staggering to see what consumers once paid. When Pong was introduced in 1972 in America, alone

"over 6000 of the games were sold nationwide at a cost of more than \$1000 each", (Provenzo, 1991 : 8). By comparison, it is now possible to purchase a video game that is dramatically cheaper and is more superior in 'gameplay'. 'Gameplay' is the terminology that defines everything about playing a video game. It can be defined as the overall experience of playing a game, encompassing a wide range of factors such as the ease of play, addictiveness, and overall enjoyability.<sup>3</sup>

There was a resurgence in the video game industry after a huge dive in sales during the mid 1980's. With Nintendo introducing the 'entertainment system', the resurgence in the industry was due to "improvements in hardware and software, including lower prices for the more sophisticated equipment", (Provenzo, 1991 : 11). The popularity of the Nintendo Entertainment System made it the largest selling toy in 1989 with US\$11.4 billion, 23% from Nintendo products.<sup>4</sup>

## 2) Communication Strategy

Advertising informs the consumer. It communicates. It provides the basis for the consumer to make decision about whether or not to buy a certain product or to use a certain service.<sup>5</sup>

Advertising and sponsorship have always been about using imagery to equate products with positive cultural or social experiences.

(Klein, 1999 : 29)

Communication strategy focuses on the promotion and advertising of a product. This is an important feature in marketing of video games because it connects a relationship between the seller (game companies) and the buyer (consumer). This is a strategy that provides the

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<sup>3</sup> PlayStation Terminology. *PlayStation 1999 New Zealand Yearbook*. p 114.

<sup>4</sup> Givens, R. 'Boys and Dolls in Toyland' (1989) *Newsweek*, pg 99. in Provenzo, E. (1991) *Video Kids : Making Sense of Nintendo*. Harvard University. pg 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Advertising in New Zealand : Its Role and Responsibilities*" pg 2.

exposure to the mass market. Randall insists that "advertising is all paid-for persuasive communication in the main media of television, press, posters, cinema and radio - that is, what we usually mean by advertisements, but excluding other forms of publicity which lay people sometimes refer to as advertising, such as sponsorship", (Randall, 1997 : 68). Hill comments that "the main purpose of much commercial advertising is to give information about a product in such a way as to increase sales at the expense of a competitor's product", (Hill, 2000 : 181).

Marketing of video games via advertising comes in a variety of forms. It can be seen in different forms of the media. This includes television, print media (magazines or newspapers), radio, billboards, the internet and video game exhibitions. Lee and Johnson define advertising :

Advertising is a paid, nonpersonal communication about an organisation and its products that is transmitted to a target audience through a mass medium such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, direct mail, outdoor displays or mass transit vehicles.

(Lee and Johnson, 1999 : 3)

#### A) The Promotional Role of Magazine Publications

The popularity of gaming magazines is reflected by the number of different magazines available on newspaper stands and in bookshops. In New Zealand, magazine consumption is at its highest. The result of such popularity is that "magazines have been a rapidly growing medium that serves the educational, informational and entertainment needs and interests of the wider range of readers in both consumer and business markets", (Lee and Johnson, 1999 : 187).

Magazine publications play a major role in marketing the video game industry. It is one medium which promotes video games similarly to the internet in terms of frequent updates

and information of video games. The purpose of gaming magazines is to accommodate those who have an interest and are familiar within the culture of video games. Panelas insists that video games represent an important type of socially coded goods around which cultural allegiances can be developed.<sup>6</sup> Magazines are part of the consumer market which focuses on providing knowledge within the video games industry.

For consumers to gain the latest information about video games, magazines have "an entire subfield with the computer video game industry involving the distribution of this expert knowledge", (Provenzo, 1991 : 13). Video game magazines are often associated with computer and internet magazines.

Provenzo discusses the type of content in gaming magazines, arguing that the purpose of such publications is to inform the consumer into every detail of video games. Provenzo insists that not only do they inform the consumer, but provides strategies and cheats of games which can be used to assist in completion of a game. Magazines feature page to page of full colour maps, strategy hints, tips and screen shots.<sup>7</sup>

Both Kinder and Sheff hold similar views on video game magazines to that of Provenzo. Kinder comments that magazines "provide tips on how to play the games and previews of new games to come", (Kinder, 1991 : 92). Sheff goes on to referring the success of advertising in magazines and the impact it has. In 1986, *Dragon Quest* was advertised in a boys magazine. This resulting in huge sales for the game and even bigger sales for the

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<sup>6</sup> Tom Panelas, 'Adolescents and Video Games : Consumption of Leisure and the Social Construction of the Peer Group,' *Youth and Society* vol. 15, no. 1 (1983) pg 59.

<sup>7</sup> Promotional advertisement entitled 'Game Player's : The Magazine for Every Video or Computer Game Player,' *Game Player's Buyers Guide to Nintendo Games* vol.2, no.5 (1989) 28-29 in Provenzo, E. (1991) *Video Kids : Making Sense of Nintendo*. Harvard University. pg 17.

magazine. Following such sales in one magazine "seven other publishers launched magazines that provided gaming tips, profiles of designs and glimpses of upcoming games", (Sheff, 1993 : 70). Alloway and Gilbert state that "it is apparent that gaming magazines are aimed at marketing games, offering players independent reviews of available and forthcoming software and hardware, giving game players a voice through editorials, and trading hints on how to improve game score", (Alloway and Gilbert, 1998 : 99).

Alloway and Gilbert believe that gaming magazines market more than just reviews and hints of video games. The text of magazines "produce and make available versions of masculinity, of femininity and of gender relations that are narrow, restrictive and regressive with respect to contemporary moves to encourage more expansive identities and democratic relationships", (Alloway and Gilbert, 1998 : 99-100). Both believe that gaming magazines aim towards what is seen as 'lads magazines'. The symmetry between the two genders are represented in magazines, as it is part of the gaming culture. Thus, magazines are an extension of a different form of medium that underlies the imbalance between males and females.

Magazines are seen as a major tool for marketing products. Anderson insists that "magazines grabbed a 25% increase in advertising spending in 1999 - the largest increase for the mainstream media sectors", (Anderson, 2000 : 25). Klein states that "the magazine then use the readership information to design closely targeted advertisements for their clients", (Klein, 1999 : 41). Wells, Burnett and Moriarty have established the following factors that they regard as the advantages of advertising in magazines :

- **Audience receptivity** - magazines having a high level of audience receptivity. Many magazines claim that advertising in their publication gives a product prestige.
- **Format** - people also tend to read magazines at a slow rate, typically a couple of days, so they offer an opportunity to use detailed copy.

- **Visual quality** - magazines tend to be excellent because they are printed on high quality paper that provides superior photo reproduction in both black and white and colour.
- **Target audience** - the ability for magazines to reach a specialised audiences has become a primary advantage for magazines.
- **Long life span** - magazines have the longest life span of all the media. They have a very high reach potential because of a large *pass-along* or secondary, audience of family , friends, customers and colleagues.
- **Sales Promotions** - Advertisers can distribute various sales promotion devices, such as coupons, products samples and information cards through magazines.  
(Wells, Burnett and Moriarty, 2000 : 240-241)

## B) Television Advertising

Television advertising campaigns are a popular option for promoting video games. Television is a medium that "has become a mainstay in the lives of most people. For over forty years, television has been the world's most powerful medium", (Lee and Johnson, 1999 : 207). The advantage of television advertising is that all home gaming consoles require a television. Shuker describes home video games as "small consoles or boxes with hand held controls which plug into a TV set or visual display unit", (Shuker, 1994 : 51). Trowler also describes video games as a "computer or computer-like console which is connected to a television or monitor", (Trowler, 1996 : 12). The PlayStation is like a Sega-type game system, using a console that plugs into a television set and playing off a CD disks.<sup>8</sup>

The direct result of using television for advertising can be seen in the fact that we watch a lot of television. Hence, this provides the perfect opportunity for video game companies to expose their software titles. Children and teenagers are a particular target as there are advertisements for video games that are aired during after school hours and Saturday mornings (video games that are advertised at these times are software titles that are specifically targeted toward youth - this has no bearing on the overall target audience that

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<sup>8</sup> The Video Playing Fields. (1996, Feb) *Ad/Media*. pg 19.

Sony is trying to attract). These periods are when most children watch television. Television is a great impact for children as consumers in that "television is an almost purely commercial venture and television advertising is an important part of children's exposure to the medium", (Greenfield, 1984 : 51).

Television is a successful medium for advertisers as there are benefits. The main aim for advertisers is to "inform, persuade and remind", (Kotler, Chandler, Brown and Adam, 1994 : 465). Lee and Johnson indicate some of the advantages of television advertising:

- television allows for the demonstration of product and services.
- television is versatile, allowing for the combination of sound, colour, and motion. As a primarily visual medium, TV employs pictorial storyline telling.
- television advertisement engage the senses and attract attention even when one would prefer not to be exposed to an advertisement.

(Lee and Johnson, 1999 : 208)

Also, advertising in television can "reach a large audience in a cost effective manner, use of sound and moving images creates a strong impact and influences the consumers' taste and perceptions and pervasive", (Wells, Burnett and Moriarty, 2000 : 266).

Television advertising allows for a number of aspects about a video game to be inserted within a 30 second time slot. This includes visual images from the game, providing a general impression about the genre of the game and often, the price can be stated. Nevertheless, the moving visual images in video game television advertising play an important role which creates the seduction to the consumer. Goldman explains that since the 1980's, television commercials have "embodied more capital, artist labour and creative energy than most programming, because the competitive structure of commodity culture pressures advertisers continuously to position their brand images against competitors", (Goldman, 1992 : 204). Goldman contemplates that television advertisers need to use all

means of modern technology to initiate creative ideas. Since 1988, Goldman asserts that television technology has allowed for greater creativity than ever before. He says that :

By 1988, the advertising landscape had become cluttered by 'realistic' images and styles. Imitators used every realistic technical device : black and white photography, grainy images, non continuity editing, jerky camera movements, back regions and hypersignified close-ups.  
(Goldman, 1992 : 204)

### 3) Product Strategy

#### A) Branding

The more advertising there is out there, the more aggressive brands must market to stand out.

(Klein, 1999 : 9)

Branding is a general term used to include brand names, trademarks and all other means to identifying a product. Murphy defines a brand as "the product or service of a particular supplier which is differentiated by its name and representation", (Murphy, 1990 : 1). Branding is the "use of a name, symbol, design or combination of the three to identify a product", (McCarthy, Perreault and Quester, 1998 : 290). McCarthy, Perreault and Quester identify two other elements of branding :

- 1) **Brand name** has a narrower meaning. A brand name is a word, letter or a group of words or letters.
  - 2) **Trademark** is a legal term. A trademark includes only those words, symbols or marks that are legally registered for the use by a single company.
- (McCarthy, Perreault and Quester, 1998 : 290)

A trademark identifies and establishes the goods and services from one company to other. Shapiro and Millar indicate that "a trademark is a distinctive word, name, symbol, slogan, or some combination of these elements used to identify one party's products and distinguish them from those of other", (Shapiro and Millar, 1999 : 60).

Branding does not only identify the product, but also the company. It extends far beyond the product and into the commercial world. Morgan believes that in a marketing world

that we live in, branding has expanded into other domains. He insists that branding marketing "was once perceived to the province of packaged goods and retailers is now systematically embraced by institutions and products as diverse as theme parks, cities, charities, gaming software, volunteer organisations, films, programs, sports, artists and public figures", (Morgan, 1999 : 26). Kapferer further insists that branding is more than just providing a distinctive product or service :

Brands are a direct consequence of the strategy of market segmentation and product differentiation. As companies seek to better fulfil the expectations of specific customers, they concentrate on providing the latter, consistently and repeatedly with the ideal combination of attributes - both tangible and intangible, functional and hedonistic, visible and invisible - under viable economic conditions for their business.

(Kapferer, 1997 : 46)

Nevertheless, there are a number of factors that contribute to creating a successful brand. Murphy outlines that "the key elements in a brand are the product itself, its price, distribution, packaging, brand name, promotion and its overall look and presentation", (Murphy, 1990 : 4).

Branding in the video game industry is important in marketing. The use of branding is to create an identity that is distinguishable from competitors. Hisrich and Peters insist that 'the most obvious advantage of a brand name is to help service the consumer or industrial user identify the most desirable product or service, but it also assists the manufacturer in image building and planning the marketing mix", (Hisrich and Peters, 1984 : 300). Video game companies have all used branding whether it be words or symbols. The brand name and trademarks symbols for the Sony PlayStation is important as the symbols play a significant factor in identification. Murphy outlines the importance of branding :

They serve as a focus for the consumer loyalties and therefore develop as assets which ensure future demand and hence future cash flows.

They thus introduce stability into business, help guard against competitiveness croachment, and allow investment and planning to take place with increase confidence.

(Murphy, 1990 : 7)

## B) Packaging

Packaging design has emerged from obscurity to become a potent marketing vehicle and a rewarding advertising medium.

(Lewis, 1991 : 137)

Packaging is an important factor to the product strategy in marketing. It provides a visual representation to the customer. That is, a well presented product will be contained within a distinguishable covering. Not only must the packaging of a product be visible, but also the convenience and use of the packaging. McCarthy, Perreault and Quester define packaging

:

Packaging involves promoting and protecting the product. Packaging can be important to both seller and customers. It can be a product more convenient to use or store, and can also prevent spoilage or damage. Good packaging makes products easier to identify and promotes the brand at the point of purchase and even in use.

(McCarthy, Perreault and Quester, 1998 : 299)

Packaging is an important communication device. It is the visual and physical feature of packaging that represents the product. Thus "today's marketing environment a package is much more than a container", (Wells, Burnett and Moriarty, 2000 : 71). It can promote the product by unique packaging and labelling and often, packaging of some products can be diverse. This is identified by Wells, Burnett and Moriarty who point out the factors that grab attention and send a message to the consumer :

- making the package colourful and distinctive.
- use a design that underscore the brand image and sends advertising messages.
- make the package as functional as possible.
- make sure the package and the advertising dovetail.

(Wells, Burnett and Moriarty, 2000 : 72)

Hisrich and Peters point out that packaging over time has changed from the tradition that packaging was only to protect and identify the product. As in some industries, protection

is the primary function "packaging has become a promotional tool and image builder for the new product, thereby enhancing its success in the market", (Hisrich and Peters, 1984 : 307). Also the primary function of packaging was "used to protect and transport products and to inform purchasers of the product within, it is now an important element of the branding mix", (Lightfoot and Gerstman, 1998 : 47).

Another function of packaging is that of a product being presented in a specific design that is unique to its presentation to the consumer and also providing a visual identity of the brand label. "Packaging is a visible expression of the brand and clearly therefore has an extremely important strategic role to play in brand building", (Lightfoot and Gerstman, 1998 : 47). Having a trademark logo on the package assists in "adding value to the pack through symbols which then become properties or equities of the brand", (Lewis 1991 : 140).

#### **4) Distribution Strategy**

The distribution of a product or brand products is vital to successful marketing. It is a component of marketing that provides the accessibility to the consumer from the manufacturer. Not only does distribution focus on physical distribution (transportation of the products), but the connection between the manufacturer to the consumer (end-users) via the middle man (retailer). Nevertheless Hisrich and Peters indicates that distribution objectives need to be established during the early phases of marketing a product :

Distribution channel objectives should specify the desired performance, the services needed, the control the firm wishes to retain, the financial support given to the channel members, and any other operational concerns. These objectives are established based on a clear understanding of the market segments defined for the new product.

(Hisrich and Peters, 1984 : 347)

In all cases of the distribution of goods, the middle man (retailer) is the main connection between the transaction of selling and buying. The manufacturers supply their products to

the retailer and the retailer supplies the product for the consumer to purchase. Retailers can vary depending on who the manufacturers distribute their products to. "Retailers range from large, sophisticated chain of discounted stores to individual merchants who specialise in selling certain products", (McCarthy, Perreault and Quester, 1998 : 399).

Nevertheless, there must be a consideration of "the type of middlemen in the channel, management must emphasise the mix of services provided by each in view of the objectives in introducing the new product", (Hisrich and Peters, 1984 : 349). They believe that there is the option of using a retailer who specialises in selling the product or department stores that sell a whole range of goods. Opting for speciality retailers includes "offering a unique assortment, knowledgeable sales assistance and better service. The major advantage of the speciality shop is that it caters to certain types of customer, which the management and salespeople come to know very well", (McCarthy, Perreault and Quester, 1998 : 402). Department stores have the opposite effect on the customer. Service and the lack of knowledge product may hinder the purchasing.

### Target Audience

The Sony PlayStation has taken the video game industry to a new dimension of consumer marketing. The expansion from the child consumer has spread to the 'generation of adult players' where they grew up during the invention of the first video game and now have the opportunity to play with a medium that is superior compared to 15 years ago.

In the early stages of the video game industry (1970's), children became attracted to this new form of electronic entertainment. "Video games are the first medium to combine visual dynamism with an active participatory role for the child", (Greenfield, 1984 : 100). The combination of visual and participation in video games became a great attraction with children. This resulted in video games become a strongly regarded medium only played by

children. Greenfield describes video games as "have been dubbed the marriage of television and the computer", (Greenfield, 1984 : 99), the combination of both visual images and interaction can contribute to a child's desire to play video games.

To maintain the rapid modification in technological advancement, there are changes to such representations with video games. Video games are not only played by children and adolescents anymore. Scally states that "more adults are playing video games more than ever", (Scally, 1999 : 2). There are adults today who have grown up with the invention of Pong right through the number of different video game consoles and games that have existed throughout the past. Corporate video game companies like Nintendo and Sony are focusing towards a "new generation of computer games and simulation and the potential to expand into the adult market", (Provenzo, 1991 : 27). Helen Jones indicates that for Sony "it intends to broaden the target audience beyond 14-16 year old boys", (Jones, 1995 : 34-35).

As the result of worldwide popularity in home video game consoles and software games, the industry as a whole is making enormous profits. Provenzo observes that "market analysts account for the resurgence of the video game industry as being the result of a new generation of children reaching game playing age", (Provenzo, 1991 : 11) .

Over time, the targeted market consumer has changed. The industry used to have a large orientation towards boys. They were seen as the only ones who played video games. Every time a new home video game console was invented the direction of consumers was "all aimed at keeping up with the tastes of the primary target audience - boys aged eight to 18", (Leccese, 1988 : 32).

During the period of the late 1980's, Sega and Nintendo became the popular choice of console. The Nintendo craze was "a madness that - like most - strikes at adolescent boys

and their young brothers; 60 percent of Nintendo players are males between 8 and 15", (Newsweek, 1989 : 67). Nevertheless, when a new console enters the market, the target audience remains to focus towards adolescent boys. The Sony PlayStation focus beyond this and attempts to attract adult consumers. "The core target for the communication was ten to 20 year old males. But it need to have broader appeal to target parents who would be buying the product", (Edmundson, 1996 : 38 - 39). Adult consumers contributed to a large percentage of sales where more than "30% of PlayStation users are 30 or older; only 17% are grade school students. By contrast, the bulk of Nintendo users are 6 - 13 years old", (Fulford, 1999 : 52 - 53) .

The Sony PlayStation has created a mass market where they focus towards a wider audience. "Sony is widely credited with moving the console market out of the bedroom and into the mainstream home entertainment area. The age range of console owners has gone from eight to 16 in the early 90's, to eight to 29 today and the average is now 17 years", (Littlewood, 1999 : 28 - 29). However, there is some debate over the average age of gamers. Edwards states that "the average age of a PlayStation user is now 28", (Edwards, 1999 : 18 - 19). This is supported by Scally who states that "the average age of computer and video games players is 28 and 61% are over 18", (Scally, 2000a : 8). As opinions differ (may depend on sources each have used), both share similar views that video game players are older and no longer are home consoles attracting the stereotyped adolescents.

It is clear from the outset Sony is trying to target a larger audience where they are attempting to attract older consumers. In focussing towards a wider audience, it is suggested that "marketing communicators start with a clear audience in mind. The audience may be potential buyers or current users, those who make the decision buying or those who influence it", (Kotler, Chandler, Brown, Adam, 1994 : 442).

## Chapter 2

### Methodology

This section will focus on identifying and elaborating the methods used for this research. After great consideration into which method of research to adopt, two were selected. First is a textual analysis of a number of marketed video games. The second method is a structured questionnaire based research. Both methods allow for personal interpretation and point of view. While there has been a lack of, if any, conducted research on marketing of video games, it appeared that the methods of textual analysis and structured based questionnaire were the most appropriate options for this research topic. The method of questionnaires was less time consuming as they were distributed at the same period compared to interviewing which would take a longer period as well as time organising and location. Textual analysis was selected because of the autonomy to provide personal interpretation.

### Qualitative Research

Words are not only more fundamental intellectually; one may also say they are necessarily superior to mathematics in the social structure of the discipline. For words are a mode of expression with greater open-endedness, more capacity for connecting various realms of argument and experience, and more capacity for reaching intellectual audiences.<sup>9</sup>

In selecting which methodology to use, qualitative research appeared more ideal than to use quantitative. Nevertheless, one must be aware that researchers are now using both methods as there is no ordinance that one must use one method or another. Some dispute using both methods "because of the vast different theoretical backgrounds and methods of

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<sup>9</sup> Collins, R. (1984) 'Statistics versus Words' in W Newman, *Social Research Methods* (1997), pg 420.

data collection in the two approaches", (Anderson and Pool, 1998 : 29). But a combined approach can be valuable in certain projects.

Quantitative research is, as the term suggests "concerned with the collection and analysis of data in numeric form", (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 1996 : 60). As the data collected is normally of a large scale, it is perceived as gathering 'facts'. Data analysis did not begin until all data and numbers were collected. The method of data gathering is considered as using questionnaires.

A decision to include quantitative research methods was to establish factual perceptions between the authors and the participants from the questionnaire. One topic where numeric data is analysed is the genre of video games. A comparison was made between a survey compiled by *Official New Zealand PlayStation Magazine* and the questionnaire completed by the participants. Nevertheless, it is difficult to assess both sets of results as *Official PlayStation Magazine* does not indicate the approximate number of those who voted. The use of numeric data will be used in the discussion where applicable.

The reason for the inclusion of quantitative is that it was possible to use this method of research from the results of the questionnaire. Anderson and Poole stipulate that the "researcher must be extremely cautious to combine methods only if it is appropriate and if it ultimately leads to a greater understanding of underlying issues", (Anderson and Poole, 1998 : 29).

Qualitative research holds a different stance in that it is "characterised by ethnography and historical studies where findings are more commonly expressed in words than in numbers", (Anderson and Pool , 1998 : 24). This method of research allows for objective or subjective interpretations of the data in relation to past studies. Techniques for data

gathering are normally in the form of interviewing and observation. Neuman comments that a researcher taking on the method of qualitative, "he or she may build new theory to create a realistic picture of social life and stimulate understanding more than to test a causal hypothesis", (Neuman, 1997 : 420). Also, Silverman states that qualitative research may be more favourable in that it explores "people's life histories or everyday behaviour", (Silverman, 2000 : 1). Jennifer Mason outlines common elements in qualitative researching :

- concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced or produced.
- based on methods of data generation which are flexible and sensitive to the social context in which data are produced.
- Aims to produce rounded understandings on basis of rich, contextual and detailed data.

(Mason, 1997 : 4)

There are different approaches to the meanings of each methodology. O'Brien draws attention from Bauman in that the methods for positivist and interpretive is a cause in "a major split in sociological analysis", (O'Brien, 1993 : 7). Positivist research which is linked to Auguste Comte, uses quantitative data where "the ultimate purpose of research is scientific - to discover and document universal laws of human behaviour", (Neuman, 1997 : 63). "They must have no logical contradictions and be consistent with observed facts", (Neuman, 1997 : 66). O'Brien extends to say that :

Positive is used here to connote a view of sociology as a progressive, cumulative, explanatory, 'scientific' project. Sociology's 'positive' tradition can be said to include those thinkers who tried, with the aid of sociology, to explain, predict and in some cases ultimately control the social world.

(O'Brien, 1993 : 7)

The approach of interpretive research is linked to Max Weber's argument in that social science needs to study meaningful social actions with a purpose. "He embraced Verstehen and felt that we must learn the personal reasons or motives that shape a person's internal feelings and guide decisions to act in particular ways", (Neuman, 1997 : 68). Interpretive researchers aim to develop an understanding of social life and discover how people construct meaning in natural settings. O'Brien defines interpretive as "not to seek so much explanations and predictions of social events as understanding what meaning and what significance the social world has for the people who live in it", (O'Brien, 1993 : 7).

### Textual Analysis

Within qualitative research, the use of textual analysis technique is used to gain a deeper or alternative meaning. There are a number of other methods such as "observation of experimental natural setting, photographic techniques, historical analysis document analysis and a number of other unobtrusive techniques", (Berg, 1998 : 3).

Selected PlayStation titles were chosen where case studies were carried out. The method of case study allows for the "research to investigate a particular existing situation that comes to the attention of the researcher", (McBurney, 1994 : 169). Also, Berg states that "case study method involve systematically gathering information about a particular person, social setting event or group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how it operates or functions", (Berg, 1998 : 212)

As the topic of this project deals with marketing of video games, it was feasible to select video games that were marketed during the time of information gathering. Researching video games that were marketed throughout the research period made it possible to gather material and information on a particular game. The material gathered included

advertisements that were aired on television, page advertisements and articles from PlayStation magazines and game reviews that are published in local newspapers.

Games were selected on the criteria of being well publicised through the different forms of media. They were also chosen because of the material that was available at the time. As stated by Sony Computer Entertainment Marketing Co-ordinator, Caroline Squires, not all games are marketed, "only our key releases" (see Appendix 1).

### Structured Questionnaire

Deciding that it would be more feasible to gather data from questionnaires, this is a research technique more associated with quantitative research. As there are no boundaries to how data and material should be gathered, the method of questionnaires and interpreting the answers was the best method for this project because it gave the participant time to think about what answer they would write. Also, giving them a time frame to complete the questionnaire, they were assured that they did not have to quickly answer the questions at once. This is an advantage over interviewing as the participant is expected to concentrate and answer straight away. With the questionnaire, the participant is more relaxed in answering instead of being face to face with an interviewer trying to get the answers they are expecting.

The questionnaire itself focussed on different aspects of marketing of PlayStation video games. While attempting to cover all areas of marketing, there was an awareness of the length of the questionnaire. Newell states that "the questionnaire should not be too lengthy", (Newell, 1993 : 108). Consideration towards two principles stated by Neuman "that questionnaires avoid confusion by keeping the respondent in mind and that the respondent can understand the questions", (Neuman, 1997 : 233) . It was necessary to

place the respondent in a position where they felt comfortable that their answers were meaningful.

Formatting of a questionnaire can be divided into two categories. There are the closed-ended questions "where the respondent selects a response from a set of alternative answers", (Gilbert, 1993 : 39). The other category is open-ended questions which "permits the respondent to answer in their own words", (McBurney, 1994 : 194). Selecting the open-ended questions format allows for "respondents to answer more completely and to reveal the reasoning behind their answer", (McBurney, 1994 : 194). Also "open questions do not limit response alternatives. Respondents are free to formulate their own answers", (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2000 : 2). Nevertheless, there is a drawback to open-ended questions. Answers which are unrestricted "require more thought and consideration. A further disadvantage is that responses may be ambiguous, wide ranging and difficult to categorise", (Newell, 1993 : 103).

The design of the questionnaire was formatted in a simplistic style so that the participant did not feel confused about any of the questions. The questionnaire was divided into six topics. This includes personal, price, target audience, marketing, violence and gender representation. All questions provided adequate space for the participant to fill in. The way that the questions were structured allowed the participant freedom to express their own views. Silverman expresses that open questions "need to be far less structured than confirmatory studies", (Silverman, 2000 : 88).

To assist the participants to become comfortable with the questionnaire, the first section is on personal details about their ownership with the PlayStation. By using this method, Newell insists that "it is best to begin with simple and easy questions which are not threatening", (Newell, 1993 : 108).

After assessing the questionnaires and answers provided, I felt that some participants had answered the questions too briefly. So, it was decided that six of the 20 participants were selected to answer another questionnaire. They were required to provide descriptive answers. The participants were selected on how well they had answered the first questionnaire and also their availability.

The second questionnaire consisted of topics that are covered from the literature review. This included target audience, magazine publications, television advertising, branding, packaging, distribution and pricing of PlayStation games. All of the questions required indepth answers with an explanation to why and how each participant came to their decision. The identification of these participants have an asterisk next to their coded number which can be seen in the research findings.

There was also a separate questionnaire that was compiled and sent to Sony Computer Entertainment via the video game retailer specialists Central Park Interactive. Questions were raised concerning the marketing of their software. Unfortunately, the reply from the marketing co-ordinator from Sony managed only to provided brief answers.

### The Sample Size

The sample size of 20 questionnaires seemed to be appropriate for this project. In calculating the size of the sample, there were two approaches considered. The theoretical approach is the sample size relating to the accuracy of the results and findings. "The greater the level of accuracy, the bigger the sample size", (Allison, 1996 : 53). The second approach is the practical approach. This is a case where a personal decision was made. Allison states that "a common way of determining sample size is by including as many subjects in the survey as cost/time will allow", (Allison, 1996 : 53). As a result of time constraints, 20 samples appeared to be reasonable. While using qualitative research

constraints, 20 samples appeared to be reasonable. While using qualitative research techniques "the sample need be only large enough to ensure a wide variety of answers", (Allison, 1996 : 72).

When conducting the second questionnaire, there were six participants who had filled in the first questionnaire with indepth answer. On this chosen assessment, a decision to select six participants to answer another questionnaire seemed the ideal to gain more information.

### Sampling Methodology and Criteria

While deciding on 20 questionnaires, the *population* itself had to be identified. Lin defines sampling as "the total group of people which meet certain criteria of interest to the researcher", (Lin, 1996 : 214). Taking into consideration the criteria, Allison states that "target population is the population from which you would like to obtain a sample and to which you would like to apply your conclusion", (Allison, 1996 : 31).

After deliberating on the target population, opportunity sampling was used by breaking down the population into a subgroup. The best way to define opportunity sampling is that an identified subgroup is broken down aiming towards a specific population. In this project, the subgroup identified is Sony PlayStation owners and were further identified by certain criterias. The criterias are as follows :

- the respondent must own a PlayStation
- the respondent must be an adult (this was determined by ages 18+)
- the respondent is willing to participate in the research knowing that the information that they provide is strictly confidential

The first criteria is straightforward in that a person who owns a PlayStation console would have more knowledge about marketing than someone who does not own one. Hence, a non owner would have a lack of knowledge about the PlayStation.

The next criteria was an important decision as in research involving children, there are complications and difficulties such as interpreting information that they may provide. There is also the issue of ethical consideration while dealing with children. Selecting adult owners would prove to be easier as they are able to elaborate and provide more details. Also, most adults involved in the research grew up during the growth of the video game industry since the 1970's.

The third criteria did not concern any of the participants as they were willing to co-operate in answering the questionnaire. Moser and Kalton (1971) argues the importance of the participant willing to answer questions. Overall, while deciding on the criterias, consideration of the participant included "having the knowledge to answer the questions, whether the questions are relevant to them and whether they wish to reveal information", (Newell, 1993 : 104).

Choosing 20 from the target population, finding them took a number of different measures. This included friends who owned a PlayStation, placing notices around campus and the use of *snowball sampling* methodology were employed. Snowball sampling is a case when "information about the cases in the population is lacking", (Lin, 1996 : 229). The use of the snowball sampling methodology undoubtedly facilitated the quickest reply. Snowball sampling is where "information about the cases in the population is lacking . . . is useful only if the members of the target group maintain some kind of formal or informal communication network among themselves", (Lin, 1996 : 229). Arber also points out that "snowball sampling can only be used when the target sample members are involved in some kind of network with others who share the characteristics of interest", (Arber, 1993 : 74). Nevertheless, there was the awareness from Berg who suggested that researchers are "given the versatility of the case study method, they may be rather narrow in their focus, or they may take a broad view on life and society", (Berg, 1998 : 212).

To reach the population quota and obtaining different points of view from the questionnaire, snowball sampling allows for the contact of the current or past participant to nominate others who fit the criterias and most probably willing to participate. Nevertheless, there is the danger that their identity could be exposed where they could be a convicted felon or prefer not to have their name revealed to others. The questionnaire itself included a form of consent, detailing that the name and information provided is strictly confidential and that no participant would be announced by their name.

### Subjects

Twenty-eight questions for the first questionnaire and 17 for the second questionnaire appeared to be a satisfactory number.<sup>10</sup> While designing the questionnaire, there was the consideration for the participant. Having too many questions to answer may result in negative replies or answers that lack any relevance. As a result of the number of questions, many participants delayed in completing and returning the questionnaire. This maybe a direct result of being too lenient in the time frame given. Nevertheless, there were considerations into the fact that it was not ethical to persuade the participate promptly to complete the questionnaire. As they are offering their time and personal point of view, they were allowed from two to three weeks for completion.

While using the snowball methodology, known acquaintances of those who had already participated were contacted and were willing to participate. Thus, having no acquaintance with them, a completion and return date was set and they were all promptly returned within the specified time.

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<sup>10</sup> The first questionnaire contained too many brief answers which may have been caused by the large number of questions, so the second questionnaire contained only 17 question, 11 less than the first, but required more indepth answering.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Findings and Discussion**

This section will provide the results from the methods used. Included with the information provided from the questionnaires, and articles from newspapers and magazines. From the results and information gathered, personal interpretations from the questionnaire participants and the articles will provide the crux of the findings. Also included is information from other source which may assist in aiding my research. After covering the topics relating to the literature review, other aspects of the PlayStation are discussed. This includes Target Audience, PlayStation Genre, PlayStation 1, The Film Connection and The Celebrity Drawcard.

#### **1) Pricing Strategy**

The resurgence in the industry have to do with improvements in hardware and software, including lower prices for more sophisticated equipment.

(Provenzo, 1991 :11)

The pricing for PlayStation games can have an influence on consumers. There are two types of consumers. The first type is a buyer who will purchase a game when it is first released. These consumers are willing to pay the full retail price to gain possession of a game. Thus, when a new game first came out, the price does not concern the buyer.

The second type of consumer are those who are willing for the price to drop over a period of time. They are those who are not as eager to play a new released game. As the price drops, this is where consumers take advantage of the price decrease :

The price effects the buying power of the consumer in two ways. As the price lowers, the consumer buying power increases as they can purchase for their dollar, while in the reverse, the increase in price will decrease their buying power.

(Questionnaire from P15\*)

The pricing for each new PlayStation game is dependent on a number of factors. As stated by the marketing co-ordinator of Sony, factors included the developers, the history of the title and the rest of the market (see Appendix 1). Overall, the price of PlayStation titles can vary from \$50 to \$120.

When the PlayStation first became available in New Zealand in 1996, the price of the console was around \$799.95. By the end of 1997, the price had dramatically dropped to \$199. The reason for the price reduction was due to rival company, Nintendo, introducing *Nintendo 64*. The price cut by Sony was an aggressive move knowing that Nintendo would be their biggest threat and follow the PlayStation price reduction.<sup>11</sup> Another reason was that the price reduction would attract a wider market. Steve Dykes, the sales and marketing manager for Sony Computer Entertainment, insisted that the price of the PlayStation would go ahead regardless of the Nintendo 64. Steve Dykes insists that :

This is our way of taking PlayStation to a wider market.  
(The Dominion, 1997 : 13)

Not only has the price of the console dropped, but also the price of PlayStation software. This has had a huge influence on sales numbers. Scally states that "lower hardware and software prices, a better selection of software, greater product availability and the development and marketing of a number of great games are all contributing to a banner year for the US video game industry", (Scally, 1998 : 33-34). Games for PlayStation are constantly being reduced. The reduction in price would entice the consumer to purchase the console and associated games. Louis Roitblat, vice president for Creative Wonders, states that "we're now able to get people to make impulse purchases, more multiple purchases because the price is in an area where (consumers) feel comfortable", (Scally, 1998 : 33-34).

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<sup>11</sup> Anonymous, "Sony L20m to Battle N64," *Marketing*, 6 March 1997, vol 14.

From the survey that was conducted, a majority of the respondents said that the console was not expensive. Five had stated that the PlayStation console was expensive. What was noticeable was that those who thought the cost of the PlayStation was expensive, had purchased their PlayStation unit approximately during the same period as the other respondents. This may relate to personal financial wealth where they may have had to budget for purchasing the PlayStation.

The attitudes towards the pricing of PlayStation games differed when comparing with the price of the console itself. Many believed the PlayStation console was worth the purchase, but the games were expensive. Thirteen stated that games were too expensive. There were strong concerns over the price of certain game titles :

It's all about making as much money as quickly as possible before prices drop.

(Questionnaire from P7)

Games are too high. Instead of \$100 - maybe \$30-\$40.

(Questionnaire from P14)

It depends on each individual consumers financial status. Yeah, I think the games are expensive.

(Questionnaire from P16)

Until games drop to CD audio prices, \$100 games only encourage piracy.

(Questionnaire from P17)

There was an emphasis on 'platinum' games. The platinum range is a selection of best-selling games that have been re-released at a much cheaper price. This is where games that have been on the market for a long period, having reached a high number of sales. As a result of high sale numbers, the game is then reduced in price, costing about \$40. Steve

Dykes says that the games, about half the price of new releases must sell at least 500,000 copies worldwide to qualify as platinum.<sup>12</sup>

At least 13 participants had stated that if they were wanting to buy a new game, they would wait for the price to be reduced at a reasonable cost. There were a few who would try the game before deciding whether it is worth purchasing straight away. So price is a major factor into considering whether a game is worth purchasing.

I would buy it straight away. (would try it at the store first)  
(Questionnaire from P1)

Nearly all my games I have purchased have been straight away. Based on my judgement, I decide if a game is worth getting, if undecided I would play the game first before buying.  
(Questionnaire from P3)

If I wanted it that bad, I'd buy it. If I wasn't sure, I would rent it first.  
(Questionnaire from P18)

Buyers who purchase a game when it is first released believe that owning the game immediately is worth the extra money. The marketing has increased their desire for the game to the point where they are not willing to wait. Those who wait for the game don't feel urgency to own, or else don't feel the game is worth the full price. It only becomes a valid purchase when the price drops.  
(Questionnaire from p17\*)

The consumer who buys the game before going platinum is an avid fan of PlayStation who has to have the latest games on offer. The consumer who waits for platinum games to occur, is more of a part-time player who sees PlayStation as a form of entertainment to fill in time.  
(Questionnaire from P 15\*)

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<sup>12</sup> PlayStation add to Platinum range. (1999, July 3) *Waikato Times*, pg 16.

The pricing of each video game and console is determined by Sony. As a standard price is set, retailers are notified by Sony if there is to be a price reduction. Nevertheless, Steve Dykes from Sony New Zealand commented on the launch of PlayStation 2 that the console could be set at any price.<sup>13</sup>

## **2) Communication Strategy**

### **A) Promoting PSX via Magazines**

Magazines play a crucial role in marketing PlayStation games. The accessibility to magazines is far greater compared to others, such as the internet (not everyone has access to) and television (where by chance the viewer may not see any PlayStation ads). Forsyth outlines that magazines vary from quarterlies to weeklies and from very generally, wide coverage journals to very specialist interests . . . magazines are normally colourful and often read on a regular basis", (Forsyth, 1999 : 99).

There are a number of magazines specialising for PlayStation only. They include titles like *PlayStation Pro*, *Total PlayStation*, *PlayStation Power*, *PlayStation Gamer*, and *Station*. Almost all PlayStation magazines are from America or the United Kingdom. New Zealand has low circulation numbers compared to overseas publications. This means that there are limited magazines that are published locally. As a result of this, the New Zealand produced *PlayStation Magazine* has suffered due to competition from a number of foreign magazines which resulted in low sale numbers. Anderson states that "with only 623,000 13-24 year-old in New Zealand, why are there suddenly so many youth-targeted magazines in the market? We have already seen PlayStation Magazine removed itself from these shores", (Anderson, 2000 : 25). New Zealand cannot compete against the larger foreign publications and the number of different titles from overseas. Smith states that 'the

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<sup>13</sup> Steve Dykes speaking on the pricing of PS2 on One Network News, 29th Nov, 2000.

Magazine Publishers Association and magazine distributors say imports are pushing out local publications at major retail centres', (Smith, 2001 : 25).

The *Official New Zealand PlayStation Magazine* has also suffered at the hands from rival magazines. When the magazine was first published in New Zealand, it used material from the United Kingdom and Australian editions (*Official UK PlayStation Magazine* and *Official Australian PlayStation Magazine*). Local content was also added to maintain a sense of a New Zealand publication. After two and half years from the first issue, a large amount of local content was lost and now there is virtually no New Zealand content. With the magazine title still intact (*Official New Zealand PlayStation Magazine*), and although there is very little New Zealand content, the magazine still has a high number of readers. Excluding overseas publications, 'there is a choice of some 600 local magazine titles', (Jayne, 2000 : 40). An example of New Zealand material is the letters and e-mails that are published in the magazine, these are from both New Zealand and Australia. Alloway and Gilbert state that "players are offered a voice in gaming magazines through letters to the editor or trouble shooting columns", (Alloway and Gilbert, 1998 : 101). Most importantly, there is a section dedicated to New Zealand readers where they can purchase back copies or subscribe to the magazine. Nevertheless, arrival dates of new games that are published are similar in both countries.

There are other magazines that also promote PlayStation games. The contents in these magazines are most often full page advertisements of a new game or game reviews of upcoming or available games. There are a number of games that are advertised in these magazines, such as *In Cold Blood*, *Fifa 2000* and *Army Men*. These can be seen in magazines like *Inside Sports*, *Loaded*, *FHM*, *Ralph* and *Brass*. These magazines are targeted towards the male population and are regarded as *lads magazines* that contain material male readers can relate to.

The advantage of magazines is that they provide readers with information on almost every aspect of PlayStation games. Television and newspapers are not as good as informing consumers on PlayStation information. This is because television is brief and relies more on visual images. Newspapers can often use second hand material and the reviewer may have limited knowledge on video games in general. The internet would be the only equivalent to magazines as there are regular updates and cover a range of aspects on the PlayStation. As all of the PlayStation magazines are monthly issues, the latest issue from each title are available throughout the month, so there is not an influx of new magazines arriving in unison. This allows the reader to pace themselves as they have the opportunity to purchase magazines at their own discretion.

From the survey, all participants acknowledged that magazines are a major form of the media where PlayStation games are promoted. Over half of the participants had stated that they would read magazines to find the latest information on PlayStation games. They also stated similar views to Provenzo (1991), Kinder (1991) and Sheff (1993) in the content of reviews, cheats previews in gaming magazines and also sales promotions by giving away sample products (Wells, Burnett and Moriarty, 2000) :

All magazines include reviews, previews, cheats and information. Also, there is a lot of advertising for future games. Some magazines include CD demos. This allows for the reader to try new games before they purchase the game.

(Questionnaire from P16\*)

From what I've seen, gaming magazines feature industry news and previews of upcoming games, reviews of current and re-released games, as well as hints and tips and interviews with industry figures. Some also come with CD featuring demo versions of new games.

(Questionnaire from P17\*)

One question that was raised in the survey was the effectiveness of magazines as a marketing tool. There were mixed views, but the majority stated that magazines are effective for promoting PlayStation games :

Magazines are very effective as marketing tools, because they are designed specifically to hit the target audience. Their layouts are such that just flicking through casually can plant a seed of interest.

(Questionnaire from P15\*)

Magazines are very effective as print media is a medium that can be stored and viewed over and over. Teenage readers are especially the target audience as teenagers are huge readers and buyers of magazines. Magazines are always readily available.

(Questionnaire from P16\*)

Magazines are not as effect as advertising, as the customer must actually first want to buy the magazine. However, the promotion of the whole gaming culture that is possible through magazines makes them very powerful promotional medium for those who purchase them.

(Questionnaire from P17\*)

Sony has created advertising strategies that has never been seen before in the video game industry in New Zealand. It is the content and the style used which is unique. Fowles has similar view to French scholar Roland Barthes three levels of linguistics, denoted image and the connotative.<sup>14</sup> Fowles has recognised that visual images in advertisements can signify more than one meaning :

The heart of any advertisement or commercial, however, is the visual imagery redolent with symbolic properties that the advertisers hopes the consumer will find significant. Because images are one kind of symbol and the words are distinctly another, a deep, model tension exists between them within advertising.

(Fowles, 1996 : 84)

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<sup>14</sup> Fowles, J. (1996) *Advertising and Popular Culture*. Sage Publications. pg 169.

A question was asked to the participants in the questionnaire about whether or not PlayStation advertising appealed to them. A majority of them agreed that the style was appealing :

Most are appealing. It's not just graphics and visuals, but the oddity of how the content goes to the extreme. Sometimes the content in a television ad may have no relevance to the game, yet at the end of the ad, the PSX phrase appears 'Do not underestimate the power of PlayStation' appears.

(Questionnaire from P16\*)

I find that PlayStation promotions to be appealing because of the oddity and mystery that they portray to the view.

(Questionnaire from P15\*)

The marketing strategies for the PlayStation in the past have focussed towards the bizarre and extreme where they could have failed in the video game industry. An example is the UK and European launch in 1996 where advertisements concentrated on S.A.P.S (Society Against PlayStation). Sony had advertised their products suggesting that no one should purchase the PlayStation. In New Zealand, similar lines of advertising were used 'Do not underestimate the power of PlayStation". As a trademark, this statement was as far as it went with Sony New Zealand.

Magazines have also contained unique advertisements for PlayStation :

In magazine ads, the same thing applies where Sony go to the extreme there is some kind of underlying message.

(Questionnaire from 16\*)

Four examples of magazine advertisements for the PlayStation are of an elderly couple, a man pushing a supermarket trolley, a man sitting on a couch next to his pet dog and the faces of two women. Each advertisement contain hidden messages from the text that is

printed about each person. To comprehend the underlying message of each advertisement, the reader must interpret the text and its connection with each the pictorial.

The advertisement of the elderly couple is a promotion for the PlayStation dual shock system hand controller. In the bottom right hand corner is a pictorial of the dual shock controller and the words '*dual shock*'. The advertisement shows the P and S logo, the four symbols and the trademark statement *Do not underestimate the power of PlayStation*. Above the picture of the couple has the text '*George Anderson, 64. Responsible for the thousand of deaths and ruthless beatings, is about to discover how it feels*'. This description may imply that he has been playing the PlayStation and is now about to experience the use of the dual shock controller.

The elderly couple contradicts the target audience that Sony is aiming towards. As stated in the discussion that the target audiences for the PlayStation is from 18 years to 30 year olds, it is unusual to see an elderly couple in the advertisement. A younger couple would be more suitable for the target audience.

The next PlayStation advertisement shows a man pushing a supermarket trolley containing a large quantity of alcohol. The advertisement is promoting the PlayStation multi-tap where a number of players can play at one time. The representation of the alcohol is not for himself, but for his friends. Thus, one can assume that the message in the pictorial acknowledges the man is walking to a friends place to play and drink.

The text at the top identifies who the man is, followed by '*brings friend and family together in a battle of supremacy*'. In the background, the four PlayStation symbols are visible. This may have been used to allow viewers to connect the relationship with the

PlayStation. So, it is the connection between the alcohol and the PlayStation multi-tap which justifies the text at the top.

The advertisement of a man on the couch has him sitting next to his dog and is surrounded by a number of family photos. Some appear to be old pictures that were taken years ago and some appear to be more recent. Also, above the dog is a photo of the man when he was an infant and above the man is a picture of dog who use to be a pup (even though the dog on the couch and in the picture are two different breeds).

The statement that he has '*discovered the key to immortality*' is signified from the old photos he has on the wall behind him. The photos shows his family history of relatives and friends. They represent the length of his past history, the inclusion of the text '*his telephone*' refers to the hotline available to him where he is able to cheat while playing the PlayStation. The descriptive text above the web address states that the hotline is for cheat and hints. This connects the length of his family history and that of the hotline which will assist him playing to the end of a game instead of continuously being stuck at a certain point.

Another magazine advertisement for PlayStation is a close up picture of the faces of two women. Both women have a PlayStation symbol in the pupil of each eye. The symbols on their eyes is the only indication that the advertisement represent the PlayStation. There is no underlying message or meaning to connect the two faces with the PlayStation.

GEORGE ANDERSON, 64.  
RESPONSIBLE FOR THOUSANDS OF DEATHS AND RUTHLESS BEATINGS,  
IS ABOUT TO DISCOVER HOW IT FEELS.



Now feel the force of every kick and punch\* as you're shaken by the impact of a new Colour Analog® Controller (DUAL SHOCK™).  
Just one of an entire range of official PlayStation peripherals designed to make the gaming experience even more powerful.

△○×□	www.playstation.co.nz	
		
DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF PLAYSTATION		

PS and PlayStation are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.  
'DUAL SHOCK' is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.  
\*With 'DUAL SHOCK' compatible PlayStation games.

SON 113

JOEL PETERS, 32.  
BRINGS FRIENDS AND FAMILY TOGETHER  
IN A BATTLE FOR SUPREMACY.

△○×□



Turn friends into enemies with a PlayStation Multi-Tap. The Multi-Tap enables up to five players to race, fight or play at the same time. Plug-in two Multi-Taps and up to eight players can do battle, simultaneously. Just one of an entire range of PlayStation peripherals designed to make gaming even more powerful.

△○×□

[www.playstation-europe.com](http://www.playstation-europe.com)

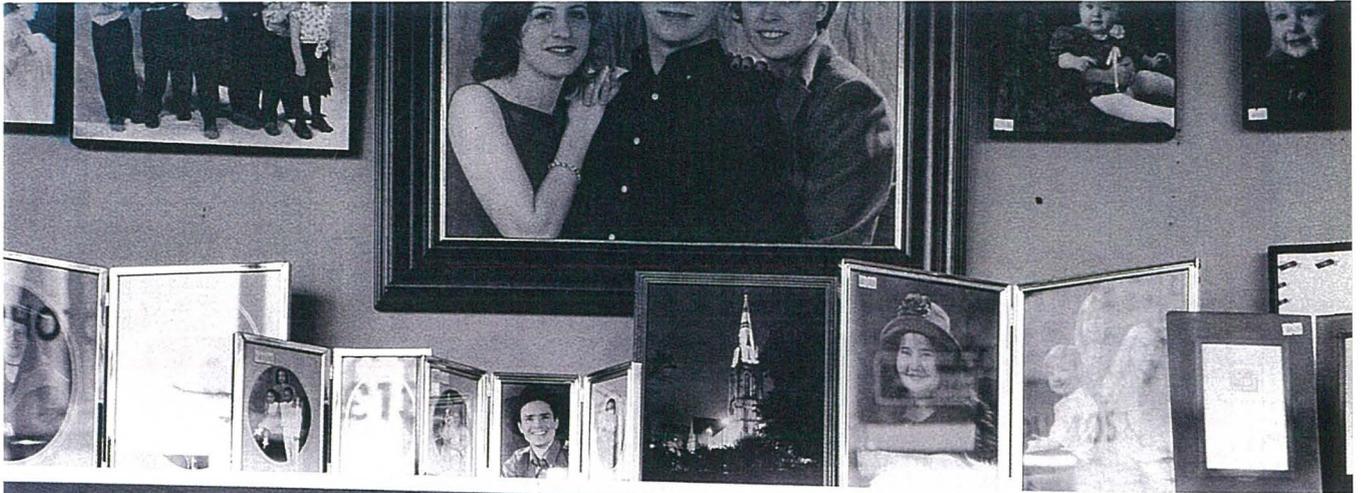


DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF PLAYSTATION

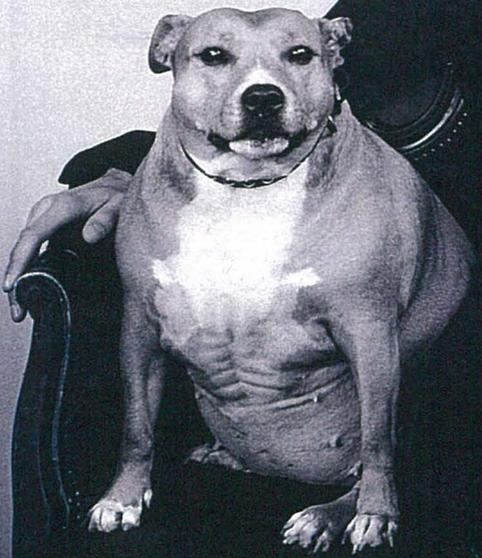
ALWAYS BUY OFFICIAL PRODUCTS

 and "PlayStation" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

SCE 118



TOM MURRAY, 31.  
RECENTLY DISCOVERED THE KEY TO IMMORTALITY.  
HIS TELEPHONE.



Live longer, fight harder and race further with the official PlayStation PowerLine.  
Providing essential cheats and hints to over 150 games  
it's bigger and better than ever. All you need is the five digit code from your  
game disc and a telephone, because the game must go on.

△OX□	<a href="http://www.playstation.co.nz">www.playstation.co.nz</a>	
		<b>0900 97669</b>
DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF PLAYSTATION		

\*PowerLine<sup>®</sup> is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe. PS<sup>®</sup> and PlayStation are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.  
This is a touch tone activated service. Calls are charged at \$1.69 per minute (Correct at April 1999).  
Kids ask your Parents first. Service provider Syncomm Limited, P.O. Box 300-701 Albany, Auckland, New Zealand.



Seguitori is a registered trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

## B) Televised Advertisements

Television is a medium almost all of the population has access to. As previously stated (Shuker, 1994) home consoles require a television or visual unit, Sony uses television to tackle their market. There are many video game titles available for the PlayStation and only selected titles will be given exposure through advertising campaigns.<sup>15</sup>

Television can provide moving images from a game. This is one unique advantage television has over posters, magazines and billboards, which only show still images. "Most newspaper advertising does give some useful information, most posters advertising very little. Television advertising seems primarily to aim at creating a favourable impression", (Hill, 2000 : 182). Forsyth comments on the advantage of television advertising :

Television is regarded as the best overall medium for achieving mass impact and creating an immediate or quick sales response. It is arguable whether or not the audience is captive or receptive; but the fact that TV is being used is often sufficient in itself to generate trade support. Television allows the product to be demonstrated, is useful in test marketing new products because of its regional nature, but is very expensive.

(Forsyth, 1999 : 99)

All of the participants stated that television is a medium that they have seen PlayStation promotions on. Most regarded television as the most common form for advertising PlayStation games. This may be an indication that most of the participants rely on television to inform them about new games, instead of finding information for themselves.

As Television is a visual and audible medium, it can be used to show the game in a very effective manner.

(Questionnaire from P20\*)

Television advertisements are not frequently aired. Only certain games are given advertising air time. Nevertheless, the viewer is offer moving

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<sup>15</sup> Sony Computer Entertainment marketing co-ordinator Caroline Squires commented in Appendix 1 that only 'key releases' will have an advertising campaign.

images from the game.  
(Questionnaire from P16\*)

TV ads are the major medium for attracting new consumers, but magazines I believe are more important for those already involved.  
(Questionnaire from P15\*)

I have seen very few TV ads for specific PlayStation games, so I would be surprised if this was the major medium for promotions.  
(Questionnaire from P17\*)

It was noted in the literature review that television advertising can reach a large audience with sound and moving images (Wells, Burnett and Moriarty, 2000), there are direct parallels where some of the participants share common views. It was acknowledged about the importance of reaching a large audience :

TV ads can hit a wide audience and can be targeted to specific demographics.  
(Questionnaire from P17\*)

TV ads would most likely reach most of the population. Not only would PSX owners would see it, non-owners may also become interested.  
(Questionnaire from P16\*)

Some of the statements acknowledged by some of the participants confirmed the advantages of television advertising identified by Lee and Johnson (in the literature review) :

With increasing graphical sophistication, many games are now becoming more cinematic with expressive animation the norm. This is clearly suited to presentation on television.  
(Questionnaire from P17\*)

Visual appeal and graphics from the game is a huge bonus. Along with real time images, this gives the viewer a greater insight into the appearance of the game.  
(Questionnaire from P16\*)

In a number of televised advertisement for new PlayStation games, the graphics and images are most often included. An example where the advertisement focuses on the graphic details of the game is Gran Turismo 3. A game that was developed for PlayStation 2, all the television network channels aired all 'three commercials'. Gran Turismo 3 became the huge title for PlayStation 2 in 2001, so Sony had produced three commercials that were all similar where they showed the most realistic images ever to be seen on a video game console at the time.

Each advertisement shows a car race where one particular car pulls to the side of the track or road that over looks the background of the screen. The background images show almost real images of city buildings or countryside. The advertisement focuses on the detail images on the car, its real time manoeuvres around corners and the background scenery are outstanding (see video tape).

### **3) Product Strategy**

#### **A) Branding**

It is fundamental business truth that a company or brand will not succeed unless it has a perceived competitive advantage.

(Nilson, 1998 : 47)

Image is always important to any organisation. It can be powerfully descriptive.

(Forsyth, 1999 : 79)

The Sony PlayStation is easily distinguished by the number of different trademarks used to promote it. Not only are words used, but also symbols. Sony gambled within its own reputation when it had entered the video game industry in 1995. This is known as brand equity when referring to the reputation of a brand. Jones stated that "Sony is about to embark on one of the biggest gambles in its history by taking on the might of computer games giants Sega and Nintendo", (Jones, 1995 : 34-35).

Entering a new area of consumer technology, Sony had a huge disadvantage, and many believed that Sony would fail. Sony Computer Entertainment International marketing manager Simon Jobling denied that Sony was at a disadvantage. He stated that "there is no brand loyalty in this market. Technology has not kept pace with consumers expectations . . . we don't carry all the baggage and association that Nintendo and Sega do", (Jones, 1995 : 34-35). Sales marketing manager for Sony Computer Entertainment, Steve Dykes stated that "Sony saw the opportunity to expand its market and committed itself to developing games", (Ad/Media, 1996 : 19). Nilson comments that "in such an environment there is only one way forward in order to be successful: you have to be better than everyone else", (Nilson, 1998 : 15). Nilson points out that the term *kaizen* is a successful factor to marketing. "In marketing, *kaizen* means constant improvement of product and service quality, constant improvement in the perceived values of the brand, constant improvement in the efficiency of the company and constant pressure on better than the 'other' brands", (Nilson, 1998 : 15). This is evident with the demise of the Sega Dreamcast and the successful of the Sony PlayStation 2.<sup>16</sup>

Sony is well recognised for their invention of the first ever walkman. Kochan states that "Sony has ensured that 'Sony Walkman' remains a fixed and familiar word combination", (Kochan, 1996 : 157). Apart from owning their own music company, Sony also has "interests ranging from consumer electronics to the film industry", (Jones, 1995 : 34-35). From a study completed in 1996 (Kochan, 1996), Sony was ranked fifth in the World's Top 100 brands, second in technology, fifth in length (length refers to its stretch and stretchability into new categories and markets) and fourth in breadth (achievement in terms of age spread, consumer types and international appeal). With such high rankings all round, Sony would not have been concerned if they had failed in the video game industry.

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<sup>16</sup> Refer to discussion on Target Audience where Sega ceases production of Dreamcast console.

Even if this was the case, Sony had the assurance that they could fall back onto the success of their consumer electronics production.

A question was asked if any consideration was taken into account of the point that Sony had no previous history in the video game industry. All of the participants shared similar views, in that they did not regard Sony as new to the video game industry, thus having no history :

It was the media that persuaded the purchase of the PlayStation.  
Anyway, Sony is well known for their electronic products. The Sony PlayStation exceeded past consoles in all aspects of video games.  
(Questionnaire from P16\*)

I don't care. It doesn't matter. What matters is the enjoyment.  
(Questionnaire from P5\*)

Another question was put to the participants that related to Sony having no previous gaming history. They were asked if they had any thoughts that the PlayStation may fade away after a period as has happened to other gaming consoles. All insisted that there was no consideration into the future of the PlayStation if it had failed :

With PlayStation being so strong internationally and seemingly to be still growing, there was no thought at all of the PlayStation dying out. It is all too big and powerful for that to happen. Their games are excellent and getting better. Each year improves on the last.  
(Questionnaire from P15\*)

All consoles have a limited life span. PlayStation has lasted. As like all consoles, the games can be used on later versions. PlayStation One games on PlayStation 2.  
(Questionnaire from P20\*)

You just have to invest and enjoy - becoming obsolete is part of the gaming experience. Besides some of my favourite games are on Commodore 64, Amiga 500.  
(Questionnaire from P5\*)

Branding for the PlayStation is important as customers must be able to easily identify a logo or trademark. If identification is achieved, one can assume what the product is. Thus, this can make it easier for the decision process of purchasing. Feldwick states that "a brand is fundamentally a promise, rendered credible by law and by experience. At one level this simply makes the decision process easier; at a higher level it can actually add to consumers' beneficial experience of the product, thus creating a value for which people may be prepared to pay", (Feldwick, 1992 : 26).

There are a number of trademarks for the PlayStation. The term 'trademark' was defined in the review of literature as (McCarthy, Perreault and Quester, 1998) words, symbols or marks, PlayStation uses the phrase '*Do not underestimate the Power of PlayStation*'. Also, Sony wanted to become a company trying to make PlayStation "a mass-market cult, along the lines of Nike and Levi's", (Bainbridge, 1997 : 6). To do this Sony incorporated the idea that they would use the four symbols that featured on the handset of the console controller (Fig. 1). "The four symbols - a cross, square, circle and triangle - will be used as a sub-brand to PlayStation, along the lines of the swoosh used by Nike", (Bainbridge, 1997 : 6).

The participants were asked if they could identify any PlayStation trademarks. All were familiar with the phrase and the symbols.

The logo is on the four buttons on the hand controller. There is a statement, but I can't remember it.

(Questionnaire from P20\*)

The symbols on the keypad. And the phrase 'Don't underestimate the power of PlayStation'.

(Questionnaire from P17\*)

The symbols are on the control pad. There is also the phrase Don't underestimate the power of PlayStation'.

(Questionnaire from P16\*)

Another trademark from the PlayStation is a logo that of the letters 'P' and 'S' (Fig. 2).

This was identified by two of the participants :

The logo for the PlayStation has a red *P* and a blue, green and yellow striped *S* laying flat with PlayStation written beneath in white, set in a black box.

(Questionnaire from P 15\*)

There is a logo of as red *P* with a colour coated *S* . The word PlayStation is written beneath it.

(Questionnaire from P16\*)

The participants were asked where some of the places they saw the trademarks for PlayStation :

On your console, games and in magazines or on TV. In shopping malls, advertising hoardings.

(Questionnaire from P15\*)

TV ads, magazine ads (including non gaming ones, such as Rolling Stone or other music magazines), shop windows, store displays.

(Questionnaire from P17\*)

On the game covers, soccer advertising signs, ice hockey rink sideboards, posters advertising a game, TV, magazines, shop displays.

(Questionnaire from P16\*)

One logo that was not acknowledged by any of the participants is the 'golden diamond' (Fig. 3). Sony Computer Entertainment have their own trademark symbol where a gold diamond shaped square has a line running through the centre of it. Sony is printed above it and underneath it are the words 'Computer Entertainment'. The symbol can be seen on any game cover or promotional material that is published for the PlayStation. There are independent developers and publishers (distributors) for each game that is released. Any game that is developed by Sony, the Sony diamond symbol is used.<sup>17</sup> The trademark

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<sup>17</sup> On the cover of every game, there is a separate company logo. These logos represents the company that develops the games.

symbol can also be seen when a game is loaded into a PlayStation. The first visual image that the player will see is the Sony Computer Entertainment symbol.

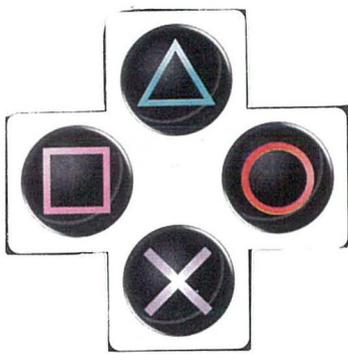


Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

## B) Packaging

There are a number of factors to consider with the design of packaging for PlayStation games. It was traditional that "packaging decisions were based on cost and production factors; the primary function of the package was to contain and protect the product . . . packages must now perform many sales tasks from attracting attention, to describing the product, to making the sale", (Kotler, Chandler, Brown and Adams, 1994 : 275).

The packaging of PlayStation games is similar to that of conventional music CD's. Both the front and back of the casing is transparent. The size dimensions are the same apart from the thickness, due to the instruction book that accompanies the game. Nevertheless, there are now a number of games that are packaged into the exact same size of a conventional CD design package :

The cover of each game will gain appeal. As it's great to see that they are of similar size to normal CD's. Now some games are packaged in cases that are exactly the same music CD's.

(Questionnaire from P16\*)

They have gone for the streamline and CD type covers for the games, some storage space as music CD's.

(Questionnaire from P20\*)

On every transparent PlayStation game case, there are images of the game on the front and back of the package. The primary goal of a game box cover is to make the consumer pick it up and look at the screenshots on the back.<sup>18</sup> On the back of each game case is a written description of the 'outstanding' features that the game possesses and most importantly, the options that the game can run on. This includes the number of players who can play the game at one time, the number of blocks that are required in the memory card and the different peripherals that can be used for the game :

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<sup>18</sup> More than just a pretty package (1997, August) *Next Generation*, Imagine Publishing Inc. pg 36.

The general idea of showing actual shots from the game gives the buyer a chance to see what the game graphics and gameplay make up the game. Some games the designs and overall depiction of a game are excellent.

(Questionnaire from P15\*)

All the images should represent the essence of the game and the characters or assets unique to the game and should convey a high level of excitement and intensity with computer rendered, 3-D imagery.<sup>19</sup>

It was identified by the participants that the packaging was durable and storage friendly :

The spine of the casing is handy as you can shelve your collection like a library.

(Questionnaire from P5\*)

The package is robust and durable, the consistency of spine labelling (game title in white, on a black background) is a nice touch gives a pleasing look when stacked.

(Questionnaire from P17\*)

Not only does the packaging reveal graphics and features of the game, the brand and trademarks are also visible. This was pointed out in the literature review in that the good packaging should promote the brand (McCarthy, Perreault and Quester, 1998). Lightfoot and Gertsman state that "the visual identity of a brand includes its logo or symbol and the package in which it appears", (Lightfoot and Gertsman, 1998 : 46). On the front, the trademark logo of the red 'P' and colour coated 'S' are printed on every front cover of a game. Also, the publisher of the game is acknowledged by their trademark name printed in the bottom right corner of every game.

An additional feature is that on the outside front cover of the case is a sticker, representing the authenticity of the game. The sticker is shown in a metallic colour with the PlayStation logo of the *P* and *S*. The sticker also has the words 'Official Licensed Product' on it, to protect both the consumer and Sony. Without the sticker on the front cover, the game is

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pg36

regarded as counterfeit. The sticker is acknowledging the authenticity, and advising the consumer that they have purchased a legal product.

Furthermore, to distinguish the packaging and design of PlayStation games, the front cover of every game, at the bottom is the word 'PlayStation' in white with a black background. For Platinum games, the background is grey and the word PlayStation is in black. In small print underneath is the word 'platinum' in reverse colour. This strongly identifies that the product is associated to the PlayStation console.

#### **4) Distribution Strategy**

The distribution for PlayStation games fall into two categories. There are the specialist stores and department stores. The specialist stores include The Gamesman and Central Park Interactive, which sell only video and computer games. The department stores include The Warehouse, K-mart, Farmers, Harvey Norman and music retailers, who sell a range of different goods. Nevertheless, the Sony brand name will guarantee some credibility in the department stores.<sup>20</sup>

A question was put to the participants on distinguishing the difference between both specialist stores and department stores. All state similar views to what was stated in the literature review for specialist stores (McCarthy, Perreault and Quester, 1998) concerning staff knowledge and the variety of product :

Specialist stores are set up to provide the consumer with what they want in order to make a sale. The staff in specialist stores have the specific knowledge on the gaming consoles, accessories, games and handy hints, cheats or information providers to give to consumers exactly what they require.

(Questionnaire from P15\*)

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<sup>20</sup> Digital Disciples Sony's PlayStation game plan (June, 1995) *Next Generation*. Imagine Publishing Inc. pg 45.

Larger range of games available. More to choose from. Specialist stores are able to order games that they may not have in stock. Staff knowledge is a bonus as they can be helpful in selecting games and they have first hand knowledge about the products they sell. The store layout in specialist stores have game categorised where it's easy to go to the selection of your favourite game type.

(Questionnaire from P16\*)

Specialist stores tend to have a larger range of games and the staff have a better knowledge of their stock and what is available.

(Questionnaire from P17\*)

With any type of store that is single product focussed, you will get greater knowledge.

(Questionnaire from P20\*)

The participants viewed specialist stores as an ideal place for them to purchase the games. "Most games are now sold through large chains, specialist shops and electrical retailers", (Sanger, Davies, Wilson and Whittaker, 1997 : 7). Their views on department stores selling PlayStation games tend to be more negative compared to specialist stores :

Department stores clutter all their stock together. Most often they can't order specific games that a customers may want. Also staff knowledge on games is at a minimal.

(Questionnaire from P16\*)

In department stores the layout and staff are worked around the other products which means the games and knowledge are not as specialised.

(Questionnaire from P15\*)

Another question that was asked was the influences on which type of retailer that they would prefer. Factors identified here included the staff knowledge, range of stock and even the price. As discussed earlier concerning the price, both forms of retailers sell PlayStation games at a similar price range. Often there are discount deals on certain games.

The higher the level of staff knowledge would be desirable to non gaming people (such as parents) seeking advice on as they can give suggestions on what games are suitable. Price may also determine purchasing a game at a particular store. The range stock would mean

the games that arrive into New Zealand are from Sony Computer Entertainment Europe. Thus, New Zealand is supplied with game titles that are available in Europe and a large number from Asia. However, New Zealand is not disadvantaged with release dates of games are delayed a week to New Zealand and Australia. Steve Dykes stated on the New Zealand market :

Despite New Zealand's distance from the factories in Asia and Europe, and our relative geographical isolation, we are in fact fully integrated with the international SCE scene. When we release titles here it's within a week of their release in Europe.

(Official New Zealand PlayStation Magazine, May, 1999 : 23)

### Target Audience

As previously stated in the literature review, playing video games were predominantly regarded as an activity commonly associated with young adolescent males. This is true in that it was not unusual to see male youths in video arcades during the 1970's and 1980's. As I was one of those youths who spent school holidays and weekends in the gaming parlours, the transition into the 21st century has changed since the first arcade in the 1970's. The days of feeding 20 cent coins into game machines have long gone. Also gone are video machines that needed only a joystick and one or two buttons. Arcades are now full of gaming machines costing \$1 or \$2 to play that contain at least six buttons which the player must contend with. Nevertheless, many youths who visit these parlours are able to adapt to the complexity of the gameplay along with operating the numerous buttons.

Now it is noticeable that the days of the video arcade are numbered. There is a slow reduction in gaming parlours and those who visit them. Webb states that "since the middle of 1994 , the American arcade industry has suffered its worst slump since the great coin-op video crash of 1983", (Webb, 1996 : 29). An amusement expo that was held in 1995 in New Orleans had a number of arcade owners worried about the attendance numbers.

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Many arcade owners' at the expo were concerned about the state of the arcade industry. Many have fears of being wiped out by the speedy growth and technical innovation of the home market.<sup>21</sup> Taking over from the arcade is the video game console that is played in the privacy of the home. Cunningham describes the transition of playing in the arcade to playing in the home :

In the late 70's and early 80's . . . video game playing was not a home based activity. Arcades were the place where game-playing took place and these arcades were populated by adolescent males.<sup>22</sup> A decade later in the early 1990's, the second wave of game-playing had occurred primarily through the dedicated game consoles which are plugged into the home television set.

(Cunningham, 2000 : 213)

With modern technology continuing to develop and grow, consumers are provided with equally well designed games that one would see in the video game parlour. For a company like Sega, they struggled with their products in the video game console sector. Sega created a number of popular games that were designed for the arcade, but now the popularity of the home console has left Sega to cease production of the Dreamcast . "Sega has a problem in that it has always been strong in the arcade market, but this is in decline because of the success of the home consoles", (Edwards, 1999 : 18-19).

No longer are video games strictly played only by young males. There are more females playing video games, but still they only represent a very small percentage when comparing male and female gamers. A survey compiled at Interval Research Centre in Silicon Valley showed a huge gap between boys and girls aged 7-12 years old. The result was that

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<sup>21</sup>US arcades gets ready for war (1995, December) *Next Generation*. Imagine Publishing Inc. pg 24.

<sup>22</sup> Kaplan, S. (1983). The image of Amusement Arcades and the difference between male and female video game playing. *Journal of Popular Culture*. vol. 17, no. 1, pg 93-98.

"software and video games for girls comprised only a small percentage (7% in 1997) of the total kids' market", (Amber, 1998). Some of the reasons that were given included that "computer technology was a thing that girls were less interested in and that number one reason was that video games were boring", (Amer, 1998).

For PlayStation, Sony moved to a new direction by targeting older consumers. The focus of the PlayStation is towards an older audience.<sup>23</sup> This was also the opinion of the 20 participants in the study. They all stated that the PlayStation is targeted towards males. Six of them go further to suggest that females are also targeted. There is a direct parallel with the literature review that males are the main target. Also, the targeted age group revealed that they all agree that adults are focussed towards. All the participant chose from the early teens to about 30 years old. The opinions from the participants reinforces what is interpreted in the literature review in that video gamers are now much older :

12-30 years, mostly males but changing, and targeted towards people who like video games. But the focus is also shifting towards families.  
(Questionnaire from P3)

7-30/35 year old, males - 60%, females 40%  
(Questionnaire from P7)

No longer just boys. The adult market exists and is growing. More games are catering for girls and a lot more girls are playing PlayStation  
12-30 males and females.  
(Questionnaire from P16)

Furthermore, 19 out of 20 of the participants wrote that PlayStation games cater for males more than females. Only one suggested that games were cater for both genders.

Male. They are the ones who buy the games.  
(Questionnaire from P1)

Men. Its obvious. Look at the range of games on the market : sport, war, violence.

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<sup>23</sup> Helen Jones, "Power Games," *Forbes*, 19 May 1995, pg 34-35.

(Questionnaire from P5)

Yes, I believe that PlayStation does favour the male gender, but mainly due to females not interested firstly.

(Questionnaire from P15)

Nevertheless, the growth of female players is growing. The general manager of Sony Computer Entertainment New Zealand Steve Dykes stated that "18% of registered NZ PlayStation owners are female, significantly higher than a lot of other territories", (Official New Zealand PlayStation Magazine, May, 1999 : 23). The comments received from the participants leads to the question whether the gender representation in the games reflect those who play them. A majority of the participants believed that since males are the main users, it was not surprising that characters in PlayStation games were stereotyped :

Yes, most definitely. There are only a few females and all are busty, long legged beauties for the male audience to perve at.

(Questionnaire from P15)

As most games are targeted towards males, the gender representation has to appeal to males, so most females are created to be sexy, alluring in order to generate sales.

(Questionnaire from P3)

Guys have guns. Woman have tits! See Tomb Raider and Dead or Alive.

(Questionnaire from P10)

Women are big breasted. Men are violent. Gender representation in games targets mens egos and fantasies.

(Questionnaire from P4)

Nevertheless, there were some participants who believed that gender representation in games do not reflect the target audience :

I think the target audience isn't reflected at all, not physically. Its representative of their fantasies and dreams.

(Questionnaire from P5)

Gender representation in games doesn't always reflect the target audience. People choose the games they like (if the opportunity is available). There aren't many strong girl figures but then again there are more monsters/animals that are relatively genderless.

(Questionnaire from P12)

As stated in the literature review, video games are now played by adults who had grown up with the invention of Pong; Sony believe that there was a market that had been untouched :

Sony realised an entire generation had been around video games since they were children, and now had disposable income to burn. This market dominated by the 20-something male, wanted quality games and didn't mind paying for them.

(Dodds, 2000 : 29)

The game plan was to first target early adopters of technology and savvy game fans, typically males under 16 yrs. Sony moved to broaden market share by targeting non-traditional gamers, 18-35 yrs, and making the PlayStation more affordable.

(Henderson, 1997 : 5)

From the 20 participants that were selected for the survey, the reasons for purchasing a PlayStation were similar. As each had their own personal reason, the results were not surprising. Reasons included entertainment, leisure, price, range of different titles, and the influence of friends and the media :

I purchased a PlayStation because of the software available in it's diversity. As an entertainment choice and because I had the extra money at the time to purchase a console. Friends influence did persuade a PlayStation purchase over Nintendo 64.

(Questionnaire from P15)

Gameplay. Being able to play spacies in the lounge on a lazy boy chair. The PlayStation was a good price at the time, too.

(Questionnaire from P18)

Purchased because of the gameplay and entertainment. As part of leisure activity, it is a great chance to steer at amazing graphics on the television screen where you determine the outcome of the game. Also the media influence played a huge factor.

(Questionnaire from P16)

### The PlayStation Genre

PlayStation customers have the opportunity to choosing different types of games to play. There are a number of games that can be classified into different genres. Shuker states that "the games fall into a number of fairly clear cut genres", (Shuker, 1994 : 52). This is

evident in publication magazines like PlayStation Pro and Total PlayStation. These magazines categorise almost all Sony PlayStation games ever made. This allows easy access for readers to view a list of game titles available and to concentrate on the type of games they are interested in. All of these show that video games are becoming more diversified and sophisticated.

As there are a number of different genres in video games, retail stores like *The Gamesman* and *Central Park Interactive* divide their merchandise into generalised categories. They display their shelves with a label at the top indicating the type of game is on that shelf. They are simplistic genres like new releases, sports, family and platinum. It would not be feasible to provide every genre with their own shelf space. Reasons include the limit of space available, the lack of stock for one genre taking up space and the number of titles for one genre that may exceed the necessary shelf space. Also, it maybe difficult to appoint a game to one genre where some games can be regarded into a number of different genres.

Shuker (1994 : 52 - 53) has compiled a list of genres available in the early 1990's :

'action' : players take on a role of a character to participate in martial arts - *Mortal Kombat*, *Streetfighter*

'adventure' : incorporating elements of action, quest and role play games - *Dragons Lair*, *Super Mario*

'sports' : athletes putting their name on video games - *Wayne Gretzky* (Ice Hockey), *Joe Montana* (Football)

'adults only' : strictly for adults as almost all titles contains nudity - *Strip Poker*

'strategy' : wargames and commercial rivalries - *Clash of Steel*

'simulation' : cockpit controlling a racing car, jet plane

These are only a few genres in comparison to what is now available. Game developers have explored into new areas of game play where customers are becoming fascinated with. A list compiled by Sanger, Davis, Wilson and Whittaker (1997 : 6-7) includes genres that extend further from Shuker's list.

**Platform** : involves chasing or avoiding characters and obstacles by jumping on to platforms

**Shoot-'em-up** : the central character is required to shoot all other characters

**Beat-'em-up** : players chooses a character who has particular combat skills which is used to destroy other characters

**Sports** : games created from actual games

**Racing** : players take part in simulated car races

**Flight Simulated** : the player controls an aircraft

**Adventure** : a quest where the character escapes to fantasy worlds avoiding obstacles and traps

**Role Playing Games** : player takes on the role of the central character

**Puzzles** : challenging games where player solves complex puzzles

**Weird Games** : miscellaneous, cannot be categorised

As this list covers a larger variety of different genres, for PlayStation, the Official New Zealand PlayStation Magazine compiles a list of games available and the type of game :

**Racing** (*Gran Turismo*), **Sports** (*NHL 2000*), **Shoot-'em-up** (*Doom*), **Role Playing Game** (*Final Fantasy VIII*), **Platform** (*Heart of Darkness*), **Puzzle** (*Devil Dice*), **Flight Simulated** (*Ace Combat 3*), **Adventure** (*Resident Evil*), **Beat-'em-up** (*Tekken 3*), **Strategy** (*Command and Conquer*), **Dance** (*Bust A Groove*)

This list of genres is similar to the previous by Sanger, Davis, Wilson and Whittaker. Nevertheless, PlayStation Magazine has allocated games into specific types of genres (subgenres). There are now subgenres introduced by PlayStation :

### Shoot-'em-up

First person Shoot-'em-up (*Quake II*), 3-D Shoot-'em-up (*Omega Boost*)

### Adventure

Scary Adventure (*Resident Evil*), Horror Adventure (*Silent Hill*), 3-D Adventure (*Syphon Filter*), Sneak-'em-up Adventure (*Metal Gear Solid*)

### Sport

Cricket Simulated (*Cricket 2000*) Basketball Simulated (*NBA Live 99*), Ice Hockey Simulated (*NHL 99*)

There are a number of 'spin off' games that are similar in gameplay. *Resident Evil* has so far resulted into two sequels and other titles : *Resident Evil 2*, *Resident Evil 3 : Nemesis*, *Silent Hill* and *Dino Crisis*. The sneak-'em-up game *Metal Gear Solid* has initiated *Syphon Filter*, *Mission Impossible*, *Tomorrow Never Dies* and *In Cold Blood*. As these games can be generalised into a genre, then they are given more specific description within that genre.

All games that are listed in the Official New Zealand PlayStation Magazine have been associated with a descriptive genre. This has opened the door for games to contain elements from other genres. The game *Die Hard Trilogy* contains racing, shoot-'em-up and targeting. *Metal Gear Solid* has adventure which can be categorised as a spy simulated or sneak-em'-up. These games can be categorised into a number of different genres. Provenzo emphasizes that "the content of video games and their technology as well, are rapidly changing", (Provenzo, 1991 : 66).

With PlayStation games being categorised into genres from where they can evolve into either a specific genre or contain elements of different genres, the consumer has accepted what is offered to them. The popularity of certain games (eg *Metal Gear Solid* and *Die*

*Hard Trilogy*) will continue to rise as long as the game play, graphics, and lifespan remains at an level that will satisfy the consumer.

A survey concerning the 50 most popular games was conducted to see what the public was interested in playing. The results compiled from over 1000 people (Official New Zealand PlayStation Magazine Nov, 2000 : 36 - 49) revealed that the role playing game, *Final Fantasy VII & VIII*, was voted number one. The results were as follows (number in brackets represents ranking) :

#### **Racing 22%**

(4) *Gran Turismo*, (6) *Driver*, (7) *Colin McRae Rally 1 & 2.0*, (13) *Crash Team Racing*, (21) *Gran Theft Auto*, (25) *Toca Touring Cars 1, 2 & 3*, (37) *Wipe Out 1,2 & 3*, (39) *Need for Speed 1-5*, (40) *Destruction Derby 1 & 2*, (44) *Formula One 97, 98, 99* , (45) *Roll Cage*

#### **Adventure 22%**

(2) *Metal Gear Solid*, (8) *Resident Evil 1 & 2*, (11) *Tomb Raider 1, 2, 3 & 4*, (15) *In Cold Blood*, (18) *Jedi Power Battles*, (22) *Medievil 1 & 2*, (24) *Legacy of Kain : Soul Reaver*, (27) *Tenchu : Stealth Assassins*, (29) *Star Wars : Episode 1*, (42) *Dino Crisis*, (49) *Die Hard Trilogy*

#### **Sports 22%**

(3) *Tony Hawk's Skateboarding 1 & 2*, (14) *ISS Pro Evolution*, (26) *Jonah Lomu Rugby*, (33) *Shane Warne Cricket 99*, (34) *Cool Boarders 1, 2, 3 & 4*, (36) *NBA Live 2000*, (41) *Everyone's Golf*, (46) *Fifa 97, 98, 99, 2000*, (47) *AFL 99*, (48) *Anna Kornikova Smash Tennis*

#### **Shoot-'em-up 12%**

(5) *Syphon Filter*, (16) *Hogs of War*, (17) *Metal of Honor*, (20) *Time Crisis*, (32) *Quake 2*, (38) *Point Blank*, (50) *Duke Nukem : Time to Kill*

**Platform 10%**

(12) *Crash Bandicoot 1, 2, 3*, (19) *Abe's Oddysee & Exoddus*, (23) *Spyro the Dragon 1 & 2*, (28) *Ape Escape*, (35) *Croc 1 & 2*

**Beat-'em-up 4%**

(9) *Tekken 1, 2, 3*, (10) *WWF Smackdown*

**Role Playing Games 4%**

(1) *Final Fantasy VII & VIII*, (31) *Vagrant Story*

**Strategy 2%**

(22) *Command and Conquer Retaliation & Red Alert*

**Flight Simulation 2%**

(43) *Ace Combat*

Note : Music and Puzzle did not register

From the 20 participants involved in the questionnaire, racing games took the top spot with adventure games :

Racing 23%, Adventure 23%, Beat-'em-up 14%, Sport 12%, Role Playing Games 9%, Shoot-'em-up 7%, Platform 5%, Strategy 5%, Puzzle 2%.

When comparing the two sets of results, there is a familiarity in the findings. Both reveal similar popularity for each genre. The greatest difference is the sample size from each exercise. From a survey of over 1000 people compared to a size of 20 participants, the results are astounding in how close they are to one another. So the results reveal that consumers prefer a variety of different games with racing and adventure the most popular.

The number of different games for the PlayStation (and for PlayStation 2) continues to grow. There are at least 800 titles available for the first PlayStation by November 2000.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Anonymous, "The PlayStation Quest," *Maclean's*, 6 Nov 2000, pg. 81, vol 113, iss 45.

This suggests that the PlayStation is still growing and that games are expanding into different and new genres because of the demand from consumers to play something different. With 800 titles, game developers would be aware that there is a demand for them to create new genres to keep consumers satisfied.

### PSone

When PlayStation 2 was released, many had wondered about the future of the original PlayStation. While Sony have continued production of game titles for the console, owners of the original console may feel they could be missing out on the opportunities PlayStation 2 owners have.

The original PlayStation is quickly aging since its release in 1995. The functions on the console are now regarded as 'limited'. Playing games and listening to music CD's are becoming a small feature to the new video game consoles. Nevertheless, the rapid growth of modern technology is not all forgotten for the original PlayStation. In 2000, Sony introduced 'PSone' (PlayStation One). It does not have the capabilities of PlayStation 2, but is a modified version of the original PlayStation which was replaced by the improved console. The PSone can cater for those who are new to PlayStation and are willing to purchase a console for a low price (compared to PlayStation 2). "Sony Computer Entertainment Inc . . . has introduced a version of its popular game platform that offers the same functionality of the original at one - third the size", (Mayer, 2000b : 77).

The PSone is smaller and can be connected to mobile phones to download information. Ueda described the repackaging of the original PlayStation "reducing it to approximately one - third of its size and is positioning it for mobile networks - wireline and wireless. An adaptor cable can connect it (and also the original PlayStation and PlayStation 2 ) to

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mobile phones, by which the user can download information, content, and software", (Ueda, 2000 : 8).

The PSone (or model SCPH-100) is small and light in that it is portable enough to move around. Even still, it can be used in a car. Mayer states that the user can "carry the game console from room to room or use it in a car", (Mayer, 2000b : 77). The PSone allows for a LCD monitor to be connected to the console. The inclusion for such a peripheral is keeping the whole console portable by not having to connect to a large television screen.

The only disadvantage for PSone is that it must be plugged into an electrical power source. It is recognised as Sony's equivalent to Nintendo's a Game Boy Advance. The Game Boy Advance is a hand held machine which players can insert different games. This is the third instalment for Nintendo from the original Games Boy to Game Boy Colour and now the latest version which has greater capabilities. What makes Nintendo Game Boy Advanced attractive is that the screen is 50 percent bigger and its image processor is three time faster and runs on 32 bits, up from eight bits.<sup>25</sup>

As the original PlayStation was phased out, Elkin states that "Sony will segment marketing efforts on PSone, targeting non-traditional gamers with a \$US99 price on hardware", (Elkin, 2001a : 4). Music store owner Roger Marbeck stated that there were about 60,000 PlayStation 2 units sold and 400,000 PSone (including the original PlayStation) had been sold in New Zealand.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> It's battle stations as new Game Boy arrives. (2001, March 21). *The Manawatu Evening Standard*, pg 10.

<sup>26</sup>Roger Marbeck discussing the PlayStation on Television One's Good Morning Show, 15th June, 2001.

### The Film Connection

The computer game and motion picture industry may have finally found the right formula for collaboration : successful movies, well designed games and the potential for new toy lines born from the popular games.

(Chronis, 1998 : 71-73)

Over the years, there have been hundreds of games available for the PlayStation. Wiley states "more than 800 original PlayStation games already on the market", (Wiley, 2000 : 20). Modern technology has contributed to the sophistication of realistic digital graphics into the world of home video games. The Sony PlayStation is the ultimate 'next generation' gaming console that has set the pace for graphic images in home video games. And with PlayStation 2 taking a huge step forward into home entertainment, video game titles are set to improving quality visual images.

Game developers have shown their creativity by producing games that have made them popular. One aspect where game developers have created popular games, is the influence by other media forms. This includes films, television and comics. Video game players are now able to play games that are an imitations to these other medias. These games are produced due to the success from other media forms. "The games industry and other areas of the entertainment industry are joining forces", (Cunningham, 2000 : 215). There is no longer a media that just sits in its domain for which it was originally designed for.

Cottee comments on the media cross over :

Since soon after the first inception, video games too have been a link in the sinister cross-promotional chain. There have been games based on movies, comics and cartoons, even books. But now that the video game has swollen to the size where it outgross the cinema, we are seeing a shift in the crossover tide. Now there are an increasing number of films based on games. The wider implications of this have yet to fully sink in to the public consciousness, for it's going to affect the games as much as the movies they inspire.

(Cottee, 1999 : 33)

There are a number of movies and television programs that have been designed into video game. Movies titles include :

*Tomorrow Never Dies, Die Hard Trilogy, Terminator 2, Alien Trilogy, A Bugs Life, The Mummy, Independence Day, Jurassic Park, Star Wars - Phantom Menace, Small Soldiers, Mission Impossible, Toy Story, Mulan, Tarzan, Hercules, Chicken Run, Evil Dead, Men In Black, Harry Potter.*

Television programs include :

*The Simpsons, VIP, Xena - Warrior Princess, South Park, The Muppets, The X Files, WWF, WCW, Who wants to be a Millionaire, Dukes of Hazzards, The Smurfs.*

Video games have also influenced the production of movies and television programs. The popular game *Mortal Kombat* had a spin off into two movies and a television series. *Street Fighter* was converted into a movie. *Pacman* had a television cartoon. The movie *Resident Evil* has just been completed in 2001. *Final Fantasy* was released in 2001.

Provenzo has identified that there are a number of mediums that are over lapping one another. This includes (Provenzo, 1991) video games based on cartoons, games into television programs, games based on movies and television programs into games.

The biggest drawcard for game to film in 2001 is Paramount Pictures' *Tomb Raider*. After five successful instalments for the PlayStation, the release of the film was highly anticipated by video game fans. *Tomb Raider* features a teenage girl named Lara Croft who sets out on adventures to find historical artefacts around the world. *Tomb Raider* is the third project for Simon West, who is best known for directing the action film *Con Air* and the thriller *The General's Daughter*.

*Tomb Raider* has also made it into the Guinness Book of Records. The game is one of the biggest selling titles of all time and Lara Croft is regarded as the biggest cyberstar to date.<sup>27</sup> "The Tomb Raider franchise has become one of the entertainment industry's most lucrative assets and has placed Lara amongst the world's most identifiable personalities", (Official New Zealand PlayStation 2 Magazine, 2001 : 10).

In the movie, Croft is played by Academy Award Winner Angelina Jolie, her character is seen as the female equivalent to Indiana Jones. The film's aim was to "broaden its teenage, mostly male, audience to a wider group who weren't gamers, but might be interested in the state, Angelina Jolie", (Friedman, 2001 : 6). Friedman further states that *Tomb Raider* "alters the vision of a fighting Ms. Croft gently to draw a wider audience, while at the same time not alienate longtime loyal fans", (2001 : 6).

The movie *Tomb Raider* uses real characters where the film makers are attempting to keep the film true to the setting of the game. Taylor states that "consultants from Eidos, the software company that makes the game, hung around to be sure West (the director) didn't stray too far from the Croft mythology", (Taylor, 2001 : 66-69). The movie *Final Fantasy* also attempts to keep the film similar to the game by using computer generated graphics. McCarroll describes the animation used for *Final Fantasy* :

Final Fantasy is ground breaking in that it takes a photo realistic approach instead of presenting standard cartoon images. And the animation is so breathtaking it's tempting to ignore the wishy-washy, metaphysical mysticism that passes for the plot.

(McCarroll, 2001 : F6)

Films are now using computer generated images more than ever. Many film makers have used the aid of computer graphics and technology eg. *The Gladiator*, *Star Wars - The Phantom Menace*, *The Mummy Returns*, and *Shrek* will continue to be used as the

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<sup>27</sup> *The 1999 Guinness Book of Records*. Guinness Publishing (1998), pg.170-171.

technology becomes available. As these movies use computer technology, they are not used for the complete movie.

Another film that will making the conversion to video games is the film *The Matrix*. After the success of the original film, once the sequel is released (which is due in 2002), the video game will be promoted. Nevertheless, as there is a successful relationship between the conversion between different mediums, there must be others that are failing. Surprisingly, it is the movie industry that is the casualty. Cunningham states that "computer games are often more profitable than movies", (Cunningham, 2000 : 215). This comment is supported by Pat Pilcher who stated that during the period of late 1999 to the end of 2000, video game revenues had exceeded those of Hollywood.<sup>28</sup> Murdoch states that "the video game industry made more money from gross domestic income than all of Hollywood's movies combined", (Murdoch, 2000 : 60-62).

The release of *Tomb Raider* in North America was successful as it became the box office number one, knocking off the big budget film *Pearl Harbour* (even though it lasted only one week at the top spot "Tomb Raider is the most successful movie based on a video game", (Matthews, 2001). However, Taylor comments that overall "the history of video game transfers from the computer screen to the big screen is dismal", (Taylor, 2001 : 66-69). The success of *Tomb Raider* continued around the world where there would be an expectation available merchandise such as toys, posters and novelties based on the movie. Even though Lara Croft merchandise has been available for a number of years in the United Kingdom, this was the only country where it could be purchased via the internet or brochures that accompany the actual PlayStation game. The game itself may start a phenomenon of Lara fans. Already popular with gamers, Lara will become even bigger

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<sup>28</sup> Pat Pilcher discussing PS2 on 'Breakfast', Television One, 30th November, 2000.

with the release of the movie and eventually the merchandise. So, from the video game to the movie and merchandise, the producers of successful titles are expanding towards a wider medium. When Nintendo was the most popular brand leader in the video game industry, Provenzo commented on the expansion of the company to into other mediums :

It is not surprising that product markets expand beyond the video games themselves into a whole range of media and consumer products associated with games. The extent to which Nintendo's product market has been expanded can be seen in a wide range of secondary products that have been licensed by the company.

(Provenzo, 1991 : 14)

Even before the filming of *Tomb Raider*, the Lara Croft character was used in other commercial mediums. A television advertisement was produced where Lara Croft was used to promote the energy drink Lucozade. However, the creators of the *Tomb Raider* series were relying on the success of the movie world wide. "Eidos executives hopes that a runaway hit at the box office will give its sales a major boost heading into the holiday season", (Gwin, 2001 : 5). This is due to the game developer, Eidos, who were in a financial crisis in mid 2001. A number of factors have contributor to the once successful company.

Provenzo outlines the video game phenomenon where it expands into secondary products. From a symbolic value, video games became a consumer product and also a media product. Thus, marketing of the product via advertising creates a number of different merchandise. For the PlayStation, Sony is hoping to tempt big brand names into running joint promotions by exploiting the cool images of its PlayStation.<sup>29</sup> A number of different companies had joined in on promoting *Tomb Raider*. Through the internet websites, companies included "PepsiCo's Pepsi, Tricon Global Restaurants' Tarco Bell, Ericsson cell phones and Ford Motor Co.'s Land Rover", (Friedman, 2001 : 6).

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<sup>29</sup> Sony seeks brand for direct hit. (1998, April 9). *Marketing*. vol 5

### The Celebrity Drawcard

Video games have had a great influences upon other mediums. As in the previous section where the video game industry have had a successful connection with the film industry, television networks and various companies for merchandising, one area where video games sales are given a huge boost are endorsements from well known celebrities. In particular, sports titles have the largest influence.

There are a number of games that are named after a popular sports star. They include *Tiger Woods Golf*, *John Madden 2000*, *Jeremy McGrath SuperCross 2000*, *Tony Hawke's Skateboarding*, *Shane Warne's Cricket*, *Johah Lomu's Rugby*, *Colin McRae's Rally* and *Matt Hoffman's Pro BMX*. As these are all sports titles, it is not unusual that game players will tend to choose these sports stars as their character in the game. Provenzo states that "by connecting media information and cultural figures to video games - particular popular actors or sports figures - the user is able to associate the game and themselves with an alter ego", (Provenzo, 1991 : 21). Turkle states that such approach "is custom made for the computer generation : you identify with an alter ego as you play your role, but the process of play is mathematical and procedural", (Turkle, 1984 : 83).

There are also stars who endorse titles where they are on the front covers of games, yet the title itself is not named after them. One example is *Cricket 2000* where the New Zealand version has on the cover, the New Zealand cricketers Stephen Fleming and all rounder Chris Cairns. Another example is All Black Tana Umaga who is on the cover of *Rugby 2001*.

Another method where celebrities review games via magazines giving their recommendations on a game. In *Official New Zealand PlayStation Magazine*, each month a celebrity is selected to give their opinion on a game that they have recently played.

Whether or not one can consider this method an endorsement, the subjective celebrities are able to use their popularity to influence readers. Celebrities include All Black Tane Randall, former Australian Rugby League captain Brad Fittler, music groups Regurgitator and Limp Bizkit, radio announcers Nick Trott and Roger Farrelly and New Zealand Super V8 Holden driver Greg Murphy.

### Conclusion

Each of the four marketing strategies (Price, Communication, Product, Distribution) used by Sony formed the basis to marketing the PlayStation. Communication strategy is one of the more important features in the marketing of the PlayStation. It is the information through magazines and advertising that sends the message to the consumer market. Overall, as part of the consumer market, the participants in the survey were able to establish the basic fundamentals that Sony have set.

All participants in the survey were aware of the pricing of PlayStation games. There were individual decisions to either purchase software at the market price or to wait for a sale price reduction. Thus, two types of consumers were identified. Those purchasing a game at the market price can be regarded as 'hardcore' gamers who want to own the game immediately. And there are other who are 'casual' gamers who are not desperate to purchase games.

Most participants were familiar with the trademarks and logo of the PlayStation. Generally, the participants could remember the logos. This indicates that Sony have succeeded in their marketing techniques in that consumers see the logo and are instantly able to relate it to the Sony PlayStation. This is similar to other brand logos such as Nike, Reebok and Canterbury which all have distinguishable symbols that identifies the company (by logo, thus name and reputation).

## Chapter Four

### Case Study - PlayStation 2

With the PlayStation, Sony is demonstrating its capability in developing as well as applying technology

(Teresko, 1999 : 44)

It really makes sense for Sony to create a system that takes advantage of all their resources, since the company has a huge movie and music base. The PS2 is really a true home entertainment system.

(Desjardins, 2001a : 39-40).

After producing the highly successful PlayStation, a more superior console had exploded onto the video game market. PlayStation 2 was Sony's second console.<sup>30</sup> When PlayStation 2 was first announced, it came as a surprise to all. "The whole games industry (plus computer world and stock market) was shaken on March 2nd this year when Sony finally announced the specs of what it dubbed the 'next generation' PlayStation", (Clarke, 1999 : 38). "The video game industry is at the beginning of a five year cycle of increasing sale", (Gunderson, 2001 : 173-75).

From 18th to the 20th February 2000, the Japanese public had their first opportunity to test out PlayStation 2 at the PlayStation festival in Tokyo. As expected from the official sales date from 4th March 2000 in Japan, demand and sales were high. Predictions were correct. Caroline Squires from Sony Computer Entertainment stated that "more than one million units were sold in the first two days of its release", (see Appendix 1). Two months later in Tokyo, "the PlayStation 2 had sold out after the most successful launches in the history of consumer electronics", (Official New Zealand PlayStation Magazine, May, 2000 : 10)

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<sup>30</sup> This can be debated as Sony designed PSone, which is a modified version of the original PlayStation. PSone came out before PS2 in New Zealand, but vice versa in Japan.

### Sega Concedes

In New Zealand the release date for PlayStation 2 was 30th Nov 2000. The timing of its release was crucial for its success especially prior to the Xmas season. Sony's competitors, Sega and Nintendo, had also produced consoles which they believe of to be equivalent or even superior to the PlayStation 2. Sega was first to release its console, Dreamcast, in September 1999.<sup>31</sup> However, Sega conceded their position in the video game industry by stopping the production of Dreamcast consoles in March 2001. "Sega scared off by even the damage competition decided in March 2001 that it would stop making its Dreamcast console", (Powell, 2001 : 58). Sega was a dominant force during the dawn of gaming in the 1980's, but it fell hard in the mid-1990's when its Saturn console was vanquished by rival systems from Sony and Nintendo.<sup>32</sup> Now, the once dominate company is now producing games for both Sony and Nintendo.

Sega were once a strong contender in the console stakes worldwide, gaining ground on Nintendo with each successive generation of machine, but when Sony entered (and dominated) the market in 1995, Sega just kept slipping farther and farther behind. The decision to focus solely on software has been applauded by most sections in the industry.

(Official New Zealand PlayStation Magazine, March, 2001)

### The Characteristics

The video game market, with the emergence of several new consoles, has finally welcomed the DVD format into its world.

(Galante-Block, 2001 : 22-24)

PlayStation 2 contains some of the most advanced technology ever possessed in a home video game console. Apart from being able to play audio CD's, one of the most exciting features that PlayStation 2 possesses is "the replacement of the PlayStation console will

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<sup>31</sup> Dreamcast is no longer in production from March 2001 as Sega could not compete against the success of PlayStation 2.

<sup>32</sup> Someone pinch Dreamcast; competition is waking up. (2001, January 1) *Discount Store News*. pg 42.

not only run computer games" (Joyce, 1999 : 16). It will also play DVD (Digital Versatile Disk) movies and can connect to the internet. "PlayStation 2 plays DVD movies and audio CDs and is backward compatible with existing PlayStation One Software. This versatility is expected not only to give a boost to gaming - related to software, but DVD titles as well", (Heller, 2000 : 2, 56).

The inclusion of DVD compatibility has had a direct effect on demand for PlayStation 2. As a side effect, this should also give the DVD market a boost, forcing prices of conventional DVD players to be reduced and making more movie titles available (Armstrong, 2000). In support of this Long suggests that "the launch of Sony's PlayStation 2 console in New Zealand is expected to give a huge boost to the DVD market here", (Long, 2000). Sony is aware that they are promoting the technology of the DVD. In 1997, there were 6m DVD rentals and it is predicted by Adams Media Research that by the end of 2001 that rentals of DVD movies will rise to 692b.<sup>33</sup> Also sales of DVD movies will rise. An example is the movie. On a budget of \$US20m to film, DVD sales of the film to date is \$US1136m.<sup>34</sup>

In years to come, PlayStation 2 owners will be able to purchase a hard disk (similar to a PC hard drive) and connect the unit to the internet. A hard disk and internet connection will make PlayStation 2 a true multimedia machine capable of on-line gaming as well as downloading games and storing heavy graphics to make on-line games faster.<sup>35</sup> Also PlayStation 2 will have other peripherals which can be connected to the unit.<sup>36</sup> Joyce

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<sup>33</sup> DVD tail wagging the box office-dog. *Sunday Star Times*, (2001, August 26), sec. Business, pg E4.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Games rival movie industry. (2000, November 19). *Home Technology*. p 45.

<sup>36</sup> Peripherals are other devices that can be connected to the unit. eg a memory card

states that PlayStation 2 "will connect to phone line modems, cable modems and cellular phone modems, allowing full access to the internet", (Joyce, 1999 : 16). Rosier further states that "Sony's ultimate vision is of PlayStation 2 as the hub of home entertainment, with users able to plug in a host of other peripherals such as digital cameras, mobile phones and MP3 players for different applications", (Rosier, 2000 : 11).

The backwards compatible of PlayStation 2 means the games that were designed for the original PlayStation can also be played on PlayStation 2. Joyce comments that "the system will be fully backward compatible, able to play older PlayStation games titles as well as those designed to take advantage of PlayStation 2's increased power", (Joyce, 1999 : 16). The backwards compatibility is a huge advantage for Sony as past video game consoles have operated on cartridge based units where they were designed for a particular machine, eg the Sega Mastersystem. Elkin states that "the PlayStation 2 is built on brand equity for the PlayStation. The fact that PlayStation One consumers can play their entire library of software titles on PlayStation 2 is a key point of loyalty", (Elkin, 2001b : 4). Once the machine was upgraded to a newer designed unit, the older cartridges were not compatible with the newer console model. Cunningham states that "once a console has been purchased, the game cartridges are incompatible", (Cunningham, 2000 : 215). Desjardins insists that "for hardcore gamers, it really won't matter whether the systems play DVD movies, provide internet access or spout legs and walk around the room. It's the games that count", (Desjardins, 2001b : 52).

PlayStation 2 is powered by a 128 bit microprocessor (PlayStation only had only a 32 microprocessor). It also contains 32 megabytes of memory. "The CPU is 128-bits running at 300 megahertz with 32 megabytes of RAM onboard, and it can run CD-Roms at 24-speed and DVD-Roms at four speed", (Christian, 2000 : 7).

"Sony calls PlayStation 2 a 'computer entertainment system', not a video game system", (Gaudiosi, 2000b : 29). Furthermore Scally insists that "Sony's new PlayStation 2 brings together so many different forms of amusement that it could be called a Swiss Army entertainment device. Just don't call it a video game machine", (Scally, 2000b : 27). Joyce also insists that "Sony aims to put its game console at the heart of new home entertainment systems", (Joyce, 2000 : 17). Gaudiosi states that "without a doubt, PlayStation 2 is the most powerful and versatile system on the market", (Gaudiosi, 2000b : 29). Externally, the PlayStation 2 unit two control ports, two memory slots, an AV multicable output, an optical digital output, two USB ports, Type III PCMCIA card slot and an i.link (IEEE1394).<sup>37</sup> The dimensions of the unit are 301 mm (W) x 178 mm (D) x 78 mm (H) and weighs 2.2 kg.

The system contains a microchip called the 'emotion engine', in the PlayStation 2 can generate words, characters, behaviours and complex physical simulations in real time via massive floating-point processing power", (Teresko, 1999 : 44). Mayer further suggests that "the philosophy behind the design of the new Sony game console was to combine a step up in graphics quality via a new graphics synthesiser with unprecedented ability to create characters, behaviour, and complex physical simulations in real time by relying heavily on massive floating point processing capability", (Mayer, 2000a : 71). Turkle further states on the advanced technology that game designers have compared to the earlier days of video games :

Designers are starting to break out of these limitations. New generations of computer graphics will allow game characters to have more realistic gestures and facial expressions. New programming techniques offer the hope of creating characters who have more specific and interesting personalities than the monsters in *Pacman* so that players' interactions with them may feel more like a social encounter and less like controlling a pinball.

(Turkle, 1984 : 77)

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<sup>37</sup> PlayStation 2 Specifications. (November 1999). *New Zealand PlayStation*, pg. 9.

PlayStation 2 is so advanced, Sony have taken the time and effect into producing an entertainment system that creates images that are as real as possible :

With the PlayStation's processing power, the hair and clothing of a game character can be affected by a digital wind calculated and processed in real time. Other examples include the dynamic simulation of real world physical attributes such as gravity, friction, mass and the accurate simulation of different materials such as water, metal and gas. That will change the future of computer entertainment forever.

(Teresko, 1999 : 44)

Video games for the PlayStation show realistic images. Skirrow states that "the new generation of machines produces an even more ecstatic identification, for they offer a magical liberation from all kinds of rigidity, including the laws of time and space", (Skirrow, 199 : 332). Hecker, a technical game developer states that "game developers need to find new things to innovate and for many today that means better physics", (Cavanaugh, 1999 : 140-105). Cavanaugh also insists that "in their continuing quest for greater realism, game makers are upgrading and designing new 3-D simulation games by injecting a heavy dose of real-world physics", (Cavanaugh, 1999 : 104-105).

Past video games have not possessed these types of graphics. Sega had attempted too with their 128-bit Dreamcast, but low sale numbers had reflected on their popularity and the demise of the console in 2001 (possibly due to the PlayStation 2 DVD and backwards capability). By August 2000 (Manning, 2000) Sega Dreamcast had sold about 2 million units in America claiming about 15% of the video game market. Sony has quadrupled Sega by claiming 61%.<sup>38</sup> However, Sony is well aware that Nintendo is planning to release a massive 256-bit microprocessor called 'Gamecube' and Microsoft is releasing 'X-Box'. Taylor states "no games-console maker has ever dominated the market for two successive generations of technology", (Taylor, 2000 : 156).

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<sup>38</sup> The PlayStation quest. (2000, November 6). *Maclean's*. p 81. vol. 113, iss, 45.

## The Competitors

As far as Sony are concerned, rival Microsoft and Nintendo are playing a game of catchup.

(Desjardins, 2001 : 24)

With PlayStation 2 being released in 2000, the Xbox and Gamecube arrived a year later. The Microsoft Xbox is a "black, cubed shaped console with its green X logo will feature a high speed modem, an eight gigabyte hard drive, a 733 megahertz Intel processor and a DVD drive", (Desjardins, 2001c : 24). The price of the Xbox for the US launch (November 8, 2001) was \$US299. At least 800,000 units have become available in North America (300,000 more units than PlayStation 2 launch). By the end of 2001 "Microsoft promises 1 to 1.5 million Xboxes to enter the North American market", (Rovito, 2001 : 18-19). With a built-in 8Gb hard drive, at least 20 games have been produced for the console and another 200 games are in production. After the launch, Microsoft spent \$US500 million to market the Xbox.

The Nintendo Gamecube was launch during the same period as the Xbox (November 5, 2001). "The dark blue console will feature a 400 megahertz processor, a 56K modem with a broadband adapter and a drive that will play disc slightly smaller than CD's", (Desjardins, 2001c : 24). The price of the Gamecube was set at \$US199. With the launch of the Gamecube "Nintendo has a \$US75 million promotional campaign that will roll out with a slate of 24 new titles", (Desjardins, 2001c : 24). Nevertheless, the Gamecube is disadvantaged in that "the machine will not play DVD's, CD's or include a hard drive", (Rovito, 2001 : 18-19).

## Demand over Supply

Sony has not been able to meet the popularity of PlayStation 2 in North America and only 500,000 units have been shipped from Japan. Originally, 1,000,000 were destined for North America, but the demand had become too great for the Sony manufacturers :

Sony confirmed that it would fall far short of meeting its promise to have a million devices ready for sale on Oct 26. At least 500,000 consumers Sony had expected to satisfy immediately - many of whom had made deposits with retailers - will be turned away. Sony blamed shortages of electronic components.

(Feder, 2000 : 7)

Just as anticipation was building to a fever pitch, however, Sony announced that production of the game platform had fallen a month behind and the company would not be able to meet its aggressive rollout schedule due to component shortages. In late September, the entertainment giant announced it would ship 500,000 units of the PS2 in its North American launch and follow with approximately 100,000 units per week through the holiday season.

(Mayer, 2000a : 71)

To try to meet such high demand, Sony continues to ship in PlayStation 2 units into North America. "Sony insists it will ship 100,000 PlayStation 2 systems to North America each week to the end of the holiday season, meaning there will be at least 1.3 million happy gamers in North America by the time Santa makes his rounds", (Lewis, 2000 : 473 - 476).

In New Zealand retail specialist stores the Gamesman and Central Park Interactive opened their doors on the stroke of midnight on the 30th November. Dann states that "Sony was bringing in thousands of machines . . . but couldn't guarantee there would be enough to go round", (Dann, 2000 : 5). He further goes on to state that "retailers are expecting to sell out and are gearing up to deal with hundreds of disappointed shoppers", (Dann, 2000 : 5). There were a number of consumers who pre-ordered PlayStation 2 which reduced the chances of customers who were expecting to walk in a shop and to purchase a unit straight away. "Even game addicts who have pre-ordered and paid a deposit might still miss out and those who haven't pre-ordered had better be prepared for a bun fight", (Dann, 2000 : 5).

PlayStation 2 failed to sell out in New Zealand as predicted. There was huge demand when the unit first arrived, but two months later, the demand steadied. Rolfe comments

that "demands saw brisk sales in the first few days after PlayStation 2 was released in New Zealand . . . sales quickly tapered off to a steady flow", (Rolfe, 2001 : 3). It is now possible for a potential buyer to walk straight into a store and buy a PlayStation 2.

### Establishing the Price

Limited PlayStation 2 units, was not the only problem for customers, the price had also changed. The original retail price was set at \$899.95. This was suddenly amended to \$999. The reason for the increase was due to the falling New Zealand dollar. "The falling New Zealand dollar has added \$100 to the price of Sony's PlayStation 2", (Joyce, 2000 : 17). Rendle states that the price caused sale problems. "New Zealand's weak dollar pushed the price up from an initial recommended retail mark of \$899 to \$999, which caused some pre-orders to pull out", (Rendle, 2000 : 1). Nevertheless, Steve Moore, managing dealer from The Gamesman stated that "from a gamer's point of view, it's expensive, but from a mainstream point of view, it's a cheap DVD player with your games console", (Rendle, 2000 : 1). Eventually the price was reduced in September 2001. Christian states that "PlayStation 2, which to now was selling \$800 to \$900, has dropped to \$679.95", (Christian, 2001). The reason for the price fall was due to Sony preparing to meet competition from Microsoft's new Xbox.<sup>39</sup>

### The Marketing Campaign

An unusual marketing strategy had been used for PlayStation 2 to create a hype before the launch date in New Zealand. The price was revealed to the public, but the exposure from the various medias failed to exist. Norton states that "the sleek blue gaming console, which Sony says will revolutionize home entertainment, is one product that doesn't seem to need an ambitious ad launch - if any advertising at all", (Norton, 2001 : 22). Staff of such video

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<sup>39</sup> PlayStation 2 price plummets. (2001, September 29) *The Press*, pg 26.

game specialist stores like the Gamesman and Central Park Interactive were kept silent. Each store manager were given strict instructions not to open and display any promotional material until the launch date. Also, television advertising did not go to air until after the launch date (30 November, 2000). The popularity of PlayStation 2 was evident in that there was a large number of customers who had pre-ordered with the specialist stores. Staff from Noel Leemings electrical specialists were not permitted to purchasing the console.

The marketing methods used were far from conventional. Blue question marks and PlayStation symbols were placed on the pavement around Auckland. This was obvious with those who were regular gamers or who knew the trademark symbols. This method of marketing was a success. Next, there was a continuous flow where "Sony's next move was to organise a convoy of trucks, each with the blue question mark adorning on its side, to drive around Auckland city. The marketing campaign also including advertising on buses. Then came the TV commercials and in due course the media coverage", (Stephenson, 2000 : 23).

The marketing campaign for New Zealand were set by the guidelines Sony had instigated overseas. Stephenson comments that "to replicate the success PlayStation 2 has had overseas, Sue-Ellen Craig, Sony Computer Entertainment's account director at Whybin TBWA, co-ordinated the local marketing campaign within the guidelines set by Sony", (Stephenson, 2000 : 23).

### **The Television Commercial**

A day after the release date (30th Nov, 2000), a PlayStation 2 commercial was aired on television. It was the only television commercial used for advertising PlayStation 2 in New Zealand at the time (see video tape). The same advertisement was again aired in late

January to mid February 2001. The advertisement titled as the 'Third Place', was directed by filmmaker David Lynch. Lynch is known for such works as *Twin Peaks*, *Blue Velvet*, *Eraser Head* and *The Lost Highway*, he is regarded as "the king of surreal", (Reynolds, 2001 : 24). The ad does not identify what PlayStation 2 looks like or the functions it possesses. Reynolds gives a brief description to the content of the ad :

Shot in black and white, the 60 second execution plays with distorted sounds and voices, and Escher-like perspectives, showing a man wandering along a corridor in a bewildered state.

He sees a woman floating in space who urges him to be silent. His arm disconnects from his body, is regurgitated from his mouth, and plunges into a thick mist.

The fog clears to reveal an image of a man, a mummy, a man with a duck's head, and the severed arm seated on a sofa. The duckman announces "Welcome to the third place".

(Reynolds, 2001)

The 'third place' is described by Suzie Shaw, account director at TBWA-London, as "a mental space that allows for a more powerful experience", (Reynolds, 2001 : 24). Rosier identifies the ad as a "stylised black and white ad featuring off the wall characters, including a bandaged figure and a suited man with a duck's head, in disoriented environments", (Rosier, 2000 : 11). Sharon Doble, National PR Manager from Sony explains what the 'third place' is :

PS2 is a gateway to an unexplored and indemnified new world. We are calling this new world 'the Third Place'. The Third Place cannot be defined because although it exists, for everybody, everybody's Third place is different. It is a state of mind - a spiritual place rather than a physical place. To be fully understood, The Third Place has to be experienced itself. Visitors will have to free their minds, create their own rules. The Third Place is about exploration, discovery and adrenalin. The Third Place is a mental space, neither inside or outside, not here or there, not waking or sleeping, not truth or lie, not on or off. The Third Place is what you make of it.

(Official New Zealand PlayStation Magazine, April, 2001)

As traditionally used in past televised PlayStation advertisements, the PlayStation 2 trademark symbol is shown at the end. It is a simple design with a dark background and the lettering is in blue. There is a voiceover of a woman shouting 'PlayStation 2'.

There was another television commercial created for PlayStation 2 that was not shown in New Zealand. The surreal hype theme of the advertisement is similar to 'The Third Place'. The advertisement was filmed in Hong Kong and combined "aspects of a video game with sci-fi movies, like *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix*", (Norton, 2000 : 22) :

The 60 sec spot opens with a backdrop of a futuristic city and a shot young man holding a glass ball. A voiceover says it is the year 2078 and that electric spores now connect PlayStation 9 consoles directly to the adrenal glands.

The ball starts sparkling and opens up, seemingly transporting the man into an alternate world. The hero combats jousting, fighting men at a bazaar and frolics with a mermaid underwater.

A voiceover tout's PS 9's 'improved retinal scanning and says 'the ultimate just got better', asking the viewers to teleport their new system today.

(Norton, 2000 : 22)

By mid 2001, a number of PlayStation 2 commercials were aired on television promoting new titles. Also, a number of new PlayStation 2 commercials were aired on television in November 2001.

### The Magazine Reviews

There have been a number of articles in gaming magazines that provided updated information on PlayStation 2. Each monthly issue provided an update to what is expected from the console. After the launch in New Zealand and Australia, *Official New Zealand PlayStation Magazine* dedicated four to five pages on new PlayStation 2 games. Additionally, the creators of the magazine produced a separate magazine for PlayStation 2 owners. It contains every aspect of a gaming magazine, but it focuses on PlayStation 2 games. However, nearly a year after PlayStation2 release, *Official New Zealand*

*PlayStation Magazine* had amalgamated with the PlayStation 2 magazine. The magazine is titled *New Zealand Official PlayStation Magazine* which provides information for both PlayStation One and PlayStation 2.

There has been very little or no magazine advertising for PlayStation 2 prior the launch date. Magazine articles on the console kept readers informed on any new developments during the build up to the launch date. However, the UK magazine *PlayStation World* had identified that there were two advertisements in style magazines :

There's a young girl with scales glued to her nose and an old woman lipstick on her teeth chewing her necklace. The only clue that the ads are for PlayStation 2 is the liberal use of the PS2 shade of deep blue and the words 'You know me, I am sound. I am light'.

(PlayStation World, 2000 : 11)

### **Store Promotion**

Video game specialist *Central Park Interactive* had large displays in their store promoting PlayStation 2. Both photos attached show blue and white banners hanging from the ceiling in the store. Printed on them is PlayStation 2 and at the bottom is the *P* and *S* trademark symbols. In photo 1, there is a large cardboard replica of the PlayStation console that was placed on the centre floor. The PlayStation logo is visible on the large display.

Photo 2 shows a stand which is covered with dark blue coloured paper similar to PlayStation 2 and on top of it are a number of packaged boxes to which the PlayStation is packed in. A cardboard cut out on the top displays the PlayStation 2 logo. There is a price label on the stand which is for a package deal promotion. On the promotion is an offer of a PlayStation 2 console, three games and a memory card.



Photo 2



Photo 1

Nevertheless, with the limited hype towards the launch of PlayStation 2, Price stated that "Sony doesn't need to generate hype", (Gaudiosi, 2000a : 1). Electronic consumer watch dog Pat Pilcher commented on the lack of media exposure of the PlayStation 2 launch :

The launch has just been phenomenal. Sony could do no wrong, if they hyped it too much, they would sell out instantly and raise expectations. They really don't need to as people have been salivating over the little black box over the last two and a half years.<sup>40</sup>

Sony is preparing to launch a number of games close to the Xmas period of 2001. The racing game *Gran Turismo 3* is anticipated to be the big attraction as the first two games were very popular as they both turned platinum. Also, there will be a number of other titles that will be upgraded to PlayStation 2. "Other successful PlayStation games are also being updated for the new format, with *Syphon Filter 3*, due out before Christmas, along with *Wipeout Fusion*, *Klonoa 2* and *Final Fantasy X*", (Joyce, 2001 : 15). This is only the beginning for the major game titles as there are a large number of developers who have committed themselves to PlayStation 2. Steve Dykes stated that "a growing number of game developers were committing to PlayStation 2, with deals signed to design games such as *Fifa 2002*, *Tony Hawkes Pro Skater 3*, *Resident Evil : Code Veronica X*, *Grand Theft Auto 3*, *Metal Gear Solid 3* and *Virtual Fighter 4*", (Joyce, 2001 : 15).

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<sup>40</sup> Pat Pilcher commenting on Breakfast, Television One, 30 Nov, 2000

## Case Study - Medievil & Medievil 2

**Publisher :** Sony

**Developer :** SCE Cambridge

**Release Date :** May 1998/May 2000

**Genre :** Action Adventure, 3-D Platform,

**Origin :** UK

**PSM Score :** 7/10, 9/10

### Background Information

When *Medievil* was first released, "it didn't exactly set the sales charts ablaze back in early 1998, but earned good reviews and garnered a loyal band of followers", (Clarke, 1999 : 66). However, its eventuated success resulted in a sequel (*Medievil 2*).

One of the distinguishable features about the *Medievil series* is the spelling of the title. The spelling of the title differs to the English dictionary spelling 'medieval'.<sup>41</sup> Even though the pronunciation is the same for both versions, *Medievil* represents the horror theme of the game with the *evil*.<sup>42</sup>

The set period of the game is centred within the middle ages. The middle age is the conventional name for the period between the collapse of the Roman civilization 5th century AD to the end of the 15th century.<sup>43</sup> The medium aevum ('middle age'; whence the adjective 'medieval') was marked by the emergence of Europe as a cultural unit, however the middle ages is more commonly identified with the social system known as 'feudalism'.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Webster's Dictionary of the English Language Unbridged Encyclopaedia Edition*, (1979). William Collins Publishing. pg 1118.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pg 634.

<sup>43</sup> *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed, (1981). ref no. VI, pg 869.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pg 869.

*Medievil* is set in and around the confines of the town of *Gallomere*. It follows a deceased knight, Sir Daniel Fortesque, who has been awoken from his grave to battle the evil wizard Zarok. Zarok ended Sir Dan's life via an arrow through his eye. And now Sir Dan has arisen to hinder Zarok from metamorphosing the population of *Gallomere* into inexplicable creatures.

*Medievil* contains a number of different game genres. It has been regarded as a "3-D action arcade adventure game", (Osborne, 1999 : 71). It can be also classed as a 3-D platform (Total PlayStation, 1999). *Medievil* is a combination of *Tomb Raider*, *Doom* and *Mario* (Total PlayStation, 1999). The different genres of *Medievil* provides excitement into game play. "*Medievil* is a true gem of a game, possessing all the best elements of my favourite game genres. Part role - playing game, part puzzler, part arcade action - *Medievil* combines them all superbly in a glitzy package", (Mitchell, 1998 : 8).

The game shows some tendencies of being of the horror genre (Sir Dan as a character who arises from the dead and the unearthing of corpses from their coffins). Nevertheless, there is a lighter side to the game. "*Medievil* is not a game which takes itself too seriously", (Osborne, 1999 : 71).

*Medievil* is a long game with "11 game areas and 22 levels in total", (PlayStation Pro, 1998 : 28). "Graphic design and implementation of these levels and their inhabitants has all nicely handled with good colours and fine lighting effects", (PlayStation 1999 NZ Yearbook, 1999 : 48). The game has an original storyline with an extraordinary game play using elements of different genres. It can be summed up as it "successfully combines a variety of gameplay elements with some great production values to come up with a game that is entertaining and involving, and is tempered with a bizarre sense of humour that permeates the action", (PlayStation 1999 NZ Yearbook, 1999 : 48).

### Magazine Advertisement

*Medievil* was advertised as a full page advertisement in *PlayStation 1999 New Zealand Yearbook* (vol 1, 1999). The ad features a gravesite in a dark old cemetery. A tombstone has the four PlayStation logo symbols engraved on it (cross, circle, square and triangle). This signifies the format of the availability of the game (the PlayStation console). On the grave there are spots of sunlight that have found it's way through the canopy of the trees that surrounds the cemetery. This may suggest that there is life within the grave. To reinforce the existence of life amongst the gravesite, there are two milk bottles next to it and also a television antenna erected from the tombstone. This provides strong indication there is the presences of life within the grave and that the grave is a home. The common saying that there is 'life after death' is strongly represented within the advertisement.

The text to the tombstone '*an action hero with a difference. He's dead*' indicates the main character is deceased. The question is asked by the reader how can a game be played when the main character is dead. If a character is dead, there is visions of motionless and lifelessness. There are also visual aspects of human existence from the presence of milk bottles, a television antenna and the sunlight beaming down on the grave. At the bottom right of the advertisement is the title of the game *Medievil*. Above the title is a recommended rating for the game.

Next to the recommended rating (M15) is a Sony symbol to show that the advertisement is a product of Sony Computer Entertainment. "Ads usually end with the product or logo in the lower right hand corner, the last thing read and the answer to what is posed above", (Myers, 1994 : 139). The bottom left has the *P* and *S* logo with the trademark statement 'Do not underestimate the power of PlayStation'.

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AN ACTION HERO  
WITH A DIFFERENCE.

*He's dead.*

SONY



COMPUTER  
ENTERTAINMENT



DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE  
THE POWER OF PLAYSTATION

MEDIEVIL

*Medievil 2* entered the market two years after *Medievil*. "Like the original, *Medievil 2* is a mix of gameplay styles, with large doses of both action and puzzle", (Clarke, 2000 : 66). The game is set in the 19th Century (500 years after *Medievil*) in London. An industrialist, Lord Palethorn, is attempting to unearth the dead. Sir Dan Fortesque is again arisen from his grave in the cause of good versus evil. There are new creatures to battle (zombies, fat bearded ladies, sneaky imps). Once again there are a number levels to combat. Games players are "subsequently faced with the task of tracking a full 17 free roaming levels", (Official New Zealand PlayStation Magazine, Feb 2000 : 28).

On the poster is a label stating the price of the game. At \$49.95, this is an exceptional price similar games cost more. The original *Medievil* cost \$79.95 when it first became available. The price eventually dropped to \$39.95 because of its platinum status.

The full page magazine advertisement for *Medievil 2* has taken a different tact compared to *Medievil*. The advertisement for *Medievil 2* has been animated. The advertisement contains eye-catching colours with a theme of horror. There is a plain red background with a werewolf type creature which has sharp teeth above a woman in bright yellow. The creature is holding a bloodied axe while his long fingernailed right hand is over the right shoulder of the woman. It appears the creature is preparing to kill and possibly feast on her body.

However, the woman looks relaxed staring back at the creature while filing her fingernails. The colour yellow may denote her as being afraid. The expression on her face and her posture indicates she is not frightened by the creature. Her dress and hairstyle and the apparel of the creature, are that found in the early 1900's.

The bottom third contains the text for the advertisement with '*Bored with the same old horror*'. Underneath the main message, there is directed towards the reader to '*try Medievil 2*'. To further persuade the reader, at the very bottom of the advertisement there

is a nebulous description to the theme of the game. *'Twisted adventure in horror'* can relate to the visual picture in which the whole advertisement has a horror theme, yet the woman's reaction does not fit within the genre.

As always, in the bottom left corner there is the PlayStation logo acknowledging the games availability on that particular video game format. At the top right is the web address for viewers to log onto to see more information on the game.

This advertisement contains a strong visual presence, but lacks a major reference to the title. The title *Medievil 2* appears to be insignificant to the layout of the advertisement (as it is placed in the bottom right corner in small text). Nevertheless, the picture and the text relate to each other. The picture itself does not reveal a distinctive meaning on its own. "Pictures involve the audience in constructing for themselves a range of messages. The relationship of picture to text is never simply one of illustration, never simply a supplement to make the ad look prettier or more informative. The picture leads us off in a number of different directions", (Myers, 1994 : 136).

www.playstation.com.au

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**BORED WITH THE  
SAME OLD HORROR?**

**TRY MEDIEVAL 2**  
TWISTED ADVENTURES IN HORROR



The television advertisement for *Medievil 2* was mainly aired on TV4. It was frequently played at night after 9.00 pm. It focused on a young woman doing every day activities, however mystery men are trying to scare her. The woman is not concerned by these men as she continues with her activities. Within the 30 second advertisement, the young woman is confronted by the men in the shower (when she pulls back the curtain), in her wardrobe (when pulls back her clothes hangers), in the backseat of her car (she adjusts her mirror) and when she closes her front door of her house (see video tape).

The advertisement fails to clearly identify itself with *Medievil 2*. It does not show any images which relate to the game. The theme of the television advertisement is similar to the magazine advertisement. Both have a woman who is being pursued by either men or a strange creature. The mannerism of the women in both advertisements is similar as neither are deterred by those trying to scare them. There is a female voice over in the television advertisement that states the phrase '*bored with the same old horror, try Medievil 2*'. This is the same as the statement in text in the magazine advertisement.

As usual the PlayStation logo is at the end of the commercial with the *P* and the *S* with the trademark statement 'Do not underestimate the power of PlayStation'. During the commercial, the woman puts her key in the front door. Her keyring has the four PlayStation symbols on it. This is the first indication that the commercial is for PlayStation. The symbols would instantly be recognised by PlayStation followers. The bottom of the screen is an internet website address publicising *Medievil 2*.

### Store Promotion

Specialist game store *Central Park Interactive* also promoted *Medievil 2*. As seen in the photo 3, a large *Medievil 2* poster was erected with a number of game cases around it. Under the new release sign, this poster occupied all of the shelf space. There is fake spider

webbing that is covering the hanging game cases. On the floor below the poster is an artificial grass mat with gravel shaped into a gravesite. There is a number of game cases on the grave and also further fake webbing. At the top end is a tombstone with *R.I.P* inscribed on it. At the other end is a small promotion stand for the game.



Photo 3

### Case Study - (C-12) Final Resistance

Publisher : Sony

Developer : SCE Studio Cambridge

Release Date : April 2001

Genre : 3rd person action adventure with 1st person mode

Origin : UK

PSM Score : 8/10

### Background Information

It looks like *Metal Gear*, it's inspired by *Resident Evil*, and it's coming to PSone. Welcome to C-12, the most adrenaline-soaked game of the year.

(Donald, 2001 : 32-35)

*(C-12) Final Resistance* was released at a time when PlayStation 2 was in the limelight in the New Zealand gaming industry. This was the first widely promoted game in 2001. With a number of big titles to be released for PlayStation 2, owners of the original PlayStation and PSone were provided with a game to keep them satisfied (this game is also compatible with PlayStation 2). The game "promises to be an exciting mix of puzzle-solving (you have to think a bit) and armed combat (you get to blow people's heads off). Sony claims it has the best graphics ever seen on PSone", (The Evening Post, 2001 : 19).

The game has a similar format (or genre) to *Syphon Filter*. The games producer insists that *(C-12) Final Resistance* is influenced by other games, "it's a third-person action adventure that takes on the elements from *Metal Gear Solid*, *Syphon Filter*, *Soul Reaver* and *Resident Evil*", (Donald, 2001 : 32-35). Lowe goes on to suggesting (on first impressions) that :

First impressions are a little bit Syphon Filter, the early alien dust ups have a simplified beat'em up feel and, when the automatics come out, the locked-on, running gun battles are pure Lara. Later on, there's a little Medal of Honour- type sniping, more puzzle-shaped Tomb Raider nods . . . and of course a sprinkling of tense, Metal Gear Solid-style stealth.

(Lowe, 2001 : 42-45)

The plot of the game is a battle against between humans and aliens for the sake of human life. This type of fictitious storyline is similar to a number of other games that has a plot of alien invasions eg. *MDK*, *Doom*, *Duke Nukem*, *Armorines* and *Quake 2*. However, it is the mixture of formats from a number of games that makes this game different. Having some features derived from other games provides a familiar gameplay and an expectancy of quality of both the overall game and player control.

### The Magazine Promotion

The first introduction of *(C-12) Final Resistance* was in *Official New Zealand PlayStation Magazine*. The front cover of the March 2001 edition showed a picture of the main character, Lieutenant Riley Vaughan (the leader of Human Resistance and a semi-cyborg soldier) firing a machine gun. With a four page spread, this game was the main feature (pages 32 - 35) of this issue of the magazine. The next issue (April edition, no. 42, pages 42 - 45) of the magazine has a preview and a write up with the pros and cons of the game.

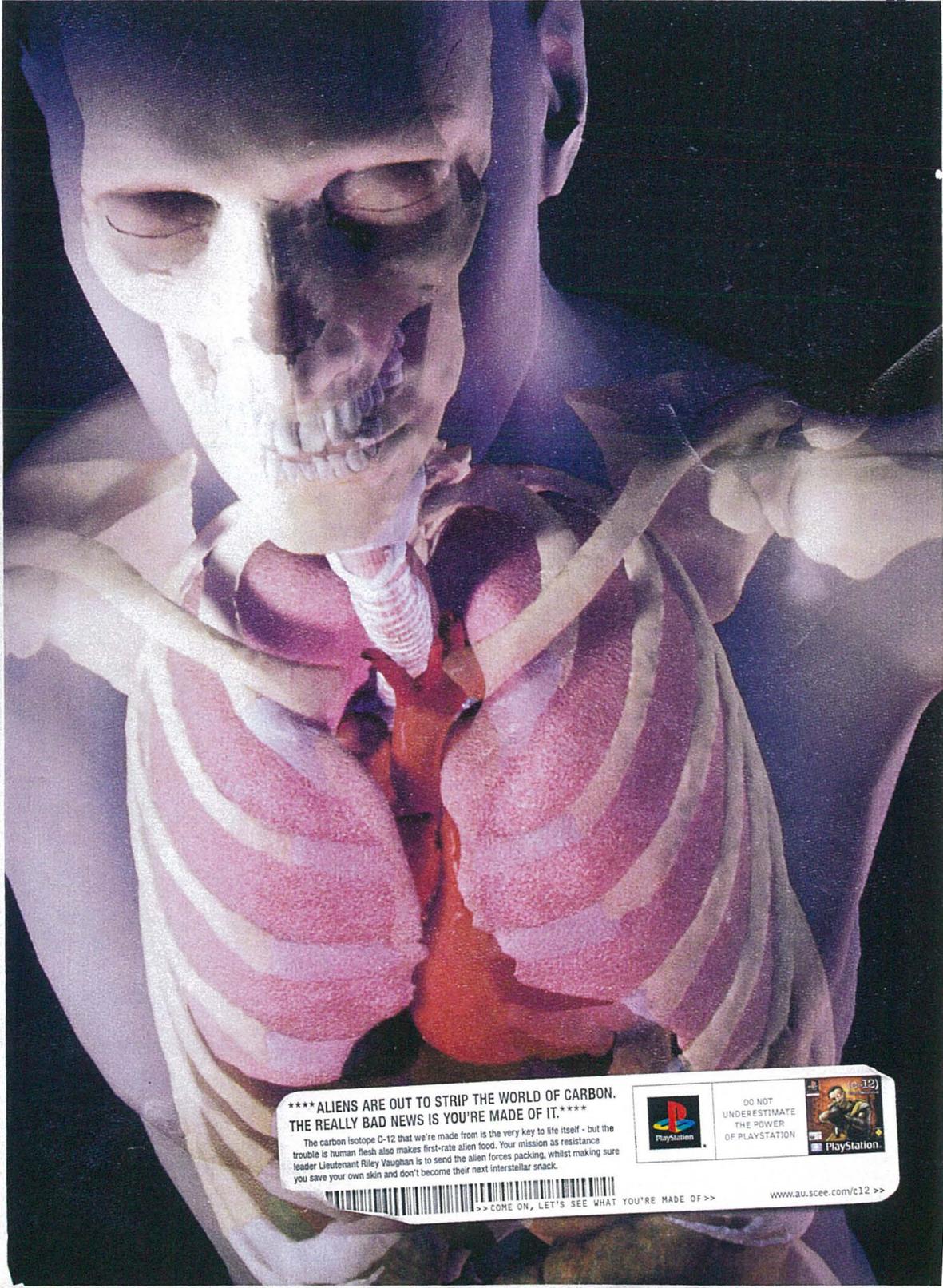
*(C-12) Final Resistance* was promoted with a separate demo disk in the April 2001 edition of *Official New Zealand PlayStation Magazine* (no. 42). This is very rare as this is the first time a free demo disk featuring only a single game had been offered by the magazine. As part of the marketing ploy, the *(C-12) Final Resistance* demo disk was available from the counter at video game specialist, Central Park Interactive.

A later issue of *Official New Zealand PlayStation Magazine* (May, 2001, iss. 44, page 83), there is an advertisement that may have appeared disturbing to some readers. In the tradition of the strange and unique style advertising for PlayStation games, the designers for the *(C-12) Final Resistance* advertisement have gone to the extreme by showing a body where the internal organs can be seen. Showing the internal organs relates to the

game plot in which the aliens are killing humans for a food source. The image of the represents a human who has been devoured by an alien. The flesh of a human contains a large amount of carbon 12 which the alien feed on (hence the title *C-12*).

Near the bottom of the page is a printed description of the game plot. To the right of the description is the *P* and *S* logo with the trademark statement next to it. A small pictorial of the game cover is also shown as well as the web address. The design of the printed description is similar to a censor sticker. Additionally, the layout is so similar to a warning sticker from the content in the advertisement, but in fact it is identifying what the advertisement is about.

>c12



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\*\*\*\*ALIENS ARE OUT TO STRIP THE WORLD OF CARBON.  
THE REALLY BAD NEWS IS YOU'RE MADE OF IT\*\*\*\*

The carbon isotope C-12 that we're made from is the very key to life itself - but the trouble is human flesh also makes first-rate alien food. Your mission as resistance leader Lieutenant Riley Vaughan is to send the alien forces packing, whilst making sure you save your own skin and don't become their next interstellar snack.



DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF PLAYSTATION



>> COME ON, LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'RE MADE OF >>

www.au.scee.com/c12 >>

### The 'Music Video'

A television advertisement was aired at night on TV4 (16/4/01). A noticeable point was the length of the advertisement (two and a half minutes). This is longer than normal practice in advertising, as most television advertisements are 30 to 40 seconds long.

The advertisement is divided into two sections. The first is a promotion for a competition in which television viewers had a chance to win one of 10 copies of *(C-12) Final Resistance*. The second part of the advertisement is devoted to promoting the game itself. Sony calls the advertisement a 'music video' due to the length.<sup>45</sup>

The first 30 seconds of the advertisement shows images of both the game and of an upcoming episode of *Star Trek*. A voiceover introduces and explains how to enter the competition via watching *Star Trek* and then logging onto the TV4 web page.

The second section of the advertisement is solely concentrated on the game itself. For two minutes, the advertisement shows images from the game. Additionally there is a pacey drum beat for background music. The images from the game show the main character continuously shooting aliens. The content in this advertisement differs to past PlayStation televised commercials. Promotions for both *Medieval 2* and PlayStation 2 were based of themes (horror and strange world respectively), but *C-12* concentrates on showing images direct from the game. The title of the game flashes onto the screen, along with a display of the game cover. In the last 13 seconds of the advertisement, a voiceover explains the basic game plot. As traditional with PlayStation televised advertisements, the *P* and *S* logo and the husky female voice saying 'PlayStation'.

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<sup>45</sup> Sony believe the duration of the advertisement is the same length as a music video clip. As the advertisement was aired on TV4 which plays music videos during commercial breaks, *(C-12)* was recognised ad the same.

There is an another advertisement for *(C-12) Final Resistance* where only images of the game are shown. After the competition had ended, TV4 continued to show a shorter version of the commercial where only the second sectionis shown. (see video tape)

**Case Study : Cricket 2000**

**Publisher : EA**

**Developer : EA Sports**

**Release Date : March 2000**

**Genre : Cricket Simulated**

**Origin : United Kingdom**

**PSM Score : 8/10**

It has evolved slowly through various incarnations but EA's support for cricket has finally come up trumps with the best version of the game to date.

(Soropos, 2000 : 64)

Video game developer EA Sports produced their first cricket game for PlayStation. *Cricket 2000* is the second cricket game to be available on PlayStation. The first cricket simulated game was Codemasters *Shane Warne Cricket 99* (England's equivalent is called *Brian Lara Cricket*). The latest realises for the PlayStation is *Wisden Cricket* and *Cricket 2002* for PlayStation 2.

*Shane Warne Cricket 99* became very popular in New Zealand as it was the first available cricket simulated game available on PlayStation. It may appear strange that the Sony PlayStation has existed since 1994, yet six years later, consumers are now treated to only the second cricket game title available for the console. In 1995-96, Sega Megadrive owners were treated to only an 'average' cricket game to appear on a console and cricket "had been rudely ignored on the PlayStation, simply because it's a tricky old sport to convert into a simulation", (PlayStation Pro, 1998 : 85). And now that EA Sports have produced their PlayStation version of 'interactive' cricket, Soropos believes that there is a large enough market for the game :

Thanks to American capitalist imperialism there have always been more ice hockey games than cricket titles. Seemingly because of the small market, the few that have come and gone have all seemed a bit half-arsed and low-budget. Thankfully for cricket fans, EA have taken the new ball and have used it reasonably well.

(Soropos, 2000 : 64)

Past attempts to provide cricket simulated video games have failed to bring reality into the game. Traditionally, game makers have struggled to transfer the game of cricket from reality into software. Converting such human movements into a video game have been unsuccessful in the past, as the technology did not exist. Menache states that in the past "it was impossible to produce a game with character animation of sufficient quality to require the skills of a character animator. The hardware simply lacked the horsepower to render the images onto the screen at a desirable frame rate", (Menache, 2000 : 34). Australian game master Dereck Proud stated that "cricket is a difficult games to simulate because if you make it realistic, then the player has almost no time to hit the ball. The decision between arcade and simulation has to be very carefully drawn so as to make the game realistic and playable", (Hill, 1999 : 17).

One example is *Cricket 97* developed by EA Sports. A game that was available on PC, the movement and actions of the players within the game almost to appear and limited to stick figures. There is no detail to graphics and accuracy of the movement of the cricket players. Greenfield states that "video games have dynamic visual elements of television, but they are also interactive. What happens on the screen is not entirely determined by the computer; it also very much influenced by the player's actions", (Greenfield, 1984 : 100). So an element of the game player to imagine the actual movement of the character they control is visualised through past viewing of cricket either on television or live.

### **The Improved Version**

Now with the rapid growth of technology, it is possible to create characters with actual movement as in a real game of cricket. Both *Cricket 2000* and *Shane Warne Cricket 99* contains realistic images of character movement. It is easy to see that there has been a huge improvement in the visual images and the game play. "Cricket 2000 has a new batting and bowling style based on a 'clickometre' - just like the swing in video golf

games", (Thomas, 2000 : 108). Also the utilisation of 3-D images is a huge factor to the appearance. The camera angles seem unlimited with some superb 3-D replays. There is also (Johnstone, 1999) more than 500 motion - captured animations built into this game with 3-D images of stadiums. Menache states that "the use of motion capture in video games is currently the most widespread and the most well accepted and understood", (Menache, 2000 : 34).

### Television Commercial

*Cricket 2000* was first available in 1999 during the Cricket World Cup in England. At that particular time, it was promoted as *World Cup 99* and was only available on PC. As Sky Television had bought the rights to the live coverage of the Cricket World Cup, the advertisement promoting the computer game appeared between overs. The reason for showing the advertisement a number of times is a reminder to viewers. By repeating the advertisement, "it tries to keep the product's name in the public's mind", (McCarthy, Perreault and Quester, 1998 : 463). The advertisement is purposely repeated to remind the target audience of the product.

Throughout the advertisement, cricket audiences were shown images of the computer game along with a few commentaries. There is a tune in the background to assist the appeal to the audience. Unfortunately, the reliance of an orchestra's attempt to create enthusiasm into audiences failed to capture any great exuberance. The commercial felt like playing a cricket match on a Sunday afternoon in an English countryside drinking tea and devouring scones. Eventually, the tune was changed to rock music style creating stimulation into the commercial. It became more appealing to view as the commotion of watching the world's best cricketers competing against each other reaches its climax.

When *World Cup 99* converted to PlayStation, the title was changed to *Cricket 2000* to cater for the year 2000. After a number of difficulties during the conversion from PC to PlayStation, the arrival date in New Zealand had been held back from October 1999 and released in March 2000. The timing of the release may or may not be in favour of the customer. Unfortunately, the availability came towards the end of the New Zealand 99-00 cricket season.

The timing of the release of the game co-existed with the International Cricket Week 2nd April - 8th April. Also, *Cricket 2000* allows for consumers to experience an updated simulated cricket game that provides different features than from other cricket video games. Unfortunately, since the promotion of the PC version in 1999, it had been six months before PlayStation owners have had their chance to experience the game. PlayStation owners are now given the option of playing *Shane Warne 99* or *Cricket 2000*.

On its release date in New Zealand, *Cricket 2000* had been well publicised on television. The opportune time was during the test series between New Zealand and Australia. As previous marketing techniques used during the 1999 World Cup to market the PC version, a similar method was used on TV3. Between each over, occasionally, the advertisement for *Cricket 2000* appeared. The advertisement also appeared during any commercial time throughout the day.

The commercial itself showed images of the PlayStation game as well as real footage of current players. There are quick flashes that run back and forth. While flicking each shot, the voice of the energetic Graham Hill can be heard. Graham Hill, part-time radio announcer, is widely known for wearing his sunglasses on Sky Sports Lion Red Sports Cafe, where he collaborates the weeks sports into 90 seconds. With such a reputation, Hill has managed to provide the advertisement with enthusiasm from his loud tone of voice

and establish an image. So it is the amalgamation of the voice over and the flashing images which had made the advertisement appealing (see video tape).

The timing of televising *Cricket 2000* is to acknowledge to cricket followers and PlayStation owners that the game is now available. This is an intelligent marketing ploy to endorse to those watching the test series on television, are being exposed to a new cricket games for PlayStation owners and enthusiasts. So, the target audience are those who are fans of cricket or who have a great interest in the game.

### The Price

What is more 'attractive' about the game is the recommended retail price in the commercial. Even though in small white print in the middle of the screen, it is visible to see \$79.95. This may surprise viewers as a majority of new PlayStation games can cost between \$90 - \$100. And most games developed by EA Sports tend to be in the higher price range. So this may have a big appeal to a lot of potential customers. After three months on the market, the price was reduced to \$39.95. The decision for the price reduction came straight from the developer of the game (EA Sports).

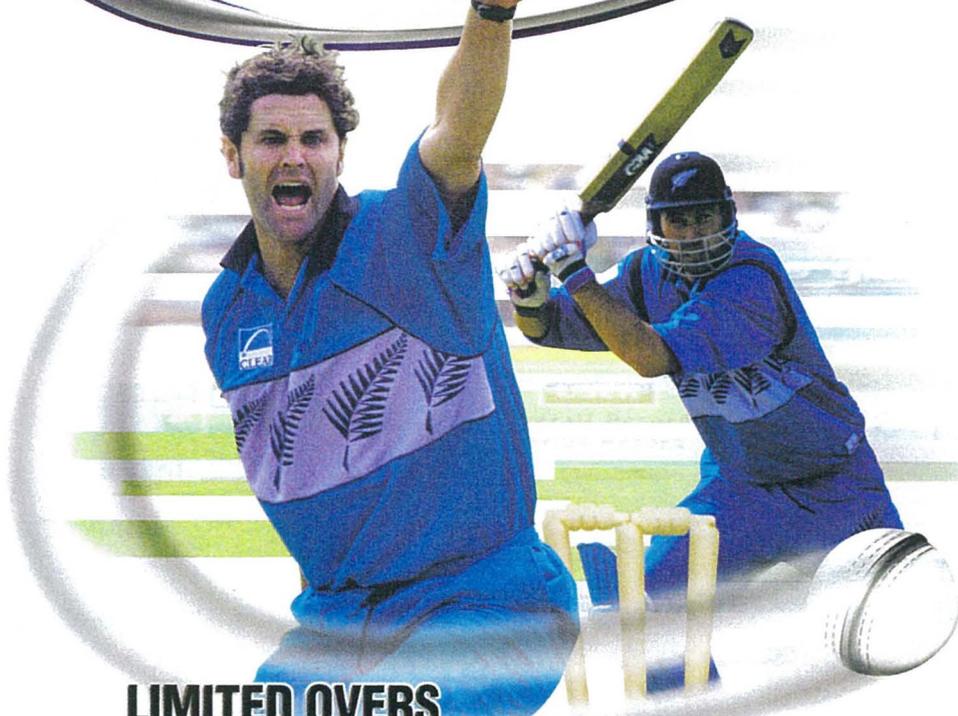
### The Magazine Advertisement

Not only was the game advertised on television, but in different magazine publications. One example is the booklet 'Summer of Cricket 2000'. This 'free' publication contain articles and profiles for the New Zealand cricket summer. And on the last page is a full spread advertisement for Cricket 2000. The whole advertisement is very distinguishable. With Cricket 2000 printed in huge letters, above is the trademark name of the developer, EA Sports. Also there is the *P* and *S* logo at the bottom signifying the games availability for that console. Next to it is PCCD which indicates that the game is still available on PC. This gives consumers the opportunity to purchase the game on either format.

There are also two trademark logos that indicate their support from cricket authorities. One is the New Zealand cricket logo and the other is the ICC official emblem from the World Cup. Alongside this is the release date of the game, and under the pictorial are the words 'limited overs, unlimited action'. This describes that the format of the game is based on one day international cricket and the action in the game is continuous. Between the New Zealand Cricket logo and the PlayStation logo is the description of each emblem in small print.



# CRICKET 2000



**LIMITED OVERS  
UNLIMITED ACTION!**

**AVAILABLE MARCH 2000**



The Official Emblem of the Cricket World Cup England 99, the Cricket World Cup trophy, the ICC Figure Logo, are trademarks and © of International Cricket Council  
The New Zealand Cricket Logo is trademark and © of New Zealand Cricket Inc. and is used with the permission of New Zealand Cricket Inc.  
EA SPORTS™ is an Electronic Arts™ Inc brand. © 2000 Electronic Arts Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.



### The Celebrity Sport Stars

The main feature of the advertisement is the pictorial of two New Zealand cricketers, Chris Cairns and Stephen Fleming. The ploy of using New Zealand international players is that it would be more appealing to New Zealand consumers than using foreign cricketers. Using New Zealand cricketers is more marketable as the two players are well respected and role models within the New Zealand sporting arena. The pictorial which is also the cover of the game show two high profile cricket personalities. Fleming, who is the current New Zealand cricket captain and Cairns who was the number one all rounder in the world at the time of the release of the game.

### Store Promotion

The advertisement layout used in the booklet is the same that retailers use, but in a poster format. *Central Park Interactive* had used four large posters of *Cricket 2000* displayed at the front entrance of their store. They were promoting the game as the most advertised software for PlayStation during that particular time. It is sending out a message to customers that *Cricket 2000* has arrived and that it is readily available.

### The Cyber Videos

Another marketing technique used with *Cricket 2000* is within the game itself. There is a section within the menu of the game where there is an icon where the player can click onto *cyber video*. The cyber video is a section for promoting future releases and the realistic graphics used by EA Sports. It shows images from a selected number of games as well as revealing some of the technological methods used in developing their games. Once clicked onto cyber video, the viewer is shown rapid images with an energetic voiceover or sound effects (see video tape for two examples of cyber videos used by EA Sports).

### The Package

With most PlayStation games, the content within the package contains the disk and instruction book. And now, what is more common is that a number of games now contain a separate booklet promoting other games that are produced by that particular developer. With *Cricket 2000*, the extra booklet contains information similar to the cyber video. The games promoted in the booklet are *NHL 2000*, *NBA 2000*, *Super Bikes 2000*, *Nascar 2000*, *Madden 2000*, *MLB 2000*, *Boxing 2000*, *Formula 1 2000*, *Fifa 2000* and *Tiger Woods USA Tour*. For each title, still images are shown as well as a list of features within each game. As EA Sport is dedicated to popular sporting games, they produce these games on an annual basis. Thus, to maintain the interest of the consumer, each year every game includes extra features that previous games did not contain.

## Conclusion

The analysis of these four PlayStation games shows that they all have been marketed in a similar manner. All have had coverage from television, print, the internet, or instore promotions.

Each case study used the various marketing techniques. Nevertheless, the main focus on each game is the promotion. Both television and magazines exposure are widely used to promote the games. Also, Sony reinforces the internet advertising in that consumers are provided with a web address from television commercials or magazine advertisements, allowing them to further investigate each game on the internet.

The pricing strategy plays a significant role because it can attract more consumer. There are now some PlayStation games that have been priced at \$20. The price reduction of *Cricket 2000*, *Medievil* series and PlayStation 2 should lure consumers to purchase these games. The cost of PlayStation games over the past years have reduced in price allowing consumers to have sufficient purchasing power to buy more games.

The content and material in the advertisements produced by Sony often do not describe the product to the consumer. As seen with the PlayStation 2 television commercial, the magazine advertisement for (C-12) *Final Resistance* and *Medievil 2* television commercial and magazine promotions, there are a number of underlying messages and meanings. The consumer is expected to identify the underlying messages and to connect those messages with the product. This form of advertising strategy is significant because the advertisements has the consumer thinking about what is being promoted. Thus, the promotions become effective as the consumer has the images from the advertisement in the memory.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

While the video game popularity continues to grow, many scholars are excluding important factors that are apart of the success of the video game industry. Those analysing it topic need to address all aspects within the industry. Not only should all facets of the industry (including marketing) be explored by interested scholars, but realising the popularity of the home video game as a growing medium is also vital. They should realise that they are limiting their research and neglecting the whole aspect of the industry.

There are a number of up to date texts and information that cover other mediums such as digital television, movie technology and the growth of digital versatile disks. In the last ten years, there has been a lack of interest by scholars in the video game industry. Nevertheless, since 1995, the Sony PlayStation had completely revolutionised the entire industry and has grown faster than any other industry. Yet, there are very limited resources and literature that have explored the rapid growth of the video game industry since the arrival of the PlayStation. With Microsoft and Nintendo entering the industry with their new consoles to compete against PlayStation 2, there must be scholars who will finally realise that there has been a long period since the last competitive battle of the home video game consoles and that information and material needs to be updated.

From the marketing techniques used by Sony, both communication strategy and pricing strategy appeared to be more important than the distribution and product strategies. The brand marketing of the PlayStation only had to be established when the PlayStation first entered the video game industry. After the PlayStation was established within the industry, it was up to Sony to attract and sell the PlayStation software to the consumer.

Sony used the pricing strategy to great effect by reducing PlayStation game prices. Platinum status games also assisted in high sale of PlayStation games. Nevertheless, there are many opinions concerning the price of PlayStation games. The questionnaire revealed different views. Basically those who are not too concerned of the price are more avid game players than those who prefer to wait for a sale price reduction.

The use of television and magazines provide the majority of exposure to the consumer. It was pointed out by the participants in the questionnaire that television and magazines were the most common media through which they could gain information on new games. Television commercials provide real time images from a game, but Sony have produced a number of advertisements where the content in the advertisement does not relate directly with the product it is trying to promote. Also, Sony do not continuously use television advertising throughout the year. They only widely promote games they believe will be popular.

It was pointed out by one participant from the questionnaire that there are circulars that are delivered in the mail providing some kind of game promotion. This form of direct mail marketing uses price, advertising and distribution strategies. The use of catalogues is usually to advertise games at a discounted price.

Brand loyalty in the video game industry has changed since the arrival of PlayStation 2. The important fact is that no other video game company have ever created a machine that can operate software from a previous console. Sony established the benchmark for future technology in the home video game industry. And it is only a few years before Sony will release the already talked about PlayStation 3.

Another important element for marketing the PlayStation was specifically targeting a wider audience. Sony have completely changed cultural views in the video game industry. Video games are now played by adults. No longer are video games labelled as a medium that was only played by adolescent boys. Sony's success in the video game market was not only marketing, but superior technology and close control over compatible software. The PlayStation has attracted a variety of people. From the questionnaire conducted, most were not 'hardcore gamers'. They were all influenced by the hype of the media, which made them curious as to what the PlayStation had to offer. The PlayStation offered consumers realistic graphics and interactive technology that have never been seen before on a home console. Also, the generous pricing of the console and games have attracted consumers. The pricing reduction is a major coup for Sony.

There were two other aspects of promotion in the video game industry that had limited acknowledgment from the participants in the questionnaire. They are conventions and the internet. Video game companies are now aware that the internet is the quickest way to promote and provide information to the consumer. The internet has a huge advantage over print media such as magazines and newspapers. Information can be readily updated within a very short time on the internet. Publications tend to be weekly or monthly, and their information can rapidly become dated.

One of the most popular methods to releasing video games and consoles is through conventions. Video game conventions occur all over the world, but the biggest is the 'Electronic Entertainment Expo' (E3) which is held in the US every year. It is at expos like this where the public and the media can witness the latest equipment and game titles to be released in the future. The 2001 E3 attracted record numbers due to the presentations of the Xbox and the Gamecube. Sony offered a number of major titles to be released for PlayStation 2.

The improving technology of video game consoles has resulted in computers becoming a casualty. Personal computers are a victim of the increasing popularity of the PlayStation. PC's are disadvantaged in term of cost and having the appropriate software to operate games. Further more, the capabilities of the internet on video game consoles will be a major threat to home computers. Already, the film industry have suffered huge losses compared to the gaming industry. However, Sony and Microsoft will have to be aware of the growing DVD industry, as both PlayStation 2 and Xbox have the capacity to play DVD movies.

The marketing of PlayStation games has been successful because Sony have used all means of media promotions available to them. Sony marketed the PlayStation to the maximum level as they are promoting a superior product, thus the marketing strategies had to 'hype up' the game console. The original PlayStation was the first of its kind while using the CD based format that contained superior graphics. And with PlayStation 2, Sony marketed a product that has never been created in the history of the video game industry.

# Appendix 1

## Questionnaire on Sony PlayStation

Answered by Caroline Squire (Marketing co-ordinator for Sony Computer Entertainment)

### Q.1

**Do you determine how your products are promoted or advertised?**

Yes, we do - by the history and level of the game is rating (ie is it a 'aaa' title or 'bbb' title?)

### Q.2

**Is there an advertising campaign for each new game?**

Not for each one - only our key releases

### Q.3

**How does each campaign differ from earlier ones? eg the genre of the game being promoted differently from another genre.**

It depends on the game and history of the title. Also, it depends on the developer.

### Q.4

**Can you clearly define the objectives of a campaign? eg the merits of the product, encourage immediate buying action, where the product can be purchased.**

Objectives differ for each title we launch and what target we are wanting to reach

### Q.5

**What forms of advertising/promotion are used for your products?**

All forms from TV, print, radio and news media

### Q.6

**Are all games marketed at a similar level?**

No

### Q.7

**Are there games that go straight to retail stores without great exposure?**

Yes

### Q.8

**Who determines the censorship restrictions regarding the contents of each game?**

The Film and Video Labelling Body

**Q.9**

**How is price determined for each game?**

Price is dependent on a number of factors eg developers, history of the title, the rest of the market

**Q.10**

**What are the reasons for eventually allowing price decreases in some games, and how are platinum games determined?**

Reasoning behind price decreases is confidential. Platinum status is reached when a certain sale target is hit.

**Q.11**

**Who is your target audience? eg. age, gender.**

Genrally, it's males 18 - 24 yrs old but that changes with each title

**Q.12**

**Are certain games promoted towards a specific audience?**

Yes

**Q.13**

**As you continue to produce video games, do you feel that you are obligated to supply games that the public demands?**

Yes and no. Yes because obviously that's what they want and no because we want to provide them with an experience that takes them beyond what they already know.

**Q.14**

**Is there any market research compiled into how video games are performing?**

A publication called 'CTW' provides us with industry information.

**Q.15**

**Do you take notice of any publications about your products? eg magazine reviews.**

Yes, most definitely

**Q.16**

**If a video game becomes popular, is it necessary to create a sequel that is superior to its predecessor?**

Not always, but the sequel must be better than the original

**Q.17**

**If a game has low sales, do you deem that particular software to be a failure?**

**Why/why not?**

No - we forecast for each title what we expect to sell. If it sells under level, perhaps, this title wasn't going to be successful in NZ - perhaps it was a hit in another country.

**Q.18**

**What contributing factors will determine if a game is a success or failure?**

Sales and reviews.

**Q.19**

**For every game, there is a developer and a distributor. What is the role of each one?**

The developers develop the games from initial conception and the distributor provides marketing and distribution channel through which to sell it.

## Appendix 2

### List of Advertisements on Video Tape

1. Gran Turismo 3
2. Gran Turismo 3
3. Gran Turismo 3
4. PlayStation 2
5. Medieval 2
6. C-12 Final Resistance
7. Cricket 2000
8. EA Sports Cyber Video
9. EA Sports Cyber Video

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