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Is Rockstar Going to Make Another Pubg

According to “*PUBG* Is Steam's Third Best-Selling Game Ever” (Makuch), *Playerunknown's Battlegrounds* (*PUBG*) has been the third most sold game on steam, and it creates the industry record of peak simultaneous users of over 3 million in December 2017 (steam charts). The huge market and incalculable profits it generated have drawn other companies' attention. For instance, *Fortnite*, a survival game newly released by Epic Games, is now the most popular game worldwide according to its popularity on YouTube and Twitch (Taylor). All of these are demonstrating a fact that survival game is now an unstoppable trend, and all game companies may have to consider it seriously regardless of their scales. As it may be a chance for small companies, represented by Bluehole, to advance rapidly. For big and already successful companies, such as Rockstar, it is also a chance to be even stronger. Is Rockstar going to make another *PUBG*? Based on my research, I conclude that Rockstar is not going to join the homogenous warfare. I have three reasons. First, Rockstar owns *GTA5*, the most profitable game in history (Riley), and it is effortless for Rockstar to extend *GTA5*'s success by publishing new versions of *GTA* series. Secondly, Rockstar values its product reputation, and developing a new game will take it imaginable amount of time. How long the survival game hotness lasts is unknown, because the deficiencies of *PUBG* have disappointed many players and their interest may disappear shortly (Martin). Actually, Rockstar is making *PUBG*-style mode in one of its games that is under development, and making modes is more time-efficient and less risky than

making independent survival games. Lastly, as game rules are not copyrightable, Rockstar has to avoid risks of losing lawsuits, and there is one going on between Bluehole and NetEase.

Furthermore, the business may be particularly risky as it is in the legal gray area.

First, according to “Ahead of *GTA 6* release *GTA 5* declared as most profitable game in history” (Riley), *GTA5* is the most profitable game in the entire industry. More specifically, *GTA V* brought “\$6 billion in revenue since the game was launched according to a report by MarketWatch” (Staff). The profit it made for Rockstar is even higher than any movies ever released. *Star Wars* and *Gone with the Wind* made merely 3 billion dollars each, and none of their revenue is comparable to half of revenue *GTA V* earned for Rockstar (Staff). Movie fans may argue that it is unfair not to include the sales generated by DVD, Blue Ray and streaming right sales. The fact shows us that “the highest grossing movie of all time has been *Avatar* which has earned \$2.78 billion worldwide” (Staff). As a company having such an unprecedentedly successful product and making tons of profit from it, it is unnecessary for Rockstar to make it action, as *GTA* series is profitable enough. They should focus on how to make its following versions even better. Some people may argue that it is blind for Rockstar to ignore such a prevalent phenomenon, as having only one game that draws most of the income is not an ideal strategy. I would say Rockstar cannot be this successful if it always follow the crowd. “The Rockstar Games label was founded in 1998 to create the most innovative and progressive interactive entertainment” (Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc). The company’s philosophy tells us that they do not simply copy others’ work, as they are the innovator.

Secondly, it is hard for Rockstar to maintain both high quality and efficiency, and Rockstar is not a company that rushes to release a product just for more short-term profit. Rockstar is technology-driven, and it is undoubtedly more powerful than most existing survival

games companies are. Let me take Rockstar's crazy optimization as an example. Rockstar is famous for its extremely good game optimization, and Kevin Hoare, the president of Rockstar Toronto, said, "Our focus for *Grand Theft Auto V* was to ensure most people could run the game comfortably, and provide a wide range of options to tailor your experience to your system" (Hoare). Rockstar is not only optimizing regular resolution version, and it is also working on 4k-resolution version, even though 4k gaming is not commonly applicable to most players due to high requirement of hardware and budget limitation. Therefore, Rockstar, a company that prioritizes smooth gaming experiences, needs much more time and workforces to work on making a totally new and independent game than companies, represented by Bluehole, known for not caring about product quality do. It is not subjective to say pursuing better quality is necessarily a duty of a company, but consumers show us that a poor-quality product is more likely to be criticized. In order to release the Xbox One's version of *PUBG*, Bluehole worked with Microsoft. However, negative comments were more than positive ones. Game commenter, Erik Kain says, "Why not just delay the release? Why rush to market if the game's performance will only turn away potential players and put a dent in the reputations of both developer Bluehole and Microsoft? It's utterly inexplicable to me" (Kain). Another commenter, Richard Leadbetter, says, "In terms of first impressions, *PUBG* is borderline horrendous - an assault of low quality artwork, jarring pop-in and disappointing performance" (Leadbetter). Noticeably, *PUBG* has lost 349,645 monthly average players since February due to mismanagement of cheaters, unstable servers and the worst optimization I have ever seen in any games published in 2017 (steam charts). It makes not only players like me but also companies keeping eyes on it interested in seeing where *PUBG* is going to in the near future. Rockstar's decision makers have to ask themselves a question that what if the trend of survival game is gone when they just finish an

independent survival game. Making modes will not be a big loss even if the trend fades away. In conclusion, making modes instead of a completely new game is the best way to join the survival game warfare and seek for potential benefits for Rockstar if it has to do something for the hotness of surviving games. Making modes based on exiting games that have perfect optimization is the best choice.

The last reason is that there is a very vague line between legally imitating and infringing other companies' copyright, and the market environment may be worse without protection of copyright law. Recently, Bluehole, the operator and owner of *PUBG*, sued NetEase, a Chinese game company that published “two titles strikingly similar to *PUBG*'s smartphone version, according to Ars” (Jain). This lawsuit attracts not only players of both games but also other imitators who are waiting for the results to take actions. What is NetEase alleged for? The content and method of the game. According to “*PUBG* Corp Sues NetEase For Allegedly Making *PUBG* Clones”, the *PUBG* clone released by NetEase is extremely similar to *PUBG* in game method, weapon system and map system, etc. For example, it is also “about 100 people who land on an island to fight their way to win and survive in the safe zone, which is constantly shrinking as the battle intensifies” (Jain). For an international company unfamiliar with Chinese domestic operation and game-relevant laws, it is very hard for Bluehole to win this lawsuit. The same situation also applies to Rockstar if it is going to launch a similar product in China. We can conclude that survival game is now a red ocean market, and Rockstar is likely to be trapped in it. In a red-ocean market, everyone has the almost same product. There are no winners, as players have to choose the lower-price one from many providers. Companies who are not able to bear price war will eventually go out of market. Furthermore, Bluehole may lose the suit, as “Copyright does not protect the idea for game, its name or title, or the method or methods for

playing it. Nor does copyright protect any idea, system, method, device, or trademark material involved in developing, merchandising, or playing a game” (U.S. Copyright Office Factsheet FL-108). It shows that Rockstar should consider about the risk of having increasingly more competitors in this market, which is allowed to happen based on the legal fact. It demonstrates that Rockstar has to face theoretically infinite competitors, as copyright law does not restrict new games of such type to be released. Moreover, when over-volume competitors get in the market, low-quality products will burn out players’ interest quickly, and all companies in this market will suffer.

In conclusion, Rockstar is not going to make another *PUBG*. First, its signature work, *GTAV*, has already proven that Rockstar’s position in game industry is unshakeable. Therefore, Rockstar should focus on every new edition of *GTA* series and continue the legendary success unceasingly. Secondly, it is not only costly but also risky to develop an independent version similar to *PUBG*, as Rockstar cares about their product quality and does not easily release an imperfect game. As a result, Rockstar may miss the shot, and the popularity of survival game shrunk due to flaws of *PUBG* recently, which made the whole business environment less comfortable for Rockstar. Noticeably, they are now developing a game mode similar to *PUBG* in one of their products, which I consider a safe attempt. Thirdly, there are numerous uncertainties in international market. Lawsuit filed by Bluehole for NetEase’s plagiarism is an attention-meriting warning for any companies that want to share the profit within the market. It is also difficult for Rockstar to set boundaries between copying other’s work and innovating when it comes to survival game, which is very special, as it is popular for its method, however, the method itself is not legally protectable.

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