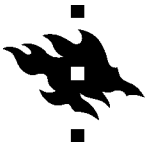


Following the Beat of *Taiko no Tatsujin*

The Localization of Japanese Rhythm Games in the West

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract <p>Tutkielman aihe keskittyy japanilaisten rytmipelien lokalisointiin Yhdysvalloissa ja Euroopassa. Länsimaiset rytmipelisarjat <i>Guitar Hero</i> ja <i>Rock Band</i> nauttivat suuresta suosiosta ihmisten keskuudessa vuosien 2005-2010 aikana, mutta tätä vastoin ne muutamat japanilaiset rytmipelit, jotka näinä vuosina lokalisoitiin länteen, eivät yleisesti ottaen onnistuneet lyömään itseään läpi kansan tietoisuuteen. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, miksi vain hyvin harvoista japanilaisista rytmipeleistä on tullut suosittuja lännessä.</p> <p>Keskittyen musiikkiin, jota Japanista lokalisoituissa rytmipeleissä käytetään, tutkielmassa analysoidaan seitsemän rytmipelin lokalisointistrategioita liittyen päätöksiin joko muuttaa pelissä käytettäviä kappaleita tai säilyttää alkuperäisen pelin kappaleista ennallaan. Käytetyt lokalisointistrategiat jaetaan seuraaviin kolmeen kategoriaan: 1) täysin lokalisoitu, 2) osittain lokalisoitu, 3) ei lokalisoitu. Valitun lokalisointistrategian onnistuneisuutta arvioidaan suhteessa siihen, onko kyseiselle rytmipelille lokalisoitu jatko-osia länsimaissa.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen toinen osa koostuu kolmen kyselytutkimuksen tulosten analyysistä. Kyselytutkimusten kohteina olivat seuraavat kolme ihmisryhmää: 1) japanilaiset <i>Taiko no Tatsujin</i> pelaajat, 2) suomalaiset digitaalisten pelien pelaajat, 3) suomalaiset <i>anime/manga</i> fanit. Kyselytutkimuksilla haettiin ymmärrystä siihen, minkälaisia vaatimuksia ihmisillä on rytmipeleille, ja minkälaista musiikkia vastaajat haluaisivat rytmipeleissä käytettävän.</p> <p>Tutkielman tuloksista käy ilmi, että tutkittujen rytmipelien joukosta rytmipelit, jotka lokalisaatioissa tekivät pienemmässä mittakaavassa muutoksia pelin kappaleistaan, olivat saavuttaneet suosiota länsimaissa. Molemmat suomalaisille suunnatut kyselytutkimukset myös tukevat tätä näkökantaa. Kaikki kolme kyselytutkimusta myös viittaavat siihen, että rytmipelissä käytetty musiikki toimii tärkeässä roolissa motivoivana syynä pelata kyseistä peliä. Rytmipeliä varten sävelletty alkuperäinen musiikki oli myös laajalti toivottua. Vaikkei saatujen tulosten perusteella voida todeta, että rytmipelin käyttämä musiikki määrittää kyseisen rytmipelin kohtalon, voidaan kuitenkin vahvasti esittää, että musiikin merkitys rytmipelille on äärimmäisen tärkeä, eikä tätä näkökantaa tulisi jättää huomiotta.</p>			
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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the localization of Japanese rhythm games in the United States and Europe. While the Western *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* rhythm game series enjoyed huge popularity among people around 2005–2010, the few Japanese rhythm games that were localized in the West during this period were, in general, not able to break through to mass appeal. This study's aim is to shed light on the reasons why only few Japanese rhythm games have managed to get popular in the West.

Concentrating on music used in these rhythm games localized from Japan, the study analyzes seven rhythm games' localization strategy in regards to their decisions to either change the songs used in a game or to keep the original soundtrack unchanged. The study divides the used localization strategies into three categories: 1) *fully localized*, 2) *partially localized*, 3) *not localized*. The successfulness of the used localization strategy is then evaluated in relation to whether the rhythm game has received sequel localizations in the West.

The second part of the study consists of analyses of three surveys aimed at the following three demographics: 1) Japanese *Taiko no Tatsujin* players, 2) Finnish digital game players, 3) Finnish *anime/manga* fans. The objectives of the three surveys were to get an understanding of people's reasons to play rhythm games and what kind of music respondents wanted to be used in rhythm games.

The study finds that the most successful localizations of Japanese rhythm games used lesser amount of localization for the rhythm game's song list. The results from the two Finnish surveys also support this view. The three surveys also indicate that the music used in a rhythm game plays a key factor with original music composed specifically for the game gathering strong support across all three surveys. The thesis concludes with arguing that while the used music might not be the sole reason that decides the fate of a localized rhythm game, its importance should not be disregarded.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In October 2004 Namco released a rhythm game *Taiko Drum Master* for Sony's PlayStation 2 (PS2) in the United States (the U.S.). The game was a localization of a Japanese game series *Taiko no Tatsujin* which can be said to have achieved popular success in Japan with releasing six arcade versions and five PS2 games during three years leading up to the first Western¹ release of the series. It is then easy to understand Namco's desire to achieve this same popularity also in the West which led to the release of localized version *Taiko Drum Master*. However the game never achieved success in the U.S., was not released in Europe (though Japan got its own localization of this localized game the following year) and nothing of the whole *Taiko no Tatsujin*-series have been heard in the West since then.

It is hard to pinpoint the specific reason why the game never got popular in the West. Was it because of the song list of the game, cartoony style of the game (see Figure 1.1), song difficulties not being appropriate, (voluntary) use of *taiko* drum (*taiko*) shaped controller,

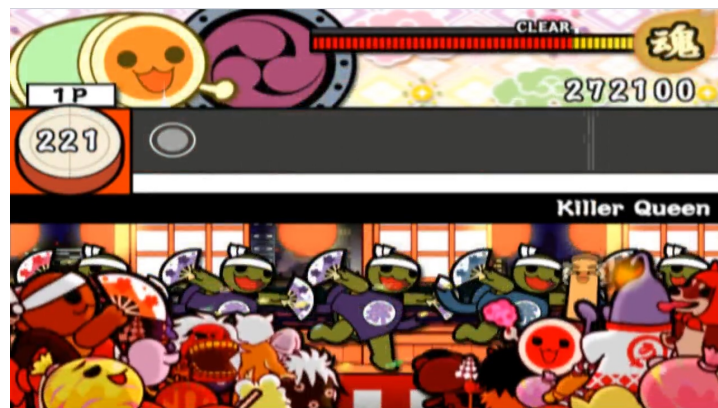


Figure 1.1: *Taiko Drum Master*'s screen at the end of successful passing of a song.

combination of these or something completely different? Or could it be that Namco was actually ahead of its time? Just over a year after *Taiko Drum Master*'s release RedOctane released a little game called *Guitar Hero* in the U.S. European release following the next year. The game used a plastic guitar controller and placed the player in a role of guitarist in front of a crowd to live the dream of a rock star. A couple of

¹In this thesis the West/Western will refer to the U.S. and Europe.

years later Activision released the first *Rock Band* which followed in the steps of *Guitar Hero* though adding also a bass, drums and a mic as playable instruments. These two rhythm game series took the whole Western world by the storm and by the end on the year 2010 the total sales of the two series had exceeded 3 billion US\$ (Miller 2012: 89). Even in 2012, two years after the two series' last main series games were released, music and dance video games ranked as the third often played video games among adult US gamers (Mintel (2012) referenced in Davies and Hemingway (2014: 189)).

It might have been just a bad timing for Namco to release *Taiko Drum Master* ahead of the incoming rhythm game craze. But what if this was not just a case of bad timing in part of Namco but that the localizations of Japanese rhythm games just do not succeed in the West? If this is the case what is the reason for this? While rhythm games are a niche genre of digital games in all, with the success that *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* managed to build up in the West one would believe that there is actually market for this genre. Or was it just because of those plastic instrument controllers creating a fleeting craze? Miller notes that combined number of home console games released by the two series over the years 2005–2010 was 17 when including main series games and larger expansion packs (2012: 87). The way that both series released their last main series games before going to a hiatus for few years in 2010 could indicate that the market had been oversaturated with too many games within too short period making the public getting bored of these games. Interestingly though both series revived also at the same time with new main series entries released by both in October 2015.

Just a look at a bigger Japanese arcade and one can see different rhythm games being played. Video game releases also have not been slacking off and the bigger-than-console-gaming-has-ever-been² mobile game market will probably keep attracting new rhythm games in Japan. However one does not hear so often of Japanese rhythm games being localized in the West. Though this might just be because the genre in itself is small and in relation to other video games these releases will just be lost in the mass. Or it could be that the localizations of these games have not appealed to anyone leaving no one to remember them.

This will be theme of this thesis. Since the birth of the genre in the 1990s Japan, a strong rhythm game culture has continued to live its life in the country. Meanwhile at the other side of the globe same kind of blossoming of the genre have not been experienced. While the Japanese export *Dance Dance Revolution* was for a while the hottest thing in arcades followed then by *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* as the kings of living room rhythm games, these times of prime have not continued to the present. Turning the focus into Japanese rhythm games this thesis aims to study the reasons why these localizations have failed – or succeeded. While one might ask what is there to study in rhythm games as these might not even have a story to tell, one needs just to look at

²Fahey (2015)

Tetris, one of the most popular digital games of all time. Based almost completely on just game mechanics, this has not stopped *Tetris* from achieving worldwide popularity. Therefore it is arguable that even if there is no story in a digital game it does not mean that it could not achieve popular appeal. Moreover, if one can achieve large popular appeal, or contrary fail miserably, why should not the reasons behind these phenomena be studied?

Having played *Taiko no Tatsujin*-series' digital games for close to ten years and other rhythm games on the side of this, based on my personal experience with different rhythm games I argue that the two most important aspects of rhythm games are the gameplay and the music being played. As Lepre notes about Nintendo DS (NDS) rhythm game *Elite Beat Agents*, a localization of Japanese rhythm game *Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan*, while the whole game has been pretty much changed into new clothes the game's gameplay has remained virtually unchanged which makes one recognize that it is a localization (2014: 124). Following Lepre's argument it is arguable that gameplay is the defining element of digital games. Therefore big changes done to the gameplay in localization should not be expected as this would change the nature of the game. This then leaves the main focus of the thesis to music which can be changed and hence might have a large effect on the player's will to pick up the game. The gameplay aspect will not be completely abandoned because, as noted above, it is digital game's defining element. However this thesis will move on with the hypothesis that the possible changes to the rhythm game's soundtrack play major role with the success or failure of the said game.

The thesis will be structured as follows. After this short introduction to the theme of the thesis chapter 1 will continue with defining what the term 'rhythm game' means in the context of this thesis (section 1.1) and introduce the main rhythm game series of the thesis, *Taiko no Tatsujin*, shortly (section 1.2). Chapter 1 will then end with a brief note of what is meant with 'localization' (section 1.3) within this thesis.

Chapter 2 will consist of theoretical review relevant for the thesis. The first half of the chapter will deal with game studies starting with understanding what is a 'game' (section 2.1) followed by a discussion of digital and video games' elements (section 2.1.1) and genre differences and how do these affect people's willingness to play video games (section 2.1.2) which leads to the topic of motivations and reasons to play video games (section 2.1.3) with game studies closing with a look at prior research on rhythm games (section 2.1.4). The second half of the chapter will be left to translation studies with short reviews of theoretical background of localization (section 2.2) and characteristics of video game localization (section 2.2.1). The chapter will then close with an argument why translation studies is not the right academic field for localization and how does this affect theories from translation studies (section 2.2.2).

Chapter 3 will introduce the research process used in this thesis. Divided into two chapters, chapter 3 concentrates on actual localization strategies used in rhythm

games with first briefly introducing each researched game followed by an analysis to the musical changes done in these games in comparison to the Japanese versions of the said rhythm games. At the end of the chapter localization strategies of the studied rhythm games are compared to each other to see whether there are any trends with the success or failure of these games.

Chapter 4 will present the results of the three different surveys conducted about the interest on rhythm games. The first survey was aimed at Japanese *Taiko no Tatsujin* players (section 4.1), the second was for Finnish digital game players (section 4.2) and the third was for Finnish *anime* and *manga* fans (section 4.3). The results including preferences of music and reasons to play rhythm games for example will then be analyzed in comparison to other surveys in section 4.4. The thesis will then conclude in chapter 5 with drawing of conclusions based on the localization decisions made and effects found in chapter 3 and whether these are in line with the survey results from chapter 4.

1.1 Defining ‘Rhythm Game’

There are many kinds of music related digital games. Collins divides these games into three categories based on what their relation is to music: 1) musician-themed games in which bands or artists are used in some way within the game, 2) creative games in which player



Figure 1.2: Gameplay from PS3’s *Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd* game.

can create and/or edit music, and 3) rhythm-action games in which player coordinates according to the melody or beat of the song being played (2008: 111–113). While Collins’ categories are interesting it is arguable that just categorizing digital games based on their relations to music does not amount to much. Crossover between categories is easy (*Rock Band*-series’ game *The Beatles: Rock Band* for example), the first two categories do not amount to their own video game genres (see more about genres in section 2.1.2) and it is arguable whether these softwares that focus on creating music can be called games rather than just regular software. The only interesting category which is actually useful is the ‘rhythm-action games’ which are the focus of this study though the ‘action’ part of the name will be dropped. As rhythm games are a

subgenre of action genre's games it is only natural that the elements that make a digital game an action game are also present in rhythm games. Obviously this fact applies to all action genre's subgenres. However how often does one hear someone talking about 'fighting-action games' or 'shooter-action games'? The name of the subgenre just becomes longer and does not add any new or necessary information. Therefore it is arguable that there is no need to use 'action-rhythm games' but just 'rhythm games' suffices.

What then are 'rhythm games'? Speaking about how *Guitar Hero's* gameplay is sometimes described as "pushing buttons in time" Miller argues that "it fails to capture the feeling and the appeal of gameplay for most players" (2012: 104) referring to the playing experience of *Guitar Hero*, in other words presenting themselves as being a rock star. However what defines the gameplay is this "pushing buttons in time" which becomes the defining element of this genre's digital games. This leads then to this thesis' definition of 'rhythm games' which is as follows:

Rhythm game A rhythm game is a digital game genre in which the player has to react to given action, be it a press of a button or stated movement, to the beat of the music that flows in the background. Furthermore, the beatmap³ of a song stays always the same from one play to another.

While the definition might sound simple it captures exactly the defining element of rhythm games. It should be noted that the digital games that are often called 'dance games' are also included in this definition. The reasons for this is related to the control method of rhythm games. It is arguable that the actual control method does not affect rhythm game's nature.



Figure 1.3: Gameplay from *Dance Dance Revolution*-series (Auten 2015).

Demonstrating with an example, a rhythm game is not defined by a (special) controller such as PS3's Dualshock 3 controller or *Guitar Hero's* plastic guitar controller or *Dance Dance Revolution's* dance pad used to control it, it is not defined by touch-screen controls used for example in *Elite Beat Agents*, and it is not defined by motion controls used for example in *Just Dance*. All of these are just control methods which

³A beatmap is the sheet music of a rhythm game song consisting of notes that the rhythm game in question uses.

are used to react to the given command in time as the definition says.

As might be obvious from the fact that a control method does not define a rhythm game, the way that commands are given do not also define a rhythm game. Rhythm games tend to have three different ways to bring the next required action to the screen. First there is the possibility that notes⁴ can flow in or appear anywhere in the screen (see Figure 1.2) though the appearing notes usually follow some kind of pattern. The second and the third are similar to each other in that both have fixed paths from which notes flow in to the screen: vertically (see Figure 1.3) or horizontally (see Figure 1.4). The different controlling methods then create a variation to what kind of notes the rhythm game in question uses.

It should be noted that some digital games called ‘rhythm games’ are not actually rhythm games based on the above definition. One of these kinds of digital games is *Patapon*. While *Patapon* is often called ‘rhythm game’ because the player has to input actions by following the rhythm of music, the reason why *Patapon* (and other similar digital games) is not a rhythm game is because of the player’s free will to do what they want. The player is not required to follow the same pattern each time, moreover the game does not even give a beatmap which to follow. As the definition of a rhythm game requires the rhythm game to be in charge of what is happening, *Patapon* (and similar digital games) should not be regarded as a rhythm game based on the definition of this thesis. These are just action games using rhythm elements as their gameplay mechanics.

1.2 Short Introduction to *Taiko no Tatsujin*

Taiko no Tatsujin is a rhythm game originally developed by Namco, known these days as Bandai Namco Entertainment⁵, and released in 2001 as an arcade game. Since the first arcade release the rhythm game series has kept its main gameplay close to identical through new arcade iterations and



Figure 1.4: Gameplay from Wii’s *Taiko no Tatsujin Wii Dodon to 2 dai me!* game.

⁴Actions (pressing a button or doing a stated movement) that player has to do.

⁵Namco merged with Bandai in 2006 and in April 2015 the company name was changed to Bandai Namco Entertainment (BNEI 2017)

home and handheld console as well as mobile game releases. The series follows the basic idea of rhythm games with that player has to hit the notes at the right time as these flow from screen's right side to the left side (see Figure 1.4 for reference of the play screen). From gameplay standpoint *Taiko no Tatsujin* consists of mostly two types of notes: red *don*-notes and blue *katsu*-notes. Depending whether one is playing arcade or console version of the series' game the control schemes can differ but the main idea is that the *don*-notes correspond to *taiko*'s center and *katsu*-notes correspond to *taiko*'s rim. Based on how accurately the player manages to hit these notes⁶ the player gains points with the aim to get as high score as possible at the end of a song. The series has also other types of notelike actions which require different kind of reaction from the player based on what kind of note it is. These vary slightly from one game to another.

As mentioned above the first release of the series was the 2001 arcade release. With the achieved success from public the arcade versions have received regular software as well as hardware updates with the latest hardware update dating to November 2011 after which the game has received eight software updates with the latest dating to March 2017. The game has been popular also on home and handheld consoles since the first PS2 game's release in 2002. Overall *Taiko no Tatsujin* series' games have been released on seven consoles⁷ as well as on mobile.⁸ While past couple of years some arcade versions and console games have gotten official releases in few East Asian countries outside of Japan, the series has remained principally as a Japanese exclusive with the only Western release being the aforementioned *Taiko Drum Master* back in 2004.

1.3 What Is Meant by 'Localization'

To end chapter 1 the meaning of 'localization' within this thesis will be explained. For this thesis localization means the process in which a software, video game softwares being the focus of the thesis, is transferred from the country of its origin to a new country or a region, and changes done to it within this process to be usable⁹ in the target region. While in most cases determining what is a localization when discussing video game localization is not extremely hard there are also few exceptions that happen to exist also within this study. The digital game referred here is *Elite Beat Agents*

⁶Note can be either hit 'perfectly' or 'well' or the note can be missed which also breaks the ongoing combo.

⁷PS2, Sony's Playstation Portable (PSP), NDS, Wii, Nintendo's Nintendo 3DS (3DS), Nintendo's Nintendo Wii U (Wii U) and Sony's Playstation Vita (PSV).

⁸Full list of releases can be found on <http://taiko-ch.net/product/consumer/> (Accessed 16 March 2017).

⁹What is here meant with something being usable is that the video game can be played on the target region's console. When most of the home consoles were still region locked so that the video games could only be played on a console that was bought on the same region, making a video game usable would demand at the very least a change of these region codes. At the other extreme a video game goes through a full customization so that it will appeal the new target market.

which is one of the video games being handled as a research material later in chapter 3. While just a brief look at the said game gives an image that it cannot be *Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan's* localization as the games look completely different from each other, as noted above Lepre (2014: 124) argued that the one common element of both of these games was the gameplay which then defined localization relationship. This point is raised here again to argue that the defining factor whether a video game is a localization or not is whether it shares the gameplay with some other game. While this does not solely determine localization it is still extremely important point.

For more deeper look at localization from the viewpoint of translation studies see the second half of chapter 2 starting from section 2.2.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Background

In this chapter the theoretical background for this thesis will be introduced. While from the word ‘localization’ in the title of the thesis one might expect translation studies to be the main discipline of the theoretical background this actually will not be the case. Rather the thesis will base its theoretical background more on game studies and specifically to the study of video games. Starting with defining what is a game in section 2.1 the topic will then move on to the field of video games with topics related to the short history of the field of study in question (section 2.1.1), the different genres of video games (section 2.1.2), different player types and why people play video games (section 2.1.3) after which the video game section will be closed with a look at the prior research conducted on rhythm games in section 2.1.4.

After this the focus will be turned on to translation studies and localization in section 2.2. This chapter will present more general look at the localization practices in general while more precise view of the prior research on localization of video games will be done in section 2.2.1. The whole chapter will end with a discussion why the priority of the theories have been given to game studies over translation studies and why even the use of theories of translation studies is actually little problematic for this thesis (section 2.2.2).

2.1 Game Studies

The term ‘rhythm game’ was defined for the purpose of this thesis in chapter 1 but this has still left the question what an actual video game is. This will be discussed more in detail in the section 2.1.1 but before that can be done there is a need to understand what is even a game. Unlike the research on video games, which is still fairly new field of study, game studies in itself has longer history behind it. While going through the complete history of the discipline is outside the scope of this thesis there is still need to go back in time to around the middle of the 20th century. Caillois’ (1958/1961) work will be the basis for this section as Caillois pushes Huizinga’s (1938/1950) theory

forward and is still often cited even within the video game studies (see for example Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant & Kelly (2009: 296–298) or Mäyrä (2008)).

As mentioned above Caillois bases his book on Huizinga's (1938/1950) work and credits him as the one who opened "extremely fruitful avenues to research and reflection" (Caillois 1958/1961: 3). Caillois, however, notes that Huizinga was not researching the essence of games but rather the definition of play: "His [Huizinga] work is not a study of games, but an inquiry into the creative quality of the play principle in the domain of culture — those which are competitive" (Caillois 1958/1961: 4). While the line between play and game is arguably thin and in many cases the two words might be used as synonyms for each other, because of Huizinga's preferences there is a need to discard the idea of using the word 'play' as a synonym for 'game' and also not rely too much on Huizinga's work. While at first this might seem as a rather hasty decision, Caillois points out rather drastic aspect about Huizinga's theory which, while might not directly affect the actual research topic of this thesis, is still something that can be heavily influential: "Games of chance played for money have practically no place in Huizinga's work" (Caillois 1958/1961: 5). Thinking back to the chapter 1 and the definition of rhythm games, yes, the role of chance does not greatly affect the essence of rhythm games which can be said to even be competitive and therefore fit quite well inside Huizinga's definition of play¹. However, when thinking of games involving for example dice, can it soundly be said that the people are not playing a game? While rhythm games might not use elements of chance that much, the random elements are not at all strange to the video games. Therefore disregarding the aspect of chance even from the definition of play is not something desirable.

Luckily, Caillois offers his own definition for play which also takes account the games of chance. While the topic for this section are the games and not the play in itself, Caillois' (1958/1961: 9–10) definition of play as an activity which is essentially 1) free, 2) separate, 3) uncertain 4) unproductive, 5) governed by rules and 6) make-believe, is something that should be taken into consideration later when topic moves to the essence of (video) games. Moreover, Caillois treats different ways of playing as a one long continuum. At the other end is *paidia*, uncontrolled fantasy in which "free improvisation, and carefree gaiety is dominant", and at the opposite end is *ludus*, bound with "arbitrary, imperative, and purposely tedious conventions" (1958/1961: 13). Mäyrä notes that the *ludus* types of games are the ones that are currently closer to what people imagine when they think of what game is, with Caillois including things such as flying the kite as a form of play (Mäyrä 2008: 34). Although Caillois' concept

¹"Summing up the formal characteristics of play we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside "ordinary" life as being "not serious," but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means." (Huizinga's definition of play quoted in Caillois 1958/1961: 4.)

of play is arguably extremely wide and might include activities that are not usually considered as games per se, it does not exclude the fact that these qualities are something that the so called “proper” games should also have. Therefore these qualities of play that Caillois has identified should also be present in video games that are a subclass of games.

With the understanding what play is Caillois moves to discuss the different types of games. Caillois divides games into four categories: competitive and ability based *agôn*, fate and luck defined *alea*, imitation and part playing *mimicry*, and seeking the state of vertigo *ilinx* (1958/1961: 14–23). The short descriptions might already indicate what kind of games are included within *agôn* and *alea* categories while *mimicry* and *ilinx* type of games might be little more abstract to immediately perceive. Games such as football and chess, where no external forces can affect the game and everything is up to player’s abilities, are perfect examples for *agôn* games while in contrast to these *alea* types of games such as lottery and roulette, just to name few, rely completely on external forces to decide the outcome of the game.

With describing *mimicry* games Caillois goes back to using the term play. From referring to things such as playing a part and theatre it is clear that *mimicry* is closer to *paidia* than *ludus* with the flexibility of rules with Caillois arguing that “[t]he rule of the game is unique: it consists in the actor’s fascinating the spectator, while avoiding an error that might lead the spectator to break the spell [illusion]” (1958/1961: 23). Like *mimicry*, *ilinx* type of games are also not so exact to define. As noted above, the main idea behind *ilinx* is the pursuit of state of vertigo with Caillois describing the process as “an attempt to momentarily destroy the stability of perception and inflict a kind of voluptuous panic upon an otherwise lucid mind” (1958/1961: 23). With this description it could be said that the *ilinx* type of games are based around seeking of (mental) excitement often through physical activities. Some of these activities that Caillois gives as examples are screaming as loud as one can, racing downhill and tightrope walking (1958/1961: 24).

It should also be noted that these four categories do not exist in a vacuum without contact to each other. Caillois acknowledges that some games take elements from more than just one category with six possible pairs existing overall (1958/1961: 71). Poker is a great example of this kind of mixture of categories with the game based around chance (*alea*) how the cards happen to be drawn, but player’s skill (*agôn*) can also affect the result when playing against other people. Combinations of three categories can also exist though these occurrences are rare and do not have influence upon the nature of the game (1958/1961: 72).

Caillois has discussed the nature of games and while he presented a definition of what ‘play’ is, same kind of definition for all the games cannot be found in *Man, play, and games*. While this is not ideal Adams identifies well the possible reason for the lack of definition: “Defining any term that refers to a broad class of human behaviors

is a tricky business, because if anyone can find a single counterexample, the definition is inaccurate” (2010: 3). This could also be said to be the reason why there is no single common definition for the term. Adams uses his own definition² of game while Juul has his own definition³ which is based on studies of several authors including also Caillois’ work. The definitions have common elements, the need of rules for example, with each other as well as with Caillois’ definition of play, though differences can also be seen with Adams and Juul pushing more player’s active participation in the game. While Caillois argues for play to be conducted under one’s free will and that the result is uncertain he does not stress how much player(s) can affect the results. This is emphasized by the *alea* category of games in which player(s) cannot affect the game’s result in any way.

After all these definitions and descriptions of play and games, the only real way to conclude this section is to accept that there is no clear, universal way to define precisely what a game actually is. While the use of definitions such as the ones of Adams’ and Juul’s can be done, the use of more descriptive method to understand what a game is will be preferred. Based on the research referred earlier in this section the following can be concluded:

Game A game is an activity which needs rules to define for example what can be done in the game and how does the game end. Further following these rules the player(s) can affect the outcome of the game meaning that no game is decided before the game has even begun. All of this happens on a game board that is separated from the reality meaning that the events of the game do not directly affect the real world. Moreover one can access this game board only by one’s own free will.

This is the descriptive definition for a game that will be referred in later sections of this thesis. As one can easily note with this definition Caillois’ pure *alea* type of games have been excluded from the definition of a game as the player(s) cannot affect the outcome of the game in any way. Adams argues that a game must have some element of challenge and decision making or it becomes non-trivial activity (2010: 7). Following the thoughts of Adams it is arguable that if active player involvement is not needed then the activity should not be referred as a ‘game’ but rather these kind of luck based activities could be referred for example as a ‘gamble’. However even these luck and chance based activities can be ‘played’ making ‘play’ an umbrella term for ‘game’ and ‘gamble’ for example. Still, the existence of chance in games is not

²“A game is a type of play activity, conducted in the context of a pretended reality, in which the participant(s) try to achieve at least one arbitrary, nontrivial goal by acting in accordance with rules.” (Adams 2010: 3)

³“A game is 1) a rule-based formal system; 2) with variable and quantifiable outcomes; 3) where different outcomes are assigned different values; 4) where the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome; 5) the player feels emotionally attached to the outcome; 6) and the consequences of the activity are optional and negotiable” (Juul (2005) cited in Mäyrä (2008: 33–34)).

completely denied as chance arguably plays a factor in many games and while chance might even, in the end, decide the outcome of the game the player(s) can still try to affect and control the probabilities of the game. These kind of activities are included in the definition of a game. In the next section after a quick look at the history of digital games the nature of video games will be discussed at which point the definition of a game will come up again.

2.1.1 Essence of Video Games

The answer for a question “when was the first video game developed?” changes depending on who one asks. Kerr notes the disagreement between researchers whether the first video game was the often cited Steve Russell’s *Spacewar* (for example Aoyama and Izushi (2003: 426) refer the game as “the first computer game”) released in 1962 for Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s (MIT) computers from where it spread across the United States’ universities, or William Higginbotham’s *Tennis for Two* which was developed four years earlier though never publicly released (Kerr 2006: 12). Mäyrä goes even further back in time to note the first programmed chess program in around 1950 and A. S. Douglas’ tic-tac-toe computer program (2008: 39–40).

The reason for these differing opinions comes from the fact that even when *Pong*’s 50th anniversary is approaching there is still no consensus among academics what these kind of games should be called. Kerr refers some of the most often used terms such as video games and computer games as the umbrella term for all the different games played across different platforms from arcade machines to home consoles. According to Kerr the reason for this is the field’s relatively young age combined to cultural preferences with computer games being more popular in Europe and South East Asia while video games are favored in the U.S. and Japan. (2006: 3.)

As one might imagine, without clearly defining what the used terms actually mean the discussion becomes quite confusing quickly. With the term such as ‘video game’ which is still relatively abstract term the level of confusion might be avoided but how about ‘computer game’? Is the topic here about an industrywide entertainment product or just a specific type of game played on PC? Mäyrä (2008) and Kerr (2006) both avoid the use of above options with the use of neutral ‘digital games’ as the umbrella term for “all kinds of contemporary games utilizing computing technologies within its operation” as Mäyrä (2008: 12) puts it. This thesis will be following Mäyrä’s and Kerr’s example with the use of ‘digital games’ as the umbrella term under which games are referred based on their corresponding platform. Therefore computer games refer to games played on PC, mobile games are games played on mobile phones, and arcade games refer to games played on arcade cabinet. After these three categories the only significant games left are the ones played on systems dedicated for digital games which are commonly referred as home and handheld consoles. These digital games will be

jointly referred as video games within this thesis. With the way the term ‘video games’ is used in this thesis the reason for the wide use of the term earlier in chapter 1 should now be apparent with this study concentrating on games released only on home and handheld consoles.

It should be noted that video games are not just a subcategory of games but at the same time video games are also pieces of software though these differ greatly from other kinds of software in that “no one has to play a [video] game” (Sellers 2006: 9). This need for freedom is also one of the key elements of games as noted above which is why the idea of comparing video games to other software products will be abandoned and the focus will be solely on the gaming aspects. Disregarding the obvious fact that video games are played on a digital platform, be it home or handheld console, are there then some other radical elements that separate video games from regular games? As video games are a subcategory of digital games which again is a subcategory of all games, the definition given in section 2.1 for games naturally applies also to video games.

Video games are often referred as an interactive media (see for example Adams (2010: 4) or Collins (2013: 2)) which is only natural when one remembers that player(s) can affect the outcome of a game. With story heavy games such as the most recent installments in the *Metal Gear*-series one might argue that the player cannot actually affect the outcome of the end result as the video game will end always the same way with video games which tell a linear story. However the way that the player can affect the outcome is how one decides to achieve this goal. While a game of chess might be won by opponent’s resignation (or the game might end in a draw), maybe the most known way to win is by checkmating the opponent. Like with *Metal Gear*, the end result is “always” the same, just how this is achieved can be done differently. Adams refers to the game’s goal as a *victory condition* though that will not necessarily end the game. Also it should also be noted that winning or losing is not a requirement for a digital game although a goal is still required. (2010: 7.) *The Sims*-series is a good example of this kind of an unwinnable game type. While it is not completely limited to just video games, this can still be argued to be one of the key elements of video games. Newman notes that “[i]t is a simple fact that videogames are not intended to be completed in single sittings” (2004: 84). While Newman refers here to the possibility to continue the play session later with a save function, it also works well to demonstrate that the developers are expecting player(s) to come back to play later again. While it cannot be denied that this feature could not be present in other games also it is arguable that video games are more lenient in allowing one to stop the play in the middle and continue later.

With video games build around computing technology this has also lifted the burden from humans to keep track of the video game’s rules which is left to computer within the console (Adams 2010: 15). This also means that when humans are in con-

trol of the rules, these can still be negotiated over before the game begins and even during the game interpretation of rules is possible. However in a video game while some of the rules might be interchangeable before the game begins (for example how much real time it takes to finish a match of *FIFA*) when the game actually begins usually the rules of the video game cannot be changed anymore. One of the few sometimes modifiable rules in video games during the play, while not a rule per se, is the option to change the level of difficulty of the video game. Going with video game player stereotypes arguably it is often thought that the so called “hardcore players” are the ones that enjoy challenging and difficult video games while their opposites, “casual players”, always prefer easy games. However the matter is not that simple. As Juul notes “casual players” also want to have challenge in their games and rate lower games that did not provide them any challenge. If the video game does not offer an opportunity to improve one’s skills, which is “at the core of almost all games” according to Juul, the video game will probably not gather much of popularity. (2010: 40–42.)

While Juul is talking here about “casual players” preferences this is something that can arguably be readily applied to all video game players. Be it a role-playing game (RPG) such as *YS VIII: Lacrimosa of Dana* or a first-person shooter (FPS) such as *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* which, while differ completely from each other how they play, are arguably aimed at more “hardcore players” if just the game’s genre is considered. Still both of these games have number of difficulty levels to choose from. Would not this then mean that there is no one level of difficulty that the players are expected to play but rather that the player can pick a difficulty level that corresponds to their own prior knowledge and skills and gives them the most enjoyable experience of the game? As it also seems to be, players would rather choose more difficult option over easier option. As noted above improving one’s skills is one of video games key elements according to Juul. Comparing learning process of playing video games to learning process of other activities, for example learning to drive a car, Juul states “we are not necessarily disappointed if we find it easy to learn to drive a car, but we are disappointed if a game is too easy. This means that failure is integral to the enjoyment of game playing in a way that it is not integral to the enjoyment of learning in general” (2013: 45). This then means that when a player moves to a game board separated from reality they are more willing to experience failure and hardship and will even expect them to happen.

Where do the rhythm games then stand within all of this? Going back to section 2.1 and the definition of a game it can be immediately noted that the presence of rules is high in rhythm games. Arguably it can be said that rhythm games might even be stricter than other digital games with applying the rules: if you miss a note the computer behind the rules will not be second questioning this and it is a goodbye to that full combo that you were going for. Following the element of Caillois’ *agôn* a rhythm game is build up to reflect player’s skills. The better one plays, the higher the score at the end of a song

will get. Being played via digital platform the player steps to a separate game board when they begin to play. And as noted above, one will not play a digital game if they do not want to. Different difficulty levels are also present in rhythm games as the games often have separated general difficulty levels as well as songs being rated respectively. Rhythm games therefore fill well both the definition of a game and essential elements of a video game.

To summarize the content of the section 2.1.1 the main difference between digital games to games in general is the fact that digital games are played on a computer controlled environment. Therefore the jump to the imagined game board happens immediately when a player turns on the game. While not talked more within the section it should be noted that the controlling of digital games happens with a controller⁴ be it just a regular game controller or some special controller such as a light gun controller for example. Otherwise there are not many matters that really separate digital games from games overall which also holds true when moving the discussion to video games. However, the way that video games implement game's rules happens in a way which takes advantage of the computing power in the console. Whether it be the possibility to change the difficulty level or the overall control over the game's rules and what is accepted on a game board, supervising of these are left to the computer.⁵ While not something that could not be done in all games per se, this can be argued to be something characteristic for video games. The discussion related to video game's difficulty level will continue later in section 2.1.3 when the topic moves to the reasons why to play video games.

2.1.2 Different Video Game Genres

The last topic to be covered before moving to discuss the reasons and motivations behind playing video games, are the different video game genres which sets up the last piece of foundation required to carry out the section 2.1.3's discussion. While people thinking about movie or book genres for example might feel that there should be no need to do further analysis on genres as the concept "is clear", video game genres work quite bit differently compared to these non-interactive products. Adams notes that while genre refers to content of the work in cases of movies and books, with video games genre actually describes the type of challenges a game has to offer with Adams defining video game genre as "[a] genre is a category of games characterized by a particular set of challenges, regardless of setting or game-world content" (2010: 70).

According to Kerr, though there have been some attempts to define video game

⁴While different motion sensing input devices, such as *Kinect*, also exists these kind of control methods have been in clear minority when compared to "regular" way to play a video game with a game controller.

⁵Computer supervising game's rules is not limited to only video games but can be applied to all digital games though apart from computer games, which resemble video games the most, some form of modification and emphasis on different factors should be expected based on the nature of the system.

genre, overall “[g]enre is quite under-theorised in game studies” (2006: 39), and therefore one might argue that this is just Adams’ own opinion of the matter which might not reflect the general opinion of the field. However with a look at the actual genres used by Adams and other authors and it becomes clear that this is not just Adams’ opinion. Adams lists action, strategy, role-playing, (real world) simulation, construction and management, adventure and puzzle games as the classic game genres (2010: 70–71). In contrast Smith B. names “sports, driving (or racing), simulation, strategy, role-playing, shooting (or shooter), and fighting (or fighter)” (2006: 48) as the most consistently used genres in video games. It is easy to see similarities between the two lists and even the ones missing can be explained. While Smith B. does not name ‘action’ as a one genre it should be noted that shooter and fighting games are included in Adams’ action genre as sub-genres. This also applies to sports genre which is part of Adams’ simulation genre. (2010: 70–71.) The use of these basic genres is not limited just to Adams and Smith B. but can be found in use by many different authors though the names of the genres might change little according to the source⁶. Smith B. also notes genres such as music, puzzle, board games and trivia though these are used less consistently (2006: 48).

Unsurprisingly use of genres is not limited to just one per video game but mixtures of genres do also exist. Calling these games hybrids, Adams argues that by mixing genres together the intention of a developer is to appeal broader audience. While some games, such as *The Legend of Zelda*-series for example, have successfully managed to combine different genres together, Adams warns that if the genre is not needed from the gameplay standpoint it should not be included in the game as it might just drive people from both genres away. (2010: 71–72.) This also demonstrates well how important genres are for video game’s appeal. Mäyrä notes that already *Spacewar*, which was popular among MIT’s staff and students, did not achieve any kind of popular appeal when the game was commercially adapted as *Computer Space* in 1971 demonstrating that for a digital game to be popular among different demographics there would be need for modification of game’s concept, difficulty and controls to suit the demand in the target audience (2008: 42). Consequently, following Adams’ line of thought, by trying to make a video game to appeal everyone the likelihood of it appealing to no one arguably increases. Being forced to play through parts that one has no interest in to begin with might well leave the game uncompleted or not even bought in the first place. Therefore it would arguably be better to concentrate to please video game’s target audience rather than to try to achieve universal appeal. This is not to say that a video game could not achieve universal appeal. From the game design standpoint the simplest digital games such as *Pong* and *Tetris* might be the ones closest to achieve this universal appeal for their time maybe because of their simple and easy gameplay

⁶For examples see five list examples in Smith B. (2006: 47) and two list examples in Kerr (2006: 40).

mechanics and not trying to be more than they were.

The above section has demonstrated the importance of genre for video games. With the knowledge of what does the video game's genre mean and what kind of effects it might have the next section will compile ideas from the above sections to explain what kind of people play video games and why do they play them.

2.1.3 Why Play Video Games?

After constructing the foundation in the above sections the questions related to player motivation can now be discussed. However it should be noted immediately that an in-depth analysis on the reasons why people play video games is out of the scope of this thesis. While in chapter 4 some interest will be given to reasons why people would choose to play rhythm games, this is not the sole focus of this study but rather just a supporting pillar. As Newman (2004: 92) puts it "not every player plays a given game in the same way, nor do they necessarily seek the same pleasures from their play". The number of video game players there are, the same amount of reasons for why they play video games exists. The aim of this section is to introduce some of these motivations to play video games while also discussing how do these motivations appear in players.

Video games are relatively expensive entertainment products with AAA games⁷ being often released at the price of around 60 euro in Finland. While free-to-play digital games have become more common during the last couple of years, the big budget titles are arguably still using the traditional model of selling the video games though things such as selling additional downloadable content (DLC) has become everyday practice for these full priced video games. So what makes people to invest large amount of money into a video game (and later possibly to additional DLC)? Sherry, Lucas, Greenberg & Lachlan name six different dimensions for reasons why people play video games which are 1) *arousal* achieved by stimulating emotions with fast action and high-quality graphics, 2) *challenge* themselves to get better in a game, 3) *competition* against other to prove one's superiority over others, 4) *diversion* from everyday life and stress and responsibilities that are related to it, 5) *fantasy* of doing something that you cannot do in a real life such as drive a race car and 6) *social interaction* with friends over playing video games (2006: 217–218).

While the above motivations might even seem quite stereotypical video game industry's opinions about the matter seem to be in the same line. Putting themselves to the industry's viewpoint Klug and Schell identify nine player types:

“*The Competitor* plays to be better than other players. *The Explorer* plays to experience the boundaries of the play world. He plays to discover first what others do not know yet. *The Collector* plays to acquire the most stuff

⁷O'Hagan and Mangiron define AAA games as “[g]ames with high production budgets, usually referring to flagship titles involving substantial resources” (2013: 5).

through the game. *The Achiever* plays to not only be better now, but also be better in rankings over time. He plays to attain the most championships over time. *The Joker* plays for the fun alone and enjoys the social aspects. *The Director* plays for the thrill of being in charge. He wants to orchestrate the event. *The Storyteller* plays to create or live in an alternate world and build narrative out of that world. *The Performer* plays for the show he can put on. *The Craftsman* plays to build, solve puzzles, and engineer constructs.” (2006: 91–92.)

Aspects such as competition and social interaction are easily found from both Sherry et al. and Klug and Schell, and it is arguable for example that at least Klug and Schell’s ‘the explorer’, ‘the storyteller’ and ‘the performer’ have elements similar to ‘fantasy’ motivation from Sherry et al.. This does not come as a surprise though with Klug and Schell noting that “[m]ost players are a combination of two or more types, [...] often changing emphasis depending on what game they are playing” (2006: 92).

Back in the section 2.1.1 the discussion briefly touched on the difficulty levels of video games and now is time to return to this discussion. Both Mäyrä (2008: 3) and Newman (2004: 16) raise challenge as a notable motivation why people play video games. Earlier Juul argued for “casual players” wanting challenge in their games. The same need for challenge is found from adolescents according to Raney, Smith & Baker (2006: 169): “So, for many teens it seems the video games must be sufficiently but also realistically challenging to be appealing.” People then clearly require challenge in video games though what kind of challenge does this mean is completely another question. Adams mentions physical coordination, logic and mathematical, exploration and seven other types of challenges as overall challenge categories commonly used in video games (2010: 261–275). Adams also raises ‘timing and rhythm’ as one of physical coordination challenges’ subcategories which would seem to be a perfect challenge for rhythm games though with ‘speed and reaction time’ and ‘accuracy and precision’ subcategories also existing one is left to question the need for ‘timing and rhythm’ subcategory as the two aforementioned subcategories cover pretty much everything relevant of the subcategory in question. Admittedly the explanation given for ‘timing’ is not completely covered in the two other subcategories but at the same time ‘timing’ could have been included in ‘accuracy and precision’ subcategory.

The level of challenge in a video game can easily be tied to the level of immersion that a player experiences when playing video game. Adams gives immersion the following description:

“Immersion is the feeling of being submerged in a form of entertainment, or rather, being unaware that you are experiencing an artificial world. When you are immersed in a book, movie, or [video] game, you devote all your attention to it and it seems real. You have lost track of the boun-

daries of the magic circle [game board]. The pretended reality in which you are immersed seems as real as, or at least as meaningful as, the real world.” (2010: 25.)

This loss of oneself in time and space state, as it could also be described, has been perceived as one of the main elements in digital games’ gameplay according to Mäyrä (2008: 108). However, as was the case with video games’ genre being different from books and movies’ genre, the immersion in video games also slightly differs from immersion in movies and books. Recalling the interactive aspect of video games it is not surprising that this is the case. With the player being able to affect what is happening rather than to just follow the given path, new ways, that could not exist in the passive media of books and movies, to immerse oneself into a video game are naturally born. Adams raises three immersion types that are present in video games: 1) *tactical immersion* boosts player’s reaction time to its limit to react to the fast paced action on the screen, 2) *strategic immersion* can occur in situations where a player is observing, calculating and planning ahead to maximize one’s advantage to win a game, and 3) *narrative immersion* lets player to submerge oneself into the game world and act as one of its inhabitants (2010: 26).

While all three types of immersion have their uses in different situations, that is in different video games, because of the theme of the thesis the focus will be concentrated on the tactical immersion as rhythm games require fast reaction and aspects like strategy and narrative are at best secondary types of elements in these video games. Adams continues tactical immersion’s description with that to achieve state of tactical immersion the game challenge often is comprised of dozens of smaller challenges that are similar to each other because differing suddenly from what a player has been doing would destroy immersion (2010: 26). This description works similarly how Phillips reflects immersion to *flow*: “[I]n order for the activity of gameplay to become immersive, the actual procedures must reach the state of an automatic response, similar to a reflex action. This state is threatened the instant that the player feels the need to pause and ask, “What I am supposed to be doing now?”” (2014: 42).

This works well as a bridge to the last topic of this section which is the aforementioned term *flow* coined by Csikszentmihalyi (1991). The term is often brought up when motivations and elements of digital games are discussed (for example Adams (2010), Mäyrä (2008) and Juul (2013) all bring up *flow* and Csikszentmihalyi). Csikszentmihalyi describes *flow* as “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter” (1991: 4). Moreover, as Phillips described immersion in video games, Csikszentmihalyi describes *flow* similarly with “people [becoming] so involved in what they are doing that the activity becomes spontaneous, almost automatic; they stop being aware of themselves as separate from the actions they are performing” (1991: 53).

The reason, why flow so often comes up in discussions related to motivations of playing digital games, relates to the way how one enters into flow state. Figure 2.1 depicts the relation between one's skills and the level of challenge that the activity requires. According to Csikszentmihalyi whether the activity is too difficult or too easy one cannot enter the flow state. Moreover Csikszentmihalyi also argues that people get bored or frustrated with doing the same thing at the same level for too long and therefore drive to stretch their skills further to get back in the flow state (1991: 75).

For video games to keep the player in flow the ideal state would then be steady increase in difficulty where the game begins as relatively easy and then progresses in linear line until the game's end. However this would require the game to be completely linear which in itself is questionable design choice in today's

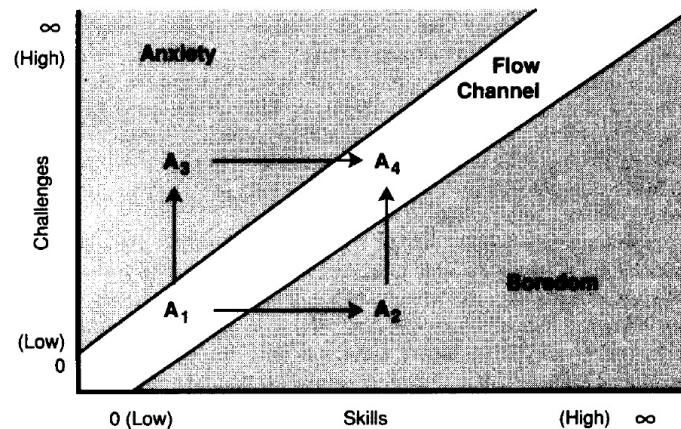


Figure 2.1: Individual's level of skill in relation to activity's challenge and how this creates flow state (Csikszentmihalyi 1991: 74).

video games when video games such as *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* appeal to people with their open world design and possibilities to freely explore the world. Therefore it is no wonder that Mäyrä argues that “rather than talking about flow as an essential part of gameplay experience, it is more appropriate to speak about *challenge-based* form of immersion into games” (2008: 108). There is truth to Mäyrä's opinion in that flow is in no way limited to just video games but can manifest in almost any activity which becomes apparent with the many examples Csikszentmihalyi (1991) gives throughout the book. As flow is applicable to different fields it is natural to use one that suits digital game industry. Different immersion types mentioned by Adams (2010) work well (though there are also limitations which will become more apparent in section 2.1.4) to identify some of the reasons why people get so into playing video games. Especially as it is convenient for rhythm games, tactical immersion should be kept in mind for later.

In this section some of the reasons why people play video games have been discussed. These include different kind of goals and roles that people want to do in video games as well as stimulation of one's mind. Moreover after getting into a game one can lose oneself into the game world in different ways depending what kind of play the game is pushing forward. However one aspect that has been missing almost completely in this section are applications of these ideas for rhythm games. This has been

a conscious omission as the focus in the next section 2.1.4 will be completely left to prior research on rhythm games.

2.1.4 Prior Research on Rhythm Games

As study of digital games is still relatively new branch of game studies and rhythm games are just a small genre within all digital games, it does not come as a surprise that there is not that much of research done on rhythm games. Popular game series on rhythm game research have been *Dance Dance Revolution*⁸, *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* of which latter two are often studied in tandem⁹. On the other hand popular themes have been learning and education (Cassidy and Paisley 2013), specialized controllers (Blaine 2005) and motivations and player attitudes (Miller 2012). While the overall amount of research is not yet huge it is more than enough to be out of scope of still small section which is why the focus will again, as was done in section 2.1.3, be concentrated on the topics easily related to the theme of the thesis. The focus will therefore be especially on the motivations why people play rhythm games and on aspects what kind of skills these games require.

The nature of rhythm games was already discussed in chapter 1 so this will not be in the focus of this section. However, during that discussion special controllers used to play rhythm games were brought up, and while these were deemed not to be necessary to define rhythm games there is no denying their appeal especially within the people who do not usually play video games. Juul argues that compared to a regular video game controller these special controllers are intuitively easier to just pick up and start playing as the player can use their existing knowledge how one should play a real instrument and then apply this knowledge to use the special controller (2010: 103). Blaine goes even further to argue that if a player does not use a specialized controller “the resultant gaming experience is considerably less fun” (2005: 32). However this is nothing more than Blaine’s personal opinion as not any kind of scientific proof is provided for the statement. On the other hand though playing with a special controller becomes an experience also for people watching as they for example can learn just by watching or enjoy the possible failure of the player in spectacular way making the whole event more social than if the game was played with a regular controller (Juul 2010: 103). The similar kind of social interactions are also found in *Dance Dance Revolution* with some of the players *freestyling*¹⁰ when they play to entertain and impress the audience (Höysniemi 2006: 9).

Miller, concentrating on both *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* series, agrees with Juul in that the two game series have had success behind them “because they rely on play-

⁸See for example Demers (2006), Höysniemi (2006) and Smith J. (2004).

⁹See for example Davies and Hemingway (2014) and Miller (2012).

¹⁰“[T]he aim of the player is to dance as expressively as possible, i.e., perform using a personal style.” (Höysniemi 2006: 4)

ers' pre-existing knowledge and embodied understanding of rock performance" backing this argument with interviewee's opinion that by holding the guitar controller the player forgets that they are playing a video game and instead imagine to be a rock star (Miller 2012: 122). Davies and Hemingway's study supports this view with them arguing that when playing either *Guitar Hero* or *Rock Band* players with low self-esteem would get more easily immersed in the game in the sense of fantasy-seeking immersion (2014: 196). Elsewhere Collins also argues that "gestural input devices encourage role-play" (2013: 63). With these findings it is safe to argue that in rhythm games that use special controllers, such as *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band*, one of the biggest motivations to play these video games are the controllers and the fantasy-seeking immersion¹¹ brought with them while the social aspects should not be forgotten either.

While rhythm games with special controllers might have a motivational element with their controllers how about the rhythm games that do not use these kind of controllers? Including external accessories required to play a game on handheld consoles can be especially hard to carry out though there have been exceptions also such as Nintendo DS's *Guitar Hero* games. While it obviously is not the whole truth, it can be argued, however, that the aforementioned fantasy-seeking immersion is more present among the so called "casual players" who do not play these games all the time and at the highest difficulty levels. This argument is based on the requirements to play rhythm games at a higher level of which will be discussed next.

Juul argues that games such as *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* are both "casual" and "hardcore" at the same time with the style being defined by the player's decision to just play for fun or trying to master the punishingly hard difficulty levels (2010: 129). Even though one might want to play the game at a higher difficulty level this does not happen automatically without any work. Some of the most basic requirements to play are "fast pattern-recognition capacity and quick reactions, as well as a good sense of rhythm. Extended gameplay sessions also entail having plenty of stamina" according to Mäyrä (2008: 143) whose topic here is *Dance Dance Revolution*. While it can seem to be obvious that dancing requires stamina if one wants to continue doing it for long time, this requirement also applies to rhythm games which are played on a regular controller. Going back to the concept of flow, Csikszentmihalyi argues that opposite to its effortless seeming nature flow "often requires strenuous physical exertion, or highly disciplined mental activity" (1991: 54). While it was agreed that flow is not a necessary gameplay element, arguably it is incorrect to dismiss flow completely in relation to immersion. The way that Adams (2010: 26) describes tactical immersion as being "in the groove" while "action is so fast that your brain has no time for anything

¹¹Because Adams (2010: 26) notes only three types of immersion in digital games there is a need to create another type of immersion. While Adams's narrative immersion seems similar to this fantasy-seeking immersion, they are separated from each other with how Adams pushes the story to be the major aspect of narrative immersion. Because story is not playing this kind of a role when playing rhythm games arguably using narrative immersion to describe this kind of immersion is incorrect.

else” is similar to Csikszentmihalyi’s statement of flow as “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter” (1991: 4). It is therefore arguable that just being immersed into a game can well drain one’s stamina away quickly.

As for the other basic requirements of rhythm games, both fast pattern-recognition capacity and quick reactions are something that are controlled by the brain. While one can train oneself to be better at these, at some point there comes the limit what one can do consciously and the next step is to do these thing at the unconscious level. This idea is applied from Phillips’s (2014: 42) line of thinking who argued that the state of immersion is lost the moment one starts to think what they should be doing next, as well as from author’s own history with rhythm games. This is supported by both Vickers, Istance & Smalley (2010: 37) and Miller (2012: 105) noting that more advanced players tend to read ahead of what they at that moment are actually playing with Miller adding that players are reading “the descending notes in chunks, looking for patterns and familiar material”. What follows from this is that while being immersed in a game player’s brain is working at a speed that goes past what conscious level of processing is capable of which then results every action being done unconsciously even if a player is technically conscious.

In this section motivations to play rhythm games have been discussed. The special controllers have played a large role in the West making these rhythm games popular though they are not the sole reason why people play rhythm games. The high-level, high-speed action that these games offer and the possibility to get immersed into this is arguably also a reason which appeal for more “hardcore” players. This section also closes game studies side of this theoretical review with section 2.2 moving to the side of translation studies.

2.2 Localization

For the translation studies half of this theoretical review the sole focus will be on localization. While some of translation theories such as skopos theory will be referred briefly at some point, these theories will be placed in a context of localization and adapted to be suitable for it. As it happens this will not be without problems which will lead to the discussion in section 2.2.2 about whether localization should be part of translation studies. Until that discussion happens the thesis will move on the premise that localization belongs under translation studies. In this section localization will be defined from translation studies’ view and an overview of localization in general will be done. In section 2.2.1 the focus will move to video games and to whether these have some special qualities not present in other forms of products being localized.

The process to understand what localization is begins with understanding the his-

tory behind the term. According to Bernal Merino ‘localization’ as a term in itself has long history behind it with instances of use happening as early as 1813 (2006: 30). However for example Dunne argues that ‘localization’ did not exist yet around 1985 as a profession and an industry but has then grown into multi-billion U.S. dollar industry (2006: 1). Pym also notes this economic value and admits that while translation studies was not keen to take notice of the industry this would have to be done “for economic reasons if nothing else” (2004: xv).

What then is this multi-billion industry that just came out of nowhere? Esselink cites the now dead The Localisation Industry Standards Association’s (LISA) definition for localization: “Localization involves taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be used and sold” (2000: 3). Pym (2010) also uses this definition though for example Dunne argues that no consensus exist to explain precisely what localization is and gives his own working definition used within his edited book: “The processes by which digital content and products developed in one locale (defined in terms of geographical area, language and culture) are adapted for sale and use in another locale” (2006: 1, 4). While there are no ground breaking differences between the two definitions Dunne’s decision not to explicitly mention linguistic changes is interesting and this will come up again in section 2.2.2.

Moving on then to what localization involves, Dunne argues that localization consists from several processes which are “(a) translation of textual content into the language and textual conventions of the target locale; and (b) adaptation of non-textual content (from colors, icons and bitmaps, to packaging, form factors, etc.) as well as input, output and delivery mechanisms to take into account the cultural, technical and regulatory requirements of that locale” (2006: 4). Pym (2010: 135) offers his own list of eleven steps included in localization. What is noteworthy in both of these is that translation is seen as just one part of the whole process.

While localization is about making a product suited for a locale other than where it was developed, the process of making the product into a state where this can be done is also relevant in localization. Internationalization, as this process is being called, is according to Esselink who uses again LISA’s definition “[a] process of generalizing a product so that it can handle multiple languages and cultural conventions without the need for re-design. Internationalization takes place at the level of program design and document development” (2000: 2). Pym demonstrates this process with timestamps as the way how the date 11.12.08 is understood differs whether you ask British or American. Instead of the date written there the internationalized version would have some kind of indicative text that the appropriate form of date would be inserted there. In a large scale localization project where there are many languages into which the text would be translated, given that there is a source text this is first internationalized and all the translations will be done from this internationalized version. (2004: 31, 34.)

It is also arguable that if a product is aiming for worldwide simultaneous shipment (sim-ship) it can be possible that the whole product is build from the start into internationalized version which would increase the efficiency of localization greatly.

The last topic for this section are the different ways to localize a product. Pym notes three different ways of localization: 1) *complete localization* in which absolutely everything from content to manuals has been localized, 2) *partial localization* in which only the most popular programs are localized and for example some parts of interface or Help files are left on their original languages, and 3) *enabled* in which the software can be used outside of locale where it was developed but nothing has been translated (2004: 9). Esselink clarifies the ‘enabled’ choice with an example of allowing double-byte characters in program making processing and displaying text in Asian languages possible (2000: 26).

This section has introduced basic concepts related to localization. When the topic moves to localization of video games in the next section, the concepts of this section will be developed further to suit the field of video game localization.

2.2.1 Video Game Localization

Since the 1980s when Nintendo entered into video game market with its Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) it is not exaggerated to say that the industry transformed once and for all into global industry. Already since the days of *Pong* the most popular digital games were imported from America to Japan and when Japan got a hang of making digital games these games were then imported to the West. While the first digital games were not too complicated and might not have required textual translations with the release of NES and development of story rich games full of text, there rose a need to translate these games as trying to progress through the game without understanding at all what the Japanese text on the screen was saying can be said to be difficult for children for whom NES was marketed towards. However it was quickly understood that just translating the text was not enough but that there was a need to alter the game to be suited for the target market. There was a need for localization.

However localizing digital games is not an easy process. While it might be easy to set up priorities such as functionality in general software localization, Mangiron and O’Hagan argue that it is not that straightforward with digital games. While functionality in the sense of preventing the game from crashing or freezing, exists, there is also the aspect that the game should be fun to play so that it can entertain the player. Translational choices related to for example character interactions can be a key part in this and require creativity from the localizer. (2006: 13.) As the process is not straightforward but could be rather described as something that is left on localizer’s shoulders what should then be prioritized? And how should these be handled? Should the elements of the original game be left intact even if people in the target culture do

not understand them or should these be changed to suit the tastes of the target market even if this means rewriting something in the story for example?

As all digital games are not localized the same way it is easy to conclude that there is no one answer to this problem. Because of this the question changes into a form of what is a good localization? Szurawitzki's one interviewee argues that they know the localization to be good if the game is talked as a game itself and the localization is not even mentioned (2010: 34). Little more dramatic way to say this is as Melnick and Kirin (2008) put it: "[L]ocalization makes players feel like they are playing a locally created game, even if it was developed thousands of miles away". This leads to the use of Skopos theory¹² in localization with O'Hagan and Mangiron arguing that "game translation is primarily driven by its purpose (skopos), which is ultimately to entertain the end user of the translated product" (2013: 150).

Arguably O'Hagan and Mangiron's view is here closer to the truth. While the argument Melnick and Kirin present is not wrong per se, it limits the possibilities of localization dramatically. The music of the game can prove to be one of the most problematic aspects of this line of thinking. If the localized game happens to have soundtrack which includes music sang in foreign language (in relation to target locale) it is hard to argue that games developed locally would include this kind of music which would then lead to either translation and re-recording of the track in question or to completely dismissing the said track in the video game. In respect to the theme of this thesis, which is to study these kind of trends in rhythm games, by accepting these kind of limitations would destroy the whole premise of the thesis. While the idea of localization being done in the way that makes the player to think they are not playing a foreign video game is attractive, the idea cannot be adapted as it is but it needs to also accept the possibilities where some aspect of a video game are left in the state of the base (original) game. Skopos theory allows these possibilities with localization done based on to whom the localized video games is marketed for.

With the understanding of the aim of video game localization the question then becomes how are these goals achieved? While in the section 2.2 different processes included in localization were very briefly discussed but as noted above video games differ from general software products making the localization of video games also slightly different. As there are many aspects that influence how enjoyable a video game is, there are as many ways to modify the game in the process of localization. While a person obviously cannot know what has been modified unless one has played the original version also, one can still make assumptions of this fact. Arguably the most visible aspect that people might think has gone through localization is the video game's story and all of the text included in a video game. Culture-specific items can be especially problematic to translator who has to ultimately decide whether to be loyal

¹²"The basic idea [of Skopos theory] is that the translator should work in order to achieve the *Skopos*, the communicative purpose of the translation, rather than just follow the source text" (Pym 2010: 44).

to the original work or to favor the target market audience's accessibility to the game (Lepre 2014: 114). The choice then becomes to choose between foreignizing translation, which retains the original style and rhythm while risk exoticizing the material and making it less accessible, and domesticating translation, which makes the material easier to access and more understandable while sacrificing possibly technical and style aspects of the original material (Carlson and Corliss 2011: 72–73). Thayer and Kolko take domesticating translation even one step further by stating that in some cases the video game's story might actually be rewritten to suit the different culture (2004: 482). Good examples of this are the American and Japanese versions of *Nier*, in which the main characters' relationship has been changed from a sibling relationship to a father-daughter relationship as well as male character's re-design to suit this change (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 186), and *Elite Beat Agents* in which the whole game's story has been rewritten.

One other aspect easily visible to a player though not so easily recognized as a localization change could be said to be video game's graphics and graphical user interface (GUI). Starting with GUI, modification of GUI can include such things as the overall way different menus and dialog boxes work and look with Thayer and Kolko noting that by moving from one language to another the length of the text can change so much that it can affect visual elements (2004: 478).¹³ Other graphical changes are also quite regular in video games. These begin from more subtle ones such as “[removing] red crosses from hospital signs and nurses' caps in *EarthBound*” (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 225) to more apparent changes such as changing the color of blood from red to green (Dietz 2006: 130). Then there are the aforementioned changes of character design in *Nier* and at the extreme end *Elite Beat Agents*' style of changing pretty much all of the visual aspects of the video game with Lepre describing this kind of “foreign remake as an extreme form of localization [which] allows a comparison of the extent to which a game can be adapted for different audiences” (2014: 126).

While making a video game more enjoyable to the target market through localization is one reason why a video game gets localized (not to overlook the monetary gains the publisher will get from this with Melnick and Kirin (2008) arguing that they “have found that strong localization easily can more than double revenue”), the different age rating systems used in different countries can also affect quite a lot to the localization decisions. Some design choices can have quite different reception in other culture. While Japanese made games might more easily include references to matters such as sexuality, nudity and alcohol which get much stricter treatment in the West, comparatively these Western games have more graphic violence and gore in them (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 207). These then reflect to the age rating system of each country

¹³This problem is not present just in localization of video games but can be met also in localization of regular software (see for example Esselink (2000: 26)).

resulting somewhere higher age rating requirement than elsewhere.¹⁴ If the publisher wants to aim some specific age demographic as its target market, changes to the video game's story and visual can be required to achieve this. This is then the work of the localization team.

This section has done a brief look at the localization of video games as an overall process of what is included and done within it though it should be readily admitted that this is only the tip of the iceberg with theoretical material accounting far past the scope of this thesis. However the aim of this section has been to introduce some ideas and give an idea what video game localization is about from translation studies' view.

2.2.2 Problem of Localization's Academic Field

Up till this section localization has been treated as a part of translation studies but after reviewing theoretical background of this and thinking the theme of this thesis it is arguable to question whether translation studies is actually the correct academic field for localization. This is in no way my original idea but rather one that has been adapted from Bernal Merino (2006). Bernal Merino's argument is that "'localisation' is an industry-used term and includes non-linguistic activities [...] 'translation' is still the most adequate term to refer to any type of language transfer, but if 'localisation' is to be used it should always be preceded by 'linguistic' or 'cultural'" (2006: 35). While use of the word 'cultural' in front of 'localization' can be understood, and half accepted, to concentrate the focus of the study to cultural changes done in localization, arguably putting 'linguistic' in front of 'localization' does not change the nature from regular translation that is done as a part of localization making use of the concept unnecessary.

The main reason to discard translation studies as the field for localization is the discipline's fixation on the idea of text¹⁵. While this is not discipline's fault in itself, after all it is literally study of translations, trying to cram "new" medias such as video games into this old line of thought does not go so well. Thinking about elements that can be modified in the process of localization first there is all the textual material (script as in character lines, hint messages, weapon names etc.) which can be easily admitted to be 'text'. However when moved to graphical aspects of a video game referring these elements as a 'text' starts to get dubious. Trying to refer technical changes such as increasing movement speed or change of difficulty as 'text' is impossible.

While Bernal Merino noted that there is also cultural aspect to localization which also can be found from LISA's definition of localization¹⁶ mentioned above this said aspect is not that often referred in studies related to localization of video games. In an

¹⁴For more detailed discussion about some of the different age rating systems see for example O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013: 217–221).

¹⁵See for example Pym's (2004) take on localization and how much 'text' is referred.

¹⁶Esselink 2000: 3

ironic way Lepre, doing research on rhythm game *Elite Beat Agents*, remarks pretty much as briefly as possible on the change of music between the move from Japan to the West though stating music to be one of the most relevant elements of a rhythm game (2014: 122, 124) with the paper's focus being "on solutions adopted to remove linguistic and cultural barriers" (2014: 114) which is done mostly based on text analysis. Elsewhere Heimburg (2006) studies communication problems when people from different cultures play massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) together and automated text strings needing translations taking the focus again to linguistic.

Finally Pym goes to note that 'localization' themed courses have tended to offer training how to use tools such as translation memories, terminology management and project-management for example, which are used in the localization industry though not in its exclusive use (2010: 127). Again, these tools are heavily related to the so called 'linguistic' localization as in translation. When Carlson and Corliss argue that "[i]n the video game industry, localization refers primarily to the translation of text and voice-work within a game, the game's instruction manual, and any additional packaging" (2011: 65), this same description could be used to describe the overall attitude of translation studies towards localization of video games.

To summarize the content of this section, localization belonging under translation studies as it is now is questionable to say the least. Translation studies, in accordance with its name, has showed tendency to focus just to the text, in other words linguistic aspect of localization process calling it at the same time 'localization'. In the spirit of Bernal Merino (2006) I argue that this should be called what it actually is, that is a translation. While focusing to just one aspect of the whole localization process, of which this thesis is also partly guilty of, the overall meaning of localization is partially lost. However unlike linguistic aspect of localization which actually has a proper name to describe it, the other aspects of localization do not have this characteristic. Therefore it is arguable that by clearly defining that one is researching one (or more) particular aspect(s) of localization, and not calling it with the overall term 'localization,' should be acceptable. The same applies to translation of video games being referred that way as a part of localization.

What comes to the academic field of localization, unless translation studies is willing to develop its repertoire to accept things other than 'text' related material, 'localization' (with the exception of translation within it) should not belong under it. While from the theoretical point on view Skopos theory offers interesting take on translation the discipline does not offer anything else for localization as a whole from a theoretical standpoint. The material related to localization reviewed in sections 2.2 and 2.2.1 do not amount much more than describing what localization is about. There are no major theories related to localization except for the ones borrowed from translation studies which can be applied to translation process of localization and have extremely limited

use outside of it. This then leads to abandoning of translation studies as the academic field for localization in this thesis and instead dealing localization as an overall process not tied to any theories. As there does not seem to be one academic field into which localization in its whole would fit well, this might lead localization being divided into pieces according to different academic fields suitable for each process, though arguably this is a better option than staying in translation studies.

Chapter 3

Research Process

With the theoretical background for the thesis reviewed in chapter 2 the topic can now move on to the actual research of this thesis. Consisting of two views at localization done to rhythm games, the view taken in this chapter will concentrate on the actual decisions done in the localization processes and how these decisions affected to the success of the game in question. The more detailed description of the method how this is done will follow in section 3.1. In chapter 4 the view will move to the consumer side of the localization with the question being what do these consumers want from a localized rhythm game and what kind of preferences do they have. Answers to these questions are sought from the answers received from three surveys targeted at three different demographic groups which present three different groups of consumers. However before this the forms of actual localized rhythm games have to be studied.

3.1 Research Material

While rhythm games are a niche subgenre of video games the number of these video games is still notably high even if the focus is turned to just rhythm games localized from Japan. Therefore there is a need to limit the number of rhythm games being researched. The possible ways to do these kind of limitations are concentrating on specific period of time or on a specific platform for example. As the story and main rhythm game of this thesis is *Taiko Drum Master* and how it failed to catch success just before *Guitar Hero*-wave hit the West, it is only natural to concentrate on the games released after this wave had begun. Therefore the first limitation, with the exception of *Taiko Drum Master*, is that the localization was released after the first *Guitar Hero* release in 2005.

While this cuts around ten years¹ of releases away there is still little over same num-

¹Höysniemi (2006: 4) names 1996 release *PaRappa the Rapper* as the first digital game in the music and rhythm game genre though she oddly references this from Fisher's study two years prior to the said video game's release. However Demers's (2006: 406) also cites *PaRappa the Rapper* as the video game that opened rhythm game markets to other companies so it would seem as Höysniemi has just

ber of years left. Therefore the next limitation will be on the consoles² which rhythm games fall under research. Again dating the consoles in relation to the time when the *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* series were at their peak of popularity, the consoles chosen at this point of time are Nintendo's Nintendo Wii (Wii) and Nintendo DS (NDS) as well as Sony's Playstation 3 (PS3) and Playstation Portable (PSP). While home consoles PS2 and Nintendo's GameCube (GC) were still on the market at the time of the first *Guitar Hero*'s release these consoles have been left out of the focus of this thesis in favor of the seventh generation of home consoles (PS3 and Wii)³.

Even with just four consoles the number of localized rhythm games is still too large to review comprehensively within the scope of this thesis. Therefore selection process was conducted which resulted in six games being chosen in addition to *Taiko Drum Master*. The selected rhythm games are divided into two groups. The rhythm games discussed in sections 3.1.2, 3.1.3 and 3.1.4 are games that are considered as 'successful' localizations with the term 'successful' defined in this case as a video game which has received a sequel localization(s)⁴ regardless of a platform in the West. Contrary to these 'successful' localization, sections 3.1.5, 3.1.6 and 3.1.7 concentrate on 'failed' localizations, rhythm games that even though have received a sequel(s) in Japan have never received a sequel in the West. Originally from all the chosen consoles one 'successful' and one 'failed' localization were supposed to be selected but this run into problems as PSP had no rhythm games fitting for these descriptions and PS3 had no 'failed' localization video game available either. PSP was therefore excluded from chosen platforms and PS3's lack of 'failed' localization was compensated by choosing an extra game from within NDS's rhythm games. This then resulted as the finalized list of games⁵ being studied.

What follows next is a review of each rhythm game chosen for the study. Each

erroneously referenced wrong source here while the actual content seems to be true.

²Computer, mobile and arcade games have been excluded from the study for various reasons. As noted above in section 2.1.1 video games have had more popularity over computer games in Japan which is why computer games have been excluded, not to mention the number of Japanese rhythm games for PC is questionable. While mobile games have for the past few years been popular in Japan, the number of Western localized rhythm games is unknown and for an overall view going through Apple's App store alone in its entirety would be nigh impossible not to even mention an addition of Google's own store, which leads to the exclusion of mobile games. Arcade games suffers from limited accessibility making studying them extremely hard which again leads to excluding these games from the study.

³While Microsoft's Xbox 360 (X360) also belongs to this generation of home consoles its sales numbers, while better than its predecessor Xbox's sales, are relatively small in comparison to its competitors in Japan. Being on market around a year more than Wii and PS3, in March 2009 the console had sold only one million units in comparison to PS3's three million and Wii's just under 8 million units (Williams 2009). This trend has also continued with X360's successor Xbox One which has sold only around 75 000 units since the console's Japanese launch in September 2014 (D'Angelo 2017). With the lackluster reception from Japanese audience to Microsoft's consoles it has been deemed unnecessary to include X360 as one of the research platforms.

⁴As in the game was not the only localization in the West even if the series continued in Japan (cf. *Taiko Drum Master*).

⁵It should be noted that the version of a game being studied is in most cases the U.S. version though when European release is referred this means the English version of the said game.

rhythm game will be briefly introduced and the video game's gameplay mechanics are described. The interest will then move on to the rhythm game's available song list and how this compares to the Japanese version's song list. Overall the relation between the Japanese version and the Western localization is considered. After the seven researched rhythm games have each been analyzed, section 3.2 will end this chapter with a discussion about all of these rhythm games in respect to each other. The chosen localization strategies on song lists and estimated sales numbers are taken into account and reasons and effects of these matters are considered.

3.1.1 *Taiko Drum Master*

As mentioned already at the beginning of this thesis *Taiko Drum Master* was released in 2004 for PS2. The game adapts the style of earlier Japanese releases from both art style as well as gameplay mechanics standpoints (see Figures 1.1 and 1.4 for these elements). Although for example the menu texts and information regarding how accurately player manages to hit the notes have been translated to English the overall appearance stays true to the Japanese games. From the view of gameplay, the game uses mostly red *don* and blue *katsu* notes with occasional drumrolls and balloon notes, which basically require player to smash the drum as fast as possible, in some songs (for more precise discussion of *Taiko no Tatsujin* series' gameplay mechanics see section 1.2). The game can either be played with a regular PS2 controller or with a special *taiko* shaped controller (*tatacon*, see Figure 3.1) that comes with the game.

The song list of *Taiko Drum Master* was not changed per se when the game was localized in the U.S. as the game was not direct localization of any existing Japanese game. However as noted already in section 1.3 the way that a localization is determined within this thesis are the gameplay elements. Therefore *Taiko Drum Master* is treated as a localization



Figure 3.1: PS2's *tatacon* controller for *Taiko no Tatsujin* (Amazon.co.jp 2017).

of *Taiko no Tatsujin*-series. This then leads to the observation that *Taiko Drum Mas-*

ter's song list was partially localized⁶ when the game was brought to the West. While songs from j-pop and *anime* genres have been replaced with mostly Western pop and rock songs and with two English *anime*/tv songs, the localized version has also included songs from classical and Namco original⁷ genres. The style of the songs can be described to have stayed the same with the move from j-pop to English pop/rock as most of the songs are either true pop or lighter rock as in the Japanese releases with no heavier rock songs being yet used that much.

Taiko Drum Master was also released in Japan the following March. The game that was originally localized based on the Japanese versions was now localized to be suitable for Japanese audience. This led to the replacement of some of the Western soundtrack with, interestingly, new Western music. Therefore both the U.S. and the Japanese versions of the game have some exclusive songs in them and all in all the Japanese version has two more playable songs compared to the U.S. release.

3.1.2 *Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party*

Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party (known in Europe as *Dancing Stage Hottest Party* but will be referred with the U.S. release name) was released for Wii in 2007 by Konami. While the game was first released in the U.S. in September, Japanese release following the next month, the game will be treated as Japanese rhythm game as Konami is a Japanese video game company and the series originates from Japan.

Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party follows the traditional *Dance Dance Revolution* gameplay seen in Figure 1.3 with the default settings making the notes flow from down to up. The game uses four kinds of notes (left, right, up and down) which can usually either come one at a time or two at a time which requires a player to make simultaneous button press on the two notes. The game can be played with a controller that works with Wii or with a dance pad. By using Wii's Wii Remote and Nunchuk's motion controls two more notes in addition to the original four are included to the gameplay. Visually the Western localization looks the same as the Japanese version.

The song list of the Western release is partially localized from the Japanese version. However, the game might almost be called fully localized as within the 50 songs that are available in both versions of the game, the number of exclusive songs per version is only four with one song within these being just a different remix of a song. The

⁶In section 2.2 Pym's (2004: 9) division of localization into three possible ways (complete localization, partial localization and enabled) was noted but as the aspect of localization of song lists is here more detailed than Pym's division allows, following three ways will be used to identify the way that a rhythm game's song list has been localized: 1) *fully localized* meaning that every song of the Japanese game has been changed or removed during the localization process, 2) *partially localized* meaning that while some songs have been replaced with new songs, some of the original tracks are also available, and 3) *not localized* meaning that original soundtrack has been left in the localized version of the game.

⁷Namco original includes music from other Namco's game series as well as songs composed specially for the *Taiko no Tatsujin*-series. Songs from other digital game series have then been moved to their own game music genre in later releases.

musical style of the game is influenced by dance remixes. Around half of the tracks are covers from already existing songs and the other half are Konami's original tracks.

Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party has received direct sequels in the West, though Japanese release names differed from the *Hottest Party* brand.

3.1.3 *Rhythm Heaven*

Rhythm Heaven (known in Europe as *Rhythm Paradise*) was released by Nintendo for NDS in 2008 in Japan with the Western localization following the next year. Being the second game in the series, though the first being localized in the West, the game takes full advantage of NDS's touchscreen as a main gameplay element. Unlike the other rhythm games in this study, *Rhythm Heaven* is the only game that does not solely use visual notes to tell player when to do the required action, but instead relies also on audio cues for this. While this mechanic differs from other games and might make it questionable should *Rhythm Heaven* be included in this study, there is a need to consider how the gameplay mechanics relate to the rhythm game's definition given in section 1.1.

As noted already earlier, the fact that the game uses a touchscreen does not exclude it from being a rhythm game as this is just a control method. How *Rhythm Heaven* then plays is by using mostly three kinds of notes though calling these actions might be more suitable: touch, hold and flick. The way that the player is told to do these actions changes little in each song which makes the feeling that the player is playing a minigame collection rather than single game with single set of mechanics. However as the actions stay pretty much the same in each song for now this matter is overlooked. The focus then moves on to how the player is informed how to do the actions. Most of the songs use an imitation kind gameplay mechanic in which the player has to imitate the action(s) done before as a model. The rest of the songs either use notes or audio cues to signal player when to do action, though in each song the use of audio cues and following the rhythm is encouraged. Therefore, while not traditional rhythm game (cf. *Taiko no Tatsujin* or *Dance Dance Revolution* for example), *Rhythm Heaven* uses rhythm game elements and is thereby included in this study.

The music of *Rhythm Heaven* has been specifically composed for the game. While this might then seem like there is no localization in the playable songs, the game is actually partially localized, because the few tracks with lyrics, originally sung in Japanese, have been localized and use English vocals in the localized version. Otherwise the game has not been heavily localized with the localization concentrating on translation of the menus and song names. As noted above, the songs have "a minigame" feeling on them and not calling them 'songs' might be arguable. However each of these have their own track, either completely original song or a remix of an earlier song though no one specific genre is really represented with music made to

be as rhythmic as possible. At the end of a song the game informs whether the player has passed or failed the song.

After the NDS's entry to the series the series has received two sequels, one for Wii and one for 3DS in Japan which both have been localized in the West.

3.1.4 *Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd*

Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd is the fifth console version of the *Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA*-series. Developed by Sega, the game was released for PS3 and PlayStation Vita (PSV)⁸ in March 2014 in Japan with the Western release following later in November that year. While the game is fifth in the series it is actually only the second game to be localized in the West with the prequel *Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F* being the first one in March 2014.

From the gameplay standpoint *Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd* uses overall of 14 different notes though this number also includes the double hits. The basic gameplay can be described with just five different notes (X, O, triangle, square and star) which the player input



Figure 3.2: PS3's *Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F* special controller (Amazon.com 2017).

with either a Dualshock controller's buttons/D-pad (X, O, triangle and square notes) and analog stick (star notes) or with a special controller (see Figure 3.2), based on the arcade version's control scheme, which can be bought separately. In addition to these basic notes there are double notes for each note mentioned above which require simultaneous action from both sides of a controller or use of both of analog sticks, and hold notes for everything except for star notes which require the player to hold the note down for a certain amount of time. Figure 1.2 shows how the notes flow in outside of the screen and do not follow any strict path. However the next notes usually appear beside the note before with the length of the space between the notes showing the time lag between the notes. During a song there are two *technical zones* and one *chance time* which heavily affects whether the player passes the song or not on the hardest

⁸The two versions do not differ from each other at all from the song list standpoint. PSV version of the game uses PSV's touchscreen as a gameplay mechanic and in the PS3 version this action has been changed to be done with PS3's Dualshock controller's analog sticks. Otherwise notable differences between the two versions cannot be noted. However the concentration here is for PS3 version of the game though with the exception of describing control scheme of the game nearly everything should be applicable also to the PSV version.

difficulty. The rest of the grade for the song is determined by the accuracy which the player manages to hit the notes.

Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd has gone through pretty much as little localization as has been necessary. Visual image of the game has also not seen any remarkable changes. Menu texts, song names and lyrics consist most of the textual translation needed for the localization and do not amount to much. Lastly the original soundtrack with its 40 playable songs have all been retained in the localized version. Almost all of the songs are from different artists with each utilizing Vocaloid software for the songs' vocals. As it can be probably figured out from the title of the game, Hatsune Miku is the game's main idol with most of the tracks using her voice as a singer though five other Vocaloids are also being used as singers.

Since the release of *Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd* the series has received new games for Playstation 4 (PS4), PSV and 3DS with each consoles' games also being localized to the Western market.

3.1.5 *Elite Beat Agents*

Elite Beat Agents was released for NDS in November 2006 in the U.S. with the European release following the next year. As a localization *Elite Beat Agents* is probably one of the hardest video games to recognize as a one. While *Taiko Drum Master* was not based around one specific game per se, this can be said to be true for *Elite Beat Agents* also. *Elite Beat Agents* though goes one step further in the respect of visuals with not borrowing anything directly from *Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan*, the game it is based on. The gameplay is the defining localization element with both games sharing the same basic gameplay mechanics. With using NDS's stylus and touchscreen the player has to tap the notes as they appear on the screen. Using numbers to indicate the order of the notes to be tapped and circle which gradually shrinks to mark the timing, the player is required to move around the whole touchscreen. In addition to these regular notes that require just tapping, some notes require the player to hold down the said note and slide it along the screen in the given path. Also sometimes the game throws a spin note whereupon the player has to spin the note as fast as possible.

While the graphics and visuals have been changed in the localization process, the visual style with its cartoon-like storytelling has been left in the game. Some new game mechanics, such as an ability to skip the intro of the song, were added to the *Elite Beat Agents*. While not defining elements of the gameplay, these work as a way to make the game more enjoyable to the target market via localization. As stated above, with pretty much everything changed in comparison to *Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan*, *Elite Beat Agents*' soundtrack has also been westernized. While *Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan* featured mostly covers of Japanese pop and rock songs in its 15 song soundtrack, *Elite Beat Agents* uses covers of Western pop and rock artists such as Deep Purple and Madonna

totaling with 19 playable songs altogether.

Elite Beat Agents never saw a sequel in the West though *Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan* received a sequel in 2007 named *Moero! Nekketsu Rizumu Damashii Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan 2* for NDS.

3.1.6 *Pop'n Music*

Pop'n Music for Wii⁹ was released by Konami in August 2009 in Japan and three months later in the U.S., being the first *Pop'n Music*-series video game localization to be released in the West. The game was released in 2010 also in Europe though with the name *Pop'n Rhythm*. Following the trend of the video games released for Wii, *Pop'n Music Wii* uses Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers' motion controls to control the game. In comparison to the arcade version of *Pop'n Music* which uses nine buttons on the harder difficulty levels, *Pop'n Music Wii* uses only five buttons. The player hits these buttons by moving Wii Remote and Nunchuk. The red middle note can be hit by either hand with an inward movement, the two blue notes can be hit by a downward movement on the respective side where the player is supposed to, and the two green notes can be hit by an outward movement with a respective side controller.

While the visual style of the menus and overall graphics have been left unchanged, the same cannot be said for the soundtrack which has been fully localized¹⁰. While the original Japanese version uses a mixture of music from pop and rock songs to *anime* songs and from Japanese *enka* to classical music and Konami's original songs, none of these tracks can be found on the Western releases¹¹. Interestingly, however, while most of the Western localization's soundtrack consist of either licensed or covers of famous Western pop and rock genres songs, ten tracks are still Konami originals even if these cannot be found from the Japanese version's disc¹².

While *Pop'n Music*-series has continued in Japan after the Wii game's release with a couple of video game releases and with new arcade versions, the series has not received to date another release in the West.

3.1.7 *Jam with the Band*

Jam with the Band (known in Japan as *Daigassō! Bando Burazāzu DX*) was released for NDS in Europe in 2010 by Nintendo. This is also the sole localization that is completely European exclusive as the game was not released in the U.S. at all. While

⁹As the series' name is the same as the Wii's game, to avoid confusion the Wii version will be referred as *Pop'n Music Wii*.

¹⁰Only the default songs found on the disc will be concentrated, leaving DLC songs out of the study's focus.

¹¹Within the 40 tracks found on both Western releases, both the U.S. and the European versions have their own exclusive songs not found on the other version. However this still does not create overlap with the Japanese version.

¹²Some of the songs were added as a DLC after the Japanese version's release.

the Japanese version of the game was the second game in the series, *Jam with the Band* was the first one to be localized in the West. For each playable track there are number of different instruments available to play with each having its own beatmap and a level of difficulty. Depending on what overall difficulty setting the player is playing, the number of different notes increases when moving to more difficult settings. At the easiest difficulty setting the player has to just hit any of the NDS's buttons to score a hit, but at the hardest difficulty setting all of the NDS's buttons (A, B, X, Y, D-pad, L, R) correspond to their own note. The beatmap's hit marker moves from left to right and when it reaches the right side the beatmap moves little up with the hit marker moving again to the left side of the screen. The game grades the player at the end of a song telling overall statistics how one did and the result score.

Visual style of the game has stayed true to the Japanese version. On the musical side *Jam with the Band* localization surprisingly has more songs than the original Japanese version. The reason for this is that the game relies heavily on custom made songs that can be downloaded via internet. Hence the small number of just 31 songs in the Japanese version compared to 50 songs in *Jam with the Band*. While Japanese soundtrack consist mostly of classical songs, of which many have been also included in *Jam with the Band*, there are also some Japanese songs which have not made it over to the West making the *Jam with the Band* partially localized. In addition to the earlier mentioned classical tracks, the soundtrack of *Jam with the Band* consist mainly of Western pop and rock songs as well as remixes and medleys of Nintendo's video game series' music. It should be though noted that the game uses instrumental version of each song.

As mentioned above, *Jam with the Band* was a localization of the second game in the *Daigassō! Bando Burazāzu*-series. After the NDS's game's entry to the series there has been one release for 3DS in 2013 in Japan though this game has not been localized in the West.

3.2 Discussion on the Findings

Now that all of this study's rhythm games have been shortly reviewed similarities between the titles will be considered as well as the possibilities what these findings can indicate. To avoid the need to move back and forth between this and earlier sections to check the necessary information, the most central information of the rhythm games has been collected to the Table 3.1. Included are the years when the first localized version (usually the U.S. version) was released, the platform for which the game was released, localization strategy used for the game's song list, an estimate of the number of the copies sold¹³ and whether the game received sequel localizations. We will start

¹³Because of the difficulties to find official sales data across different countries, this has led to using <http://www.vgchartz.com/> (VGChartz) website's estimates of the number of copies sold in the U.S.

Game	Locali- zation year	Plat- form	Song list	Copies sold	Localized sequels?
<i>Taiko Drum Mas- ter</i>	2004	PS2	Partially localized	100 000	No
<i>Elite Beat Agents</i>	2006	NDS	Fully localized	360 000	No
<i>Dance Dance Re- volution: Hottest Party</i>	2007	Wii	Partially localized	1 870 000	Yes
<i>Rhythm Heaven</i>	2009	NDS	Partially localized	1 050 000	Yes
<i>Pop'n Music Wii</i>	2009	Wii	Fully localized	70 000	No
<i>Jam with the Band</i>	2010	NDS	Partially localized	3 873	No
<i>Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd</i>	2014	PS3 PSV	Not localized	260 000	Yes

Table 3.1: Research material information.

the discussion with this data.

With the exception of *Taiko Drum Master* and *Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd* all of the other selected games' release falls to the period when *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* series were at their peak. While the balance between home and handheld consoles seems to be fine, NDS's rhythm games might be little over represented though two of these games were earlier deemed as 'failed' localizations. The real interest of the Table 3.1 lies however in the localization strategies for games' song lists and in the number of copies sold and whether this led to sequels.

Starting with the clearest ones, *Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd* being the only game which song list had not been localized at all, and *Elite Beat Agents* and *Pop'n Music Wii* which used the opposite strategy with localizing the entire song list. However arguably this localization has not borne fruit as neither of the two games received sequel localizations. While *Pop'n Music Wii's* number of copies sold clearly explains the reason for this, it seems like *Elite Beat Agents* has sold more copies than *Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd*¹⁴ but still did not receive a sequel. However it should be

and in Europe which have then been combined into the numbers found in Table 3.1 (sources can be found in the Bibliography under VGChartz (2017a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h)). As these are not official sales records but VGChartz's estimates collected with their own methodology, some form of prudence should be exercised. This can be seen for example in *Taiko Drum Master's* sales (VGChartz 2017a) as sales numbers from Europe are presented though the game was not even released in Europe (only the copies sold in the U.S. have been taken into account in this study). However for a sake of an argument these numbers can be used in general as an indication about the popularity of the studied games which is why these numbers have been included.

¹⁴The number of copies sold found in the Table 3.1 is the combined amount of both PS3 and PSV versions (VGChartz 2017g,h).

noted that *Elite Beat Agents* was released 8 years earlier than *Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd* so it has been much longer on the market. *Elite Beat Agents* also did not meet the sales hopes of the president of Nintendo of America (Kohler 2006). In addition *Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd's* sales number might not include digital copies sold which might heavily affect how well the game has actually sold. This demonstrates well why just sales numbers cannot be blindly trusted.

Moving on to the games which have been partially localized, with the exception of *Taiko Drum Master* which consist of about three fifths of actually localized tracks with the rest being found also from the Japanese releases, *Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party* (four tracks) and *Rhythm Heaven* (language of few songs) do almost as little localization as possible, and while *Jam with the Band* uses Western music it is hard to determine whether this has been done to replace the few Japanese tracks found on the Japanese version or to just add new songs to the game, as the localized version has 19 tracks more than the Japanese one. Whatever the truth is, this did not lead to the success¹⁵ unlike the two other games which went with close to no localization at all. The number of copies sold of both *Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party* and *Rhythm Heaven* can be described as excellent. While *Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party* was a sequel to an already established series, *Rhythm Heaven* going over million sold copies, while being a new intellectual property (IP) in the West, is an achievement that, not surprisingly, resulted in sequel localizations.

Looking superficially at this matter, it seems like the less a rhythm game localizes its song list, the higher chance it has to succeed. Each of the games using no or close to no localization (*Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party*, *Rhythm Heaven* and *Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd*) received a sequel while the fully localized ones *Elite Beat Agents* and *Pop'n Music Wii* failed in this (though it is hard to call *Elite Beat Agents* a “failure” if the game has actually managed to sell more than 300 000 copies which within this data should result in a sequel cf. *Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd*). The middle ground ones *Taiko Drum Master* and *Jam with the Band* were not able to secure a sequel localization though it should be noted for both of them that these games were only released either in the U.S. (*Taiko Drum Master*) or in Europe (*Jam with the Band*) which can have had an effect on how they performed.

However, from all of this it could be argued that a localization of a song list has not clearly shown any significant results to be recommended. Why is this then done? While trying to appeal to a larger audience seems like a sensible idea, the licensing of Japanese songs, or rather the difficulties related to this, might play a key factor.

¹⁵The extremely low number for *Jam with the Band's* number of copies sold (VGChartz 2017f) is most likely some kind of an error which has happened during data collection as there are no sales available for the year when the game was released. With the peak of the sales happening usually during the first week of a release (Kimura 2015: 61), missing the sales number of the first year completely results most likely in misrepresentation of the game. However as the game was only released in Europe not too large of sales impact should be expected as every other game within this data has sold more in the U.S. than in Europe.

While discussing licensing of Japanese *anime* songs by fans to record cover songs of them and releasing them on circulation, Sevakis (2016) notes that if the music should be accompanied with a video, which is the case in video games, localizer should be seeking the license permission from two different agencies. As the actual publishers of music are in charge of license permissions in the case when use of a video accompanies the music, receiving this license might be hard for smaller video game companies, though for example for Nintendo (publisher of both *Elite Beat Agents* and *Jam with the Band*) one might imagine this not to be the case.

In the end it might still be easier to receive licenses for music from a country into which one is localizing the game which then results in localization of the whole song list. The possible reason why *Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party*, *Rhythm Heaven* and *Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd* have managed to avoid this is that each of the games is using either music composed solely for the game (*Rhythm Heaven*) or music closely resembling this (*Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party*¹⁶ and *Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd*¹⁷). This then raises two possibilities why these games using (almost) not localized song lists might have gotten more popular than the series using localized song list: 1) people want to play the original version of the game, or 2) people want music composed specifically for the game. It should be noted that these two possibilities do not rule each other out and can exist together. With the results from next chapter's surveys this proposal hopefully can be lightened in the chapter 5.

¹⁶In addition to the music composed by the developer of the game, Konami, the use of cover dance remixes might make licensing process easier not to exclude the fact that *Dance Dance Revolution* is an established game series both in Japan and in the West.

¹⁷While the game does not include many songs composed specifically for the game in question, the fact that the game is a collection of Vocaloid songs and has therefore a theme behind it, the licensing process might be easier. There is also a possibility that Sega has not even tried to get licenses for songs that would not get overseas license also.

Chapter 4

Analysis of conducted surveys

In this chapter results of the three surveys conducted for three different demographic groups will be gone through. Two of these surveys concentrated on people's overall attitudes and preferences in rhythm games (sections 4.2 and 4.3) and the third one concentrated specifically on players of *Taiko no Tatsujin* and their playing preferences related to the said series (section 4.1). In each of the following sections the way that the survey was conducted will be introduced first which will be followed by an analysis of the results of that particular survey. At the end of this chapter in section 4.4 findings from the conducted surveys are drawn together for a discussion of possible trends found among the results.

4.1 Survey for Japanese *Taiko no Tatsujin* Players

To get an understanding of *Taiko no Tatsujin* players' preferences regarding the game series, one week long survey was conducted at the end of January 2017¹. The place where the survey took place was at *Taiko no Tatsujin fumen toka Wiki*² (referred from now on as 'Taiko Wiki'), a Wikipedia style information platform specialized in *Taiko no Tatsujin* related information maintained by the fans of the series. Short description of the study and a request for participation as well as a link to the actual questionnaire form³ were posted in Japanese to the site's 'Miscellaneous discussion'⁴ discussion area with the aim of gathering the opinions of fans⁵ of *Taiko no Tatsujin*.

¹From Monday 23 January to the end of Sunday 29 January.

²<http://www.wikihouse.com/taiko/index.php?FrontPage> (Accessed 31 March 2017)

³University of Helsinki's "E-lomake" survey platform was used to create the questionnaire. English translation of this questionnaire form is provided in the Appendix A.

⁴<http://www.wikihouse.com/taiko/index.php?%BB%A8%C3%CC%BD%EA> (Accessed 31 March 2017). Translation of the name of the area by the author.

⁵While the concept of 'fan' is not defined more precisely, the fact that a person is ready to spend their spare time on this kind of a fan maintained site is good enough of requirement for 'a fan' here. Though it should be admitted that with how easy it is to distribute this kind of questionnaire via for example Twitter, there is a chance that the survey has gathered some replies outside the users of Taiko Wiki. However these people should be expected to be also relatively interested of *Taiko no Tatsujin* as they would not otherwise have any reason to reply.

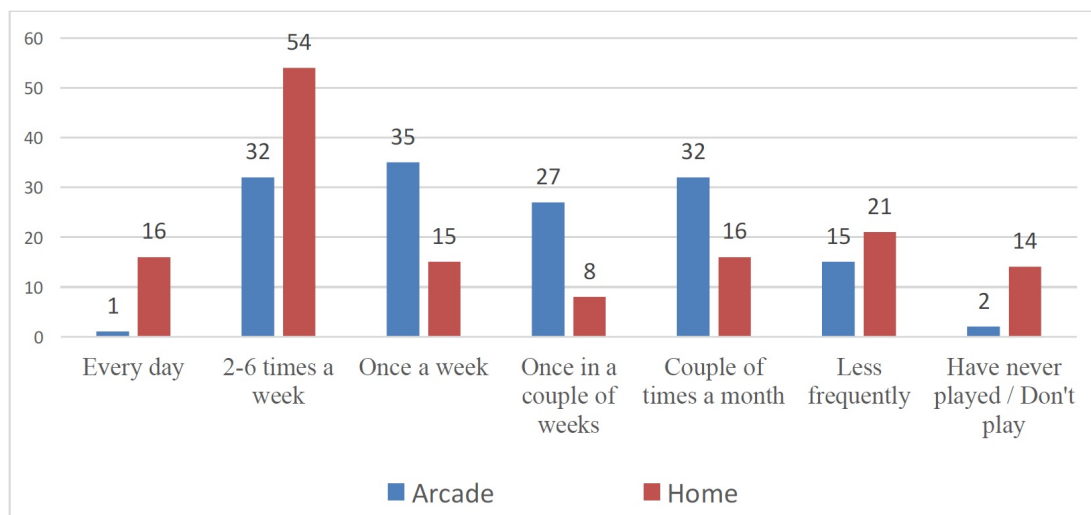


Figure 4.1: Frequency of playing *Taiko no Tatsujin*.

During the one week period 146 replies were received of which 144 were from people who stated their nationality to be Japanese. As there were no more than two replies from people outside of Japan, these two replies were excluded from the data making the object of study Japanese *Taiko no Tatsujin* players with $n_T = 144$. Of these respondents 141 were male while the age distribution concentrated on the years 13–15 (39), 16–18 (49) and 19–22 (44) with 129 replying ‘studying’ as their main occupation. Most of the respondents also had a quite long history with the series as 92 respondents replied that the first time they had played *Taiko no Tatsujin* was over five years ago and behind this was 2–5 year history with the series choice with 35 respondents. Figure 4.1 then shows the frequency at which the respondents play *Taiko no Tatsujin*. It is interesting to note that while around half of the respondents are playing at home (includes both *Taiko no Tatsujin* video and mobile games) more than once a week, at the other end there are also quite many people who play less frequently or do not play at home at all. In comparison the play frequency at an arcade, while not having great peaks anywhere, shows that respondents go regularly to an arcade to play.

Why then do the respondents play *Taiko no Tatsujin*? Figure 4.2 presents these reasons.⁶ Maybe little too generic ‘it’s fun’ was easily the most chosen option though over half of the respondents also chose the music used in the series as a reason to play. While wanting to challenge one’s own skills and just a pure desire to get better could be grouped together in the sense that they are challenge/difficulty related views, arguably the nuance of the two slightly differ from each other which is why the two have been separated. As it seems the respondents seem to have agreed with this though the desire to get better got half more replies than the more challenge oriented one. Maybe the most surprising result is that *Taiko no Tatsujin*’s gameplay mechanics do not seem to attract players as an important reason to play although if the mechanics were terrible

⁶Respondents were able to choose up to three choices which is why there are more answers than n_T . On average one respondent chose 2.19 choices.

the gameplay experience would not probably be described as fun.

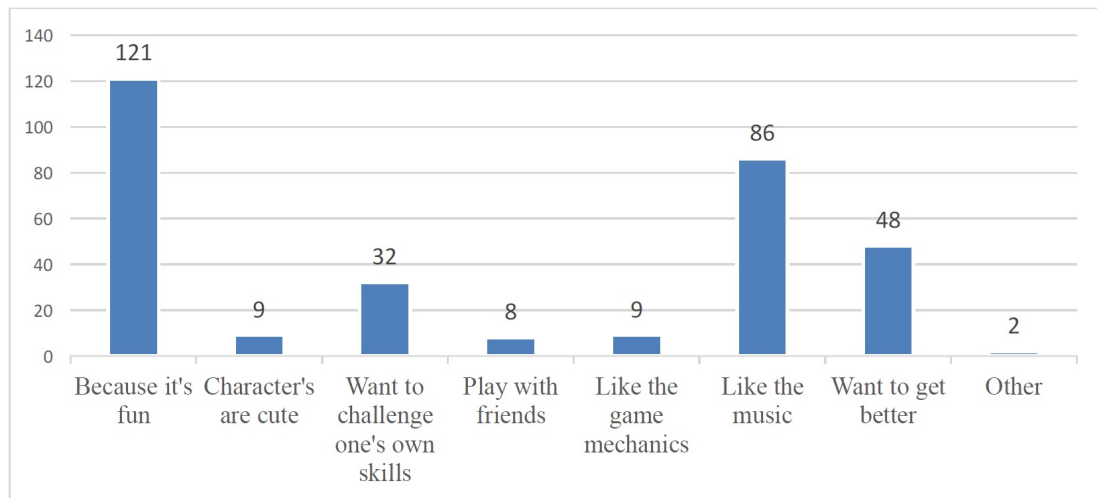


Figure 4.2: Reasons for playing *Taiko no Tatsujin*.

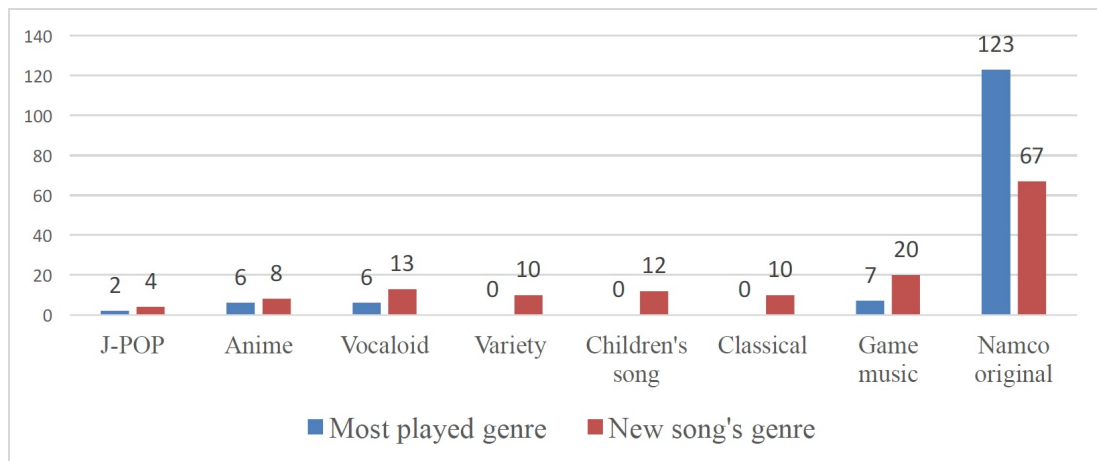


Figure 4.3: Choice of song genre.

With the hypothesis of this thesis being that the music of a rhythm game plays a key factor on the success of the said game, it was then natural to ask which genre's songs did *Taiko no Tatsujin* players play. From the Figure 4.3 it can be easily seen that Namco original genre⁷ is far ahead of every other genre with over 85% of respondents playing the said genre's songs the most. When asked for which genre would the players want to get the next new song, the genre distribution evened out more in comparison to Namco original though it still gathered close to half of all of the replies and more than three times the amount that the second placing Game music managed to gather.

The answers from the Figures 4.2 and 4.3 can be said to be reflected also in how a player chooses which song to play. From the respondents' answers it becomes clear how much overall liking of a song and the song's difficulty have an effect over the song selection (see Figure 4.4⁸). While choosing a song that a player likes is natural

⁷Songs composed specifically for *Taiko no Tatsujin*-series.

⁸Respondents were able to choose as many choices as they wanted. On average a respondent chose 1.69 answers.

to have fun while playing, it is interesting to note how much the level of difficulty also relates to this ‘fun’ as a key motivation as noted in section 2.1.3. Moreover, while it is a question of personal taste what kind of songs does a person find to their liking and therefore chooses to play, the challenge/difficulty level aspect can explain why Namco original was the most played genre overall. As most of the respondents had a long history with the series it should not be an overstatement to expect that these players are playing at the hardest difficulty level (*oni*), possibly even the most difficult songs of the series. As it happens, Namco original genre has the largest number of most difficult rated songs (10 star rating). This therefore can also work as a possible reason why Namco original attracts players.

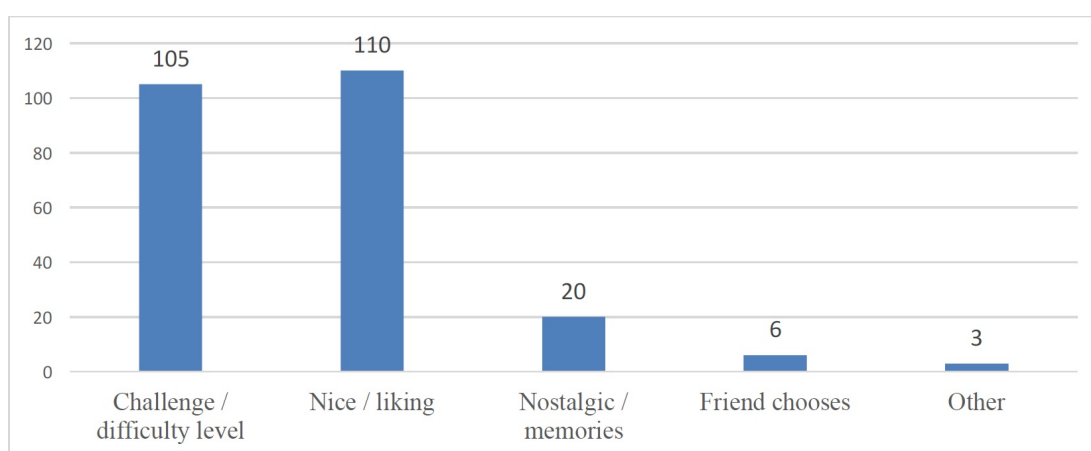


Figure 4.4: How the played song is chosen.

While it was not asked whether *Taiko no Tatsujin* was respondents’ favorite or the most played rhythm game series, what became clear was that for most of the players *Taiko no Tatsujin* was not the only rhythm game series that they played. Only 19 respondents (13.19%) reported not playing other rhythm games neither at arcade⁹ nor at home¹⁰. While arcade rhythm games still seem to have an edge over video and mobile rhythm games, the shift to the mobile game market from video game market mentioned in chapter 1 can be seen from the fact that 68 respondents reported playing mobile rhythm games which was more than double the amount that either home consoles (26) or handheld consoles (33) gathered.

4.2 Survey for Finnish Digital Game Players

For a Western view of rhythm games and localization of these in general, two surveys were conducted of which in this section the views of Finnish digital game players are

⁹Overall 46 respondents reported not playing rhythm games other than *Taiko no Tatsujin* at arcade.

¹⁰Overall 55 respondents reported not playing rhythm games other than *Taiko no Tatsujin* at home.

examined. The survey took place around the middle of February 2017¹¹ at Finnish information technology (IT) related site Muropaketti's¹² internet forum's (MuroBBS) 'Games and consoles'¹³ discussion area. Short description of the study and a request for participation as well as a link to the actual questionnaire form¹⁴ were posted in Finnish to a discussion thread created to promote the survey.

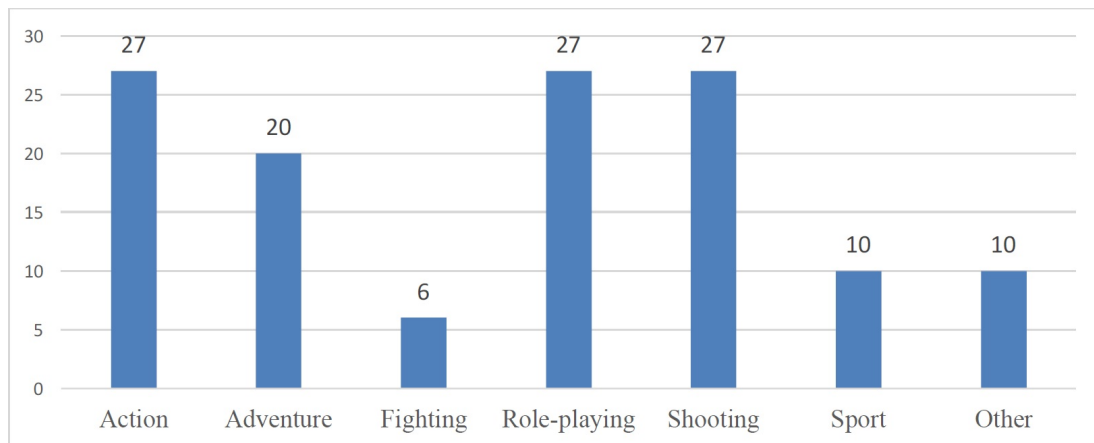


Figure 4.5: Digital game players' usually played digital game genres (rhythm games excluded).

While MuroBBS is mainly IT focused forum, game related discussions also gather quite a bit activity which is why MuroBBS was chosen as a place to conduct the study. The aim was to collect replies from people playing digital games so even if the questionnaire happened to be distributed for example via Twitter this would not be a problem as long as respondents were digital game players. During the one week period overall 39 responses were received of which one was excluded as they stated not playing digital games, making $n_G = 38$. Of these respondents 36 were male and 2 were female. Age of the respondents concentrated on 19–25 (10) and 26–35 (21) years old groups while currently 11 were studying, 14 were working full-time and 9 were unemployed. To get an understanding from what kind of digital game background the respondents were, their primary gaming platform was asked with PC being the choice for 30 people. Behind PC were the latest home consoles PS4 (4) and Xbox One (3) with one respondent answering that they usually played at an arcade. Excluding rhythm games, the usually played genres can be found in Figure 4.5. Notably strategy games were noted three times within 'Other' choice's written answers. The frequency on which the respondents were playing digital games can be described as an active hobby for most with 22 playing on a daily basis and 12 respondents playing 2–6 times a week.

¹¹From noon of Monday 13 February to the noon of Monday 20 February.

¹²<https://muropaketti.com/> (Accessed 2 April 2017).

¹³<https://murobbs.muropaketti.com/forums/pelit-ja-konsolit.110/> (Accessed 2 April 2017). Translation of the name of the area by the author.

¹⁴University of Helsinki's "E-lomake" survey platform was used to create the questionnaire. English translation of this questionnaire form is provided in the Appendix B.

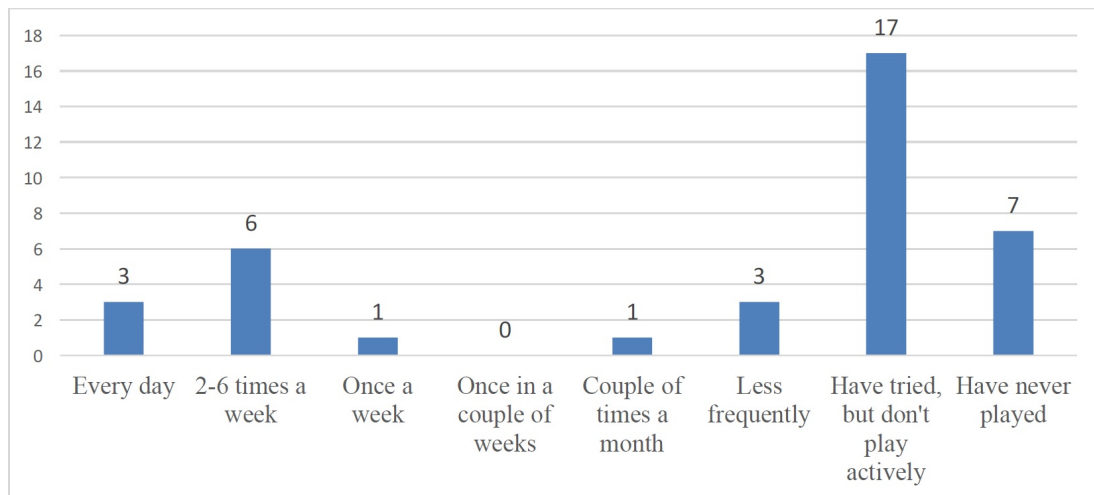


Figure 4.6: Digital game players' frequency of playing rhythm games.

Moving then on to the preferences that these digital game players have on rhythm games, their history with rhythm games was first asked¹⁵. As can be seen in the Figure 4.6 while few were playing rhythm games frequently, most did not play actively. Most respondents had tried rhythm games sometime in the past though there also were quite a few people who had no actual experience with these kind of games. This frequency of playing rhythm games could indicate the use of them for example as games played in a party though *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band*, which might be expected to be suitable for these kind of situations, were named only by three people within the voluntary writing question. Also as for most respondents PC was their primary gaming platform this might drop the amount of rhythm games they play with video game consoles.

On the actual preferences in rhythm games, the results can be seen in the Figure 4.7¹⁶. For the most important aspect the answers were mainly divided between music and game mechanics. With the inclusion of the next most important aspects 23 people (60.53% of all respondents) included both music and game mechanics within the three most important aspects of rhythm games. The question of challenge also comes up as an important motivation source. While challenge is not a defining aspect of a rhythm game for digital game players it is still an important aspect of a rhythm game going up against music and game mechanics. The two 'Others' in the Figure 4.7 were 'exercise' and 'sport' which can be associated with movement based rhythm games such as *Dance Dance Revolution*.

¹⁵If the respondents had a history with rhythm games they had a possibility to write the names of some of these games down. While respondents were asked not to take computer and mobile games into account, from the written answers few of these platforms' games came up. Instead of excluding these people's answers from the data these have been left in as the choice to write was volitional and there is no way to tell what platform's games people answering that they had a history though decided not to write any, had played. This voluntary writing also becomes again apparent in that the most probable choices thought to be *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* were named only by three people.

¹⁶Respondents were asked to identify the most important aspect in a rhythm game and in the following question they could name up to two next most important aspects. On average one respondent chose 1.53 choices in the second question.

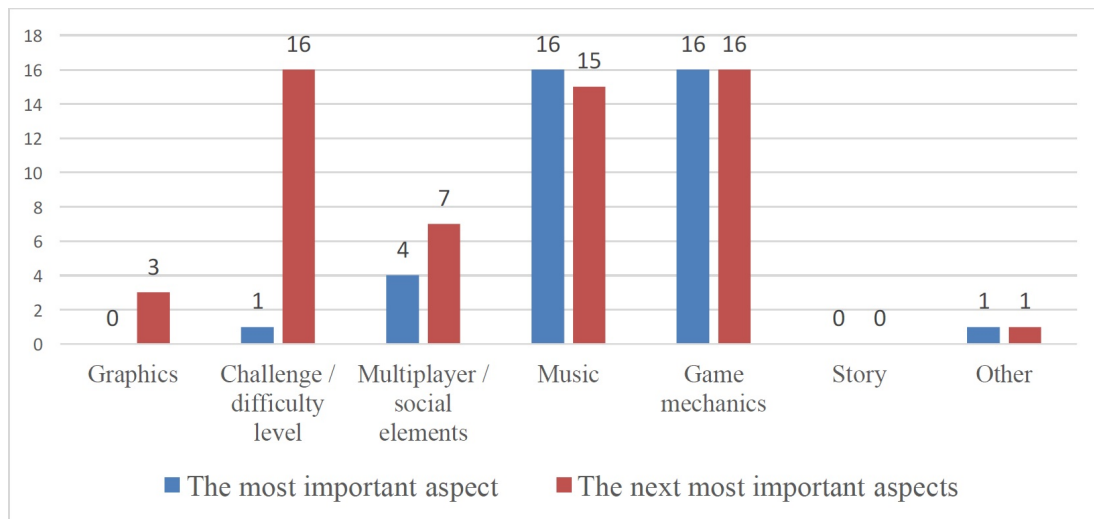


Figure 4.7: Digital game players' priorities in rhythm games.

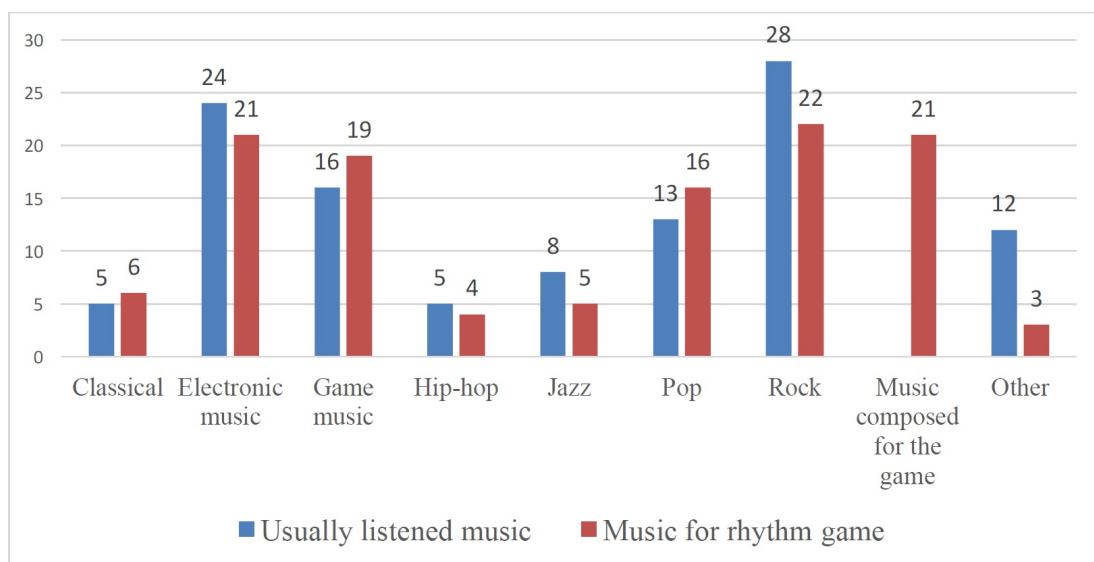


Figure 4.8: Digital game players' musical preferences.

In accordance with the theme of the thesis, respondents' musical preferences were also inquired. In the Figure 4.8 the respondents' actually listened music genres are presented in relation to what kind of music they would hope to have in a rhythm game.¹⁷ No big differences between the actually listened music and rhythm game preferences are seen. However if the respondents would have a choice, over half of them would like to have music composed specifically for the rhythm game in question. At the same time this choice is second only to rock and tied with electronic music with more general game music following behind them. The relatively often chosen 'Other' in actually listened music included mainly heavy and metal genres' music though these were not hoped to be present that much in rhythm games. Based on the nationality of

¹⁷ Respondents were able to choose any number of genres as they wanted. This resulted with an average of 2.92 choices per respondent for 'usually listened music' and an average of 3.08 choices per respondent for 'music for rhythm game'.

the most listened music Finnish music came first with 11 replies followed by Japan (9) and the U.S. (8).

4.3 Survey for Finnish *Anime* and *Manga* Fans

For a possible differing view from digital game players and at the same time having an interest towards Japanese culture, Finnish *anime* and *manga* fans' opinions were inquired. The survey took place around the middle of February 2017¹⁸ through talking and messaging software Discord¹⁹ at the Finnish *anime* and *manga* channel 'Animedisco'. Short description of the study and a request for participation as well as a link to the actual questionnaire form²⁰ were posted in Finnish to Animedisco's 'Miscellaneous²¹' chat channel. The message was then pinned to the chat channel's top to be easier to find. As Discord uses chat based messaging model, references to the pinned message were done around three times a day during the week the survey took place.

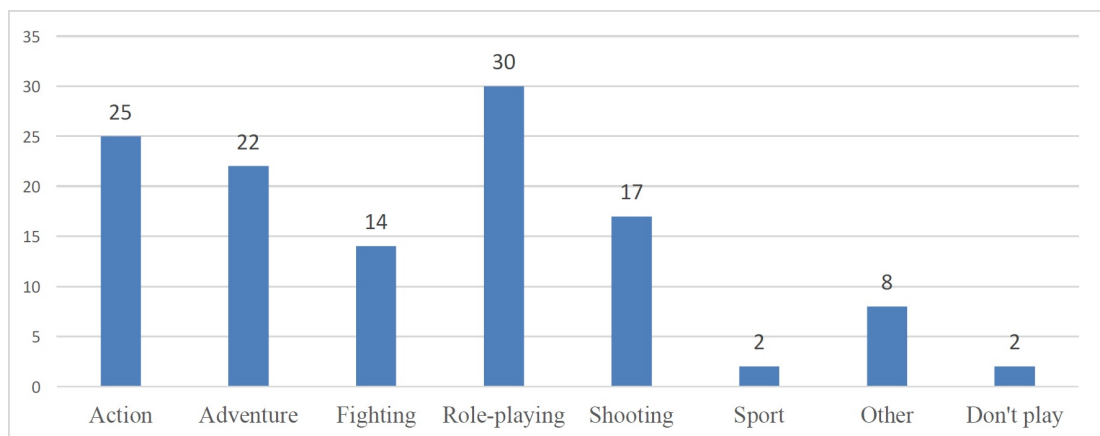


Figure 4.9: *Anime* and *manga* fans' usually played video game genres (rhythm games excluded).

As the aim of the survey in question was to get views from people either watching *anime* or reading *manga*, two questions related to these activities were presented. Therefore if the questionnaire happened to be distributed outside Animedisco people's interest on *anime* and *manga* could be verified. During the one week period 38 replies were received of which all showed interest towards either *anime* or *manga* making $n_A = 38$. Of these respondents 30 were male and 8 were female with an age distribution of four 16–18 years old, 25 19–25 years old and nine 26–35 years old. Following this age distribution 28 were currently studying, two were working full-time, one was working part-time and seven were unemployed. Respondents could also be described

¹⁸From noon of Monday 13 February to the noon of Monday 20 February.

¹⁹<https://discordapp.com/> (Accessed 2 April 2017).

²⁰University of Helsinki's "E-lomake" survey platform was used to create the questionnaire. English translation of this questionnaire form is provided in the Appendix C.

²¹Translation by the author.

as fairly active video game²² players as 17 stated playing these games on a daily basis while ten were playing 2–6 times a week though two people also stated not playing video games at all. Distribution of played genres can be seen in the Figure 4.9.

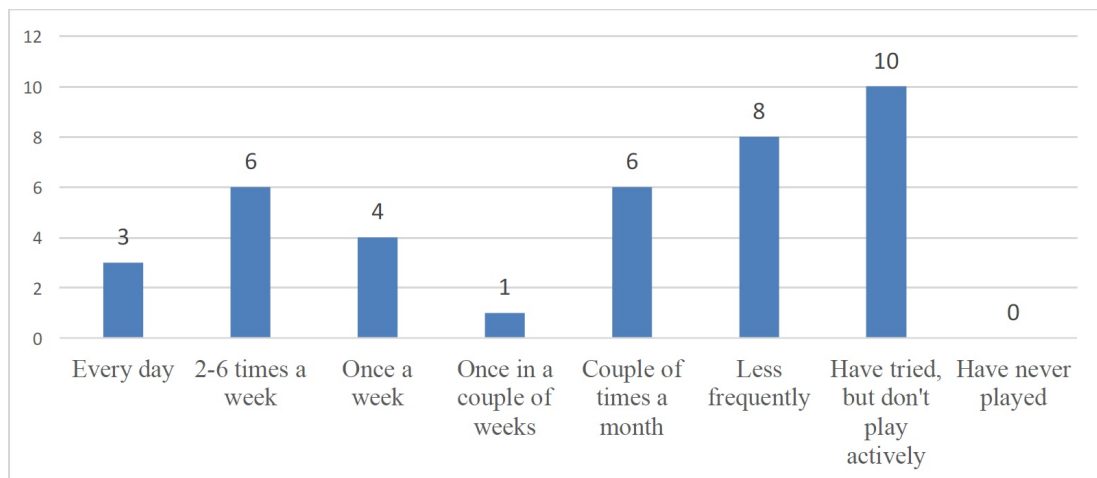


Figure 4.10: *Anime* and *manga* fans' frequency of playing rhythm games.

Moving to the respondents' history with rhythm games²³, while played fairly actively by around one third of the respondents²⁴, for larger number of respondents rhythm games were not part of their daily life with eight respondents playing around once a month or less frequently and ten having tried in the past but not playing currently (see Figure 4.10). However all of the respondents had at least tried a rhythm game. In the following question names of some of these played rhythm games were inquired with the most popular *Osu!*²⁵ gathering 11 replies while *Taiko no Tatsujin* gathered the second largest amount of replies (8).

Proceeding then on to an analysis of *anime* and *manga* fans' preferences in rhythm games shown in Figure 4.11, music is prioritized the most as the first choice as well as an overall choice with only four people not choosing music at all in neither of the two questions²⁶. Game mechanics is the only one that offers even some kind of competition for music as the most important aspect and this trend also continues when the number

²²Excluding rhythm games here.

²³As in the survey for Finnish digital game players, if the respondents had a history with rhythm games they had a possibility to write the names of some of these games down. While respondents were asked not to take computer and mobile games into account, from the written answers few of these platforms' games came up. Instead of excluding these people's answers from the data these have been left in as the choice to write was volitional and there is no way to tell what platform's games people answering that they had a history though decided not to write any, had played.

²⁴34.21% of respondents playing at least once a week.

²⁵Originally a fan made computer game based on the *Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan's* and *Elite Beat Agents'* game mechanics though the game has since then been also released on mobile and game modes have expanded to include other rhythm games.

²⁶Like in digital game players' survey, respondents' most preferred aspect was inquired first followed by a second question where respondents were instructed to choose up to two next most important aspects. However some overlap has happened within these questions, as two people had chosen music as their most important aspect and repeated this choice again in the following question explaining why the overall amount of choices of music was only 34 and not the expected 36. On average one respondent chose 1.58 choices on the second question.

of the two questions are combined together with game mechanics being chosen 31 times overall. After this there is a clear gap before challenge aspect which also resides in its own space with a large gap to the rest of the choices.

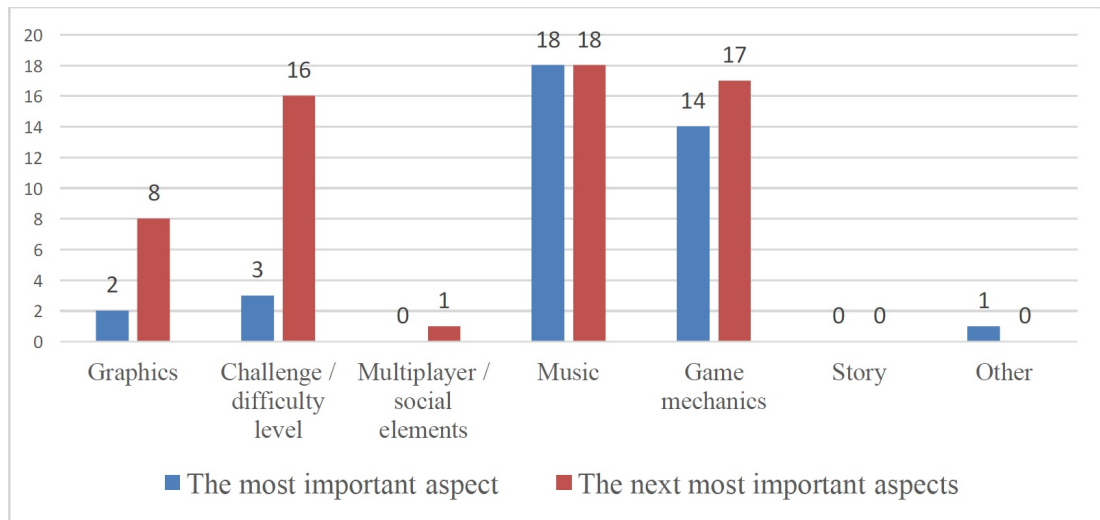


Figure 4.11: *Anime* and *manga* fans' priorities in rhythm games.

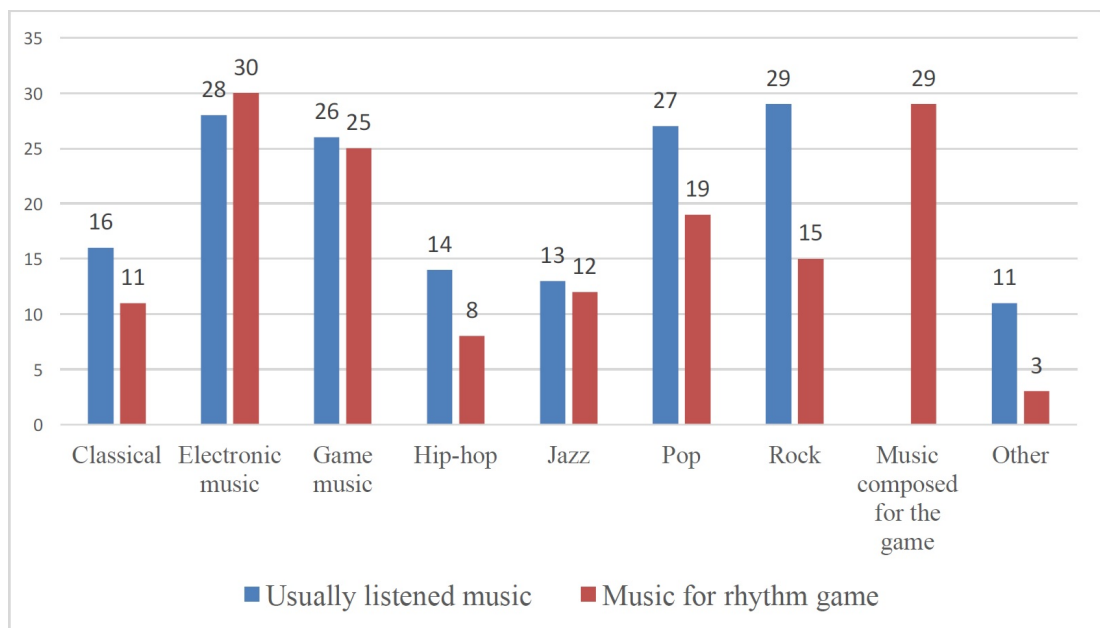


Figure 4.12: *Anime* and *manga* fans' musical preferences.

What is then wanted from the so important music in rhythm games? Figure 4.12 presents respondents' actually listened music genres in relation to the genres that they would like to have in a rhythm game.²⁷ While most of the genres suffered drops, of which rock and pop genres as well as 'Other'²⁸ suffered the largest drops, when moving

²⁷For both of the questions respondents were able to choose as many choices as they wanted. This resulted with an average of 4.32 listened genres per respondent and an average of 4.00 wanted genres for a rhythm game per respondent.

²⁸Metal, progressive rock and anime music were the most often mentioned genres in the written answers.

from listening habits to rhythm game desires, electronic music went against the flow with gaining two replies. Music composed specifically for the said rhythm game was also desired by many people with it gathering more than three fourths of respondents' answers. What comes to the listened music's origins, Japan dominated this question with 21 people listening Japanese music the most. Behind these on the shared second place were Finnish and the U.S. origin music both with six replies.

4.4 Discussion on the Survey Results

While the surveys aimed for Finnish digital game players and *anime/manga* fans are easily comparable as the two surveys are fairly similar how they are build up, the results can in part also be compared to the survey aimed at Japanese *Taiko no Tatsujin* players. Concentrating first on the aspects of rhythm games which each survey's respondent found the most important two aspects specially stand out. Firstly is the importance of music used in the said rhythm game. Disregarding for a second the fun aspect of playing *Taiko no Tatsujin* as a reason, the reason that then stands out, by fairly large margin even (see Figure 4.2), is the liking of the music that the series uses. Meanwhile, though going close to head to head against the game mechanics, in both Finnish surveys' music was regarded as one of the two most important aspects (see Figures 4.7 and 4.11).

On the contrary to this mutual understanding of the importance of music the second standing out matter is the division of the role of game mechanics' importance. While music was one half of the two most important aspects for Finnish respondents, the game mechanics are the second half of this pair. However, while it can be argued that a rhythm game probably would not be fun to play if the game mechanics were bad, the fact that only nine *Taiko no Tatsujin* players chose this within the three possible choices that were given to them also tells that this does not seem to be all that important aspect for most of these players. Whether this is cultural division of preference or just a misunderstanding cannot be answered based on just these surveys, although the agreement with music as well as putting some form of importance to the challenge of a rhythm game in both Finnish surveys as well as in *Taiko no Tatsujin* survey might indicate that this could be a cultural difference rather than an error born from miscommunication.

On the musical side, while it is interesting to see Namco original to be both the most played genre as well as the genre which respondents want to have new songs from (see Figure 4.3), the fact that also for Finnish respondents original music composed specifically for the rhythm game in question is a significant aspect that stands out. While going to length of arguing that these respondents do not want to have licensed music in their rhythm games is going couple of steps too far, it is interesting to note that respondents could readily take in this kind of original music. Otherwise the tastes of

both Finnish digital game players and *anime/manga* fans seem to go well in together if the genres at the top of music hoped to be included in rhythm games are looked at (see Figures 4.8 and 4.12). Both surveys show preference over to electronic music as well as game music with both being also listened outside the rhythm game environment.

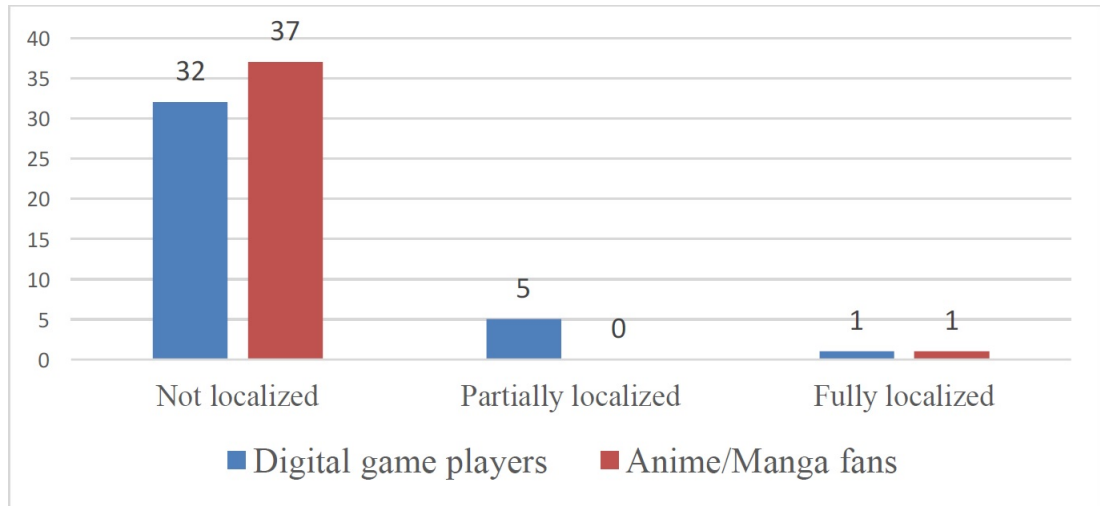


Figure 4.13: Preference for rhythm game's song list's localization.

For the last topic of this chapter a short note related to localization strategy used for rhythm game's song list will be done. This was left uncovered in sections 4.2 and 4.3 as it would not have amounted to much on its own, but gives better view when combined together. In both Finnish surveys' respondents' preference on the rhythm game's song list's localization was asked and the results can be seen in Figure 4.13²⁹. While this kind of view to the matter from *anime* and *manga* fans was expected, the fact that Finnish digital game players also indicated this strongly in favor of not localizing the song list of a rhythm game was little unexpected. Whether this is because of an interest towards the music of the original game or wanting to experience the game as the Japanese players are experiencing it, giving therefore possibly a competitive chance in a competition, remains unknown based on just this study, but as these views are so clear arguably they should not be disregarded.

²⁹Note that while the 'Not localized' and 'Fully localized' choices correspond directly to their meanings in the two surveys, 'Partially localized' in the middle referred to localization of everything except the original songs composed for the rhythm game in question (for more details see Appendix B and Appendix C).

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In this thesis localization strategies for song lists of rhythm games have been studied in relation to the success that the researched rhythm games have achieved. Furthermore with three conducted surveys both active rhythm game players' and more general audiences' preferences on both rhythm games in general as well as music used in them were studied. In this chapter the findings of these two research objects are presented and conclusions for this study are drawn.

In chapter 3 localization strategies of song lists of seven rhythm games across four different video game platforms were studied. Localization strategies were divided into three different possibilities with one game not localizing the used song list, two games fully localizing the used song list and the rest of the four games partially localizing, though with varying degrees, the used song list. While the success of a game can be tied to the number of copies sold, for the sake of this study 'success' was defined with the game receiving a sequel.¹ Research into these rhythm games then found out that three had received sequels, the one which had not localized its song list and two with partially localized song lists. However a closer examination revealed that these two partially localized rhythm games were mostly using music from the Japanese version of the game making them almost not localized rhythm games. In contrast to this, the rhythm games which had more localization put into the song list of the game showed generally weak sales numbers with no signs for a localized sequel.

While the first half of the study concentrated on the actual localization strategies used, the other half then concentrated on to understanding what people wanted from rhythm games. Based on three surveys aimed at different demographics the study found commonalities as well as differences between these arguably divergent demo-

¹While maybe counterintuitive that if a game does not receive a sequel it cannot be deemed as a success, there is however a point to this argument. Firstly, a look at the 100 most sold video and computer games of 2016 reveals that under 10% of the best-selling titles were not part of any franchise (VGChartz 2017i) indicating digital game industry's will to produce successful franchises rather than singular games. Secondly, if a game manages to get a sequel, it is probably an indication that the game has at least covered the cost of what went into developing it. If a product, be it a digital game or a movie for example, does not manage to cover the cost of what went into making it, calling it a success becomes arguably hard.

graphics. Starting with the commonalities whether it be Japanese *Taiko no Tatsujin* players, Finnish digital game players or Finnish *anime/manga* fans, each of these demographics showed support for the importance of music used in rhythm games. Moreover, while *Taiko no Tatsujin* players played the most songs that were specifically composed for the series, both Finnish demographics showed an interest towards this kind of original music composed for a rhythm game. While this choice's popularity cannot be compared to the popularity among *Taiko no Tatsujin* players, with especially electronic music giving a good run against this original music, the similarity in the attitudes should still be noted. This similarity of attitudes was also seen with the support for game music in general from all of the survey groups.

The aspect of challenge in rhythm games was also thought as a necessary part of the gaming experience. This supports the line of thought of both Juul (2013) and Raney et al. (2006) who argued in chapter 2 that failure and challenge are integral parts of a digital game experience. While challenge is not noted as the defining element of rhythm games unlike music and game mechanics by Finnish survey respondents, it was still raised to the side of these two when the next two important aspects were inquired. Similar kind of view can be interpreted from the Japanese *Taiko no Tatsujin* players' answers of which wanting to get better and wanting to challenge one's own skills were the next reasons to play *Taiko no Tatsujin* after the musical aspect.

The biggest difference between Japanese *Taiko no Tatsujin* players and Finnish survey respondents arose from the view to the importance of game mechanics in rhythm games. While *Taiko no Tatsujin* players deemed game mechanics as one the lowest reasons to play the series, contrary from Finnish survey respondents' answers it became clear that game mechanics were deemed as one of the two most important aspects in rhythm games going head to head against used music. This is an interesting difference in the views of two different cultural groups, though which might be explainable by the rhythm game background of both sides. From the 144 *Taiko no Tatsujin* players only 19 reported not playing other rhythm games. Contrary to this, within the respondents from the two Finnish surveys, there were relatively more people who did not play rhythm games actively or had not even played rhythm games. When included the fact that the number of available digital rhythm games is arguably larger in Japan than in the West, it can be argued that the readiness to try different rhythm games, regardless of what kind of gameplay mechanics they are using, actually lowers. Moreover when the preference for music overwhelms game mechanics players might be playing different rhythm games solely based on what kind of music these games are offering. On the other hand, when there is no clear difference of the superiority between music and game mechanics, if both of these aspects are not appealing the player might leave the game untouched leading to its inevitable failure.

This then leads to the comparison between the actual localizations and what people want from rhythm games. The 'successful' localizations were using either no loca-

lization at all or localizing as little as possible of their song lists and as the surveys for Finnish respondents showed (see Figure 4.13) most of the people wanted to keep the original song list used in the Japanese game. Furthermore, these three ‘successful’ localizations used heavily music composed either specifically for the game in question or music used in other rhythm games (for the use of music in *Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd* refer to section 3.2), which, based on the surveys, was something that the respondents wanted from rhythm games. While the use of licensed music was not disapproved in any way with how strong support the more traditional genres of music had, the use of Western music in Japanese rhythm games was not viewed favorably.

It should be noted that this does not amount to any more than just correlation between the localization strategies and the survey results, not to mention the small sample size of rhythm games researched and limited number of replies across all of the surveys, which is why drawing conclusions with the style of “not localizing rhythm game’s song list results in a definite success” highly overstates the nature of the results. There are many other matters which also affect the success of digital games in general with marketing being among one of them.

Going back to the chapter 1 and to the question why the localization of *Taiko Drum Master* failed, based on the results of this study, the use of original and game music as well as not changed classical music can be seen as a positive for the game though how large negative effect did the use of Western pop and rock music have is debatable. However from the view of localization related to marketing, the video game players of the time might have asked why should they use this weird drum (see Figure 3.1) to play these Western songs. Before moving to the question of localizing song list there might be a need to consider the question of localization of *taiko* in general. In Japan using the traditional instrument to play modern pop songs can also arguably feel little out of place but the concept of *taiko* is still understood. Furthermore, because of the existing rhythm game culture, getting caught up with this kind of a small detail might not be that big of a problem as the game is still recognized as a rhythm game and what one is supposed to do in a rhythm game is understood. Whether one has to be a master drummer (*Taiko no Tatsujin*), a dance star (*Dance Dance Revolution*) or a member of a cheering squad (*Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan*) is not a key part of a rhythm game but rather an added spice which creates the theme. While Lepre argued that by changing *Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan*’s male cheering squad to dancing special agents in *Elite Beat Agents* made the game more accessible to a Western audience (2014: 122), it should be asked how are dancing special agents any more comprehensible than a male cheering squad? Even if a game received favorable critical reception if there is no culture for rhythm games this kind of a weird concept might not go through to an audience as was the case with *Elite Beat Agents*.

Despite the fact that this study has focused on localization of rhythm games mainly from the musical side of view and therefore has not found more than correlation bet-

ween localization strategies of song lists and people's attitude towards used music, the results of this study should not be just disregarded. As noted above, there are many other things also within the localization process that affect to the rhythm game's success. However, as was discussed in the section 2.2.2, because localization has often been seen as part of translation studies the relevant research, not related to translational aspects of localization, is limited. While arguing that there is no research done to other aspects of localization is plain ignorant, there is no denying that limited amount of available theoretical material has had an effect even to this study. Relying heavily on game studies and especially motivational reasons to play video games was necessary not just because these were part of the research theme but because these aspects had to compensate for the lack of localization related theory. While localization might have been studied from the perspective of marketing and this could have been tried to be applied to this study, it is unknown how much of this kind of research has been done about video game localization specifically. And if there would be these kinds of studies, how well could these be applied to a study that does not focus solely on marketing aspect of localization?

The other aspect that could have been discussed in more detail is the differences between Japanese and Western gaming culture. However here again comes up the lack of available research material. While there have been some studies related to Western rhythm game communities (see Höysniemi (2006) for example), comparable studies on Japanese rhythm game communities are harder to come by. Though general views of Japanese and Western gaming cultures could be used, as the name states these are, at the best, just general views and it is arguable that thinking from the fact that rhythm games can attract both "hardcore" and "casual" players, rhythm game related gaming culture should be used (and studied) specifically. As has been argued in this thesis, rhythm games have their own nature which attracts players, and musical aspects play a key part within all of this which is why they cannot be left ignored. However at this point there is really not much supporting material for this argument because of the lack of related studies. While rhythm games might be a niche genre within digital games, it is a genre that can gather different kind of people, regular digital game players as well as those who do not usually play digital games at all, together. Therefore it is arguable that there is a reason to research more of this genre's digital games. For further study related to rhythm games should be the inclusion of other aspects of localization process, to get a better understanding of the localization strategies used in these games, as well as significance of rhythm game culture, especially the Japanese side one, as there is a lack of research on these themes overall.

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Digital Games Cited

Following is the list of digital games and digital game series cited within this thesis. The names are in alphabetical order with Japanese games listed based on their Hepburn romanization. However if the digital game has been localized in the West, the localized name is used unless the Japanese version is not referred specifically in which case the Japanese version has its own citation. In case of just the localized name is used the Japanese name of the game (series) is given in brackets after the localized name if it differs from the localized name. The release year is based on the first release of the game.

Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare, Activision, 2007.

Computer Space, Nutting Associates, 1971.

Daigassō! Bando Burazāzu –series, Nintendo, 2004–2013.

Daigassō! Bando Burazāzu DX, Nintendo, 2008.

Dance Dance Revolution (Dansu Dansu Rebornyūshon) –series, Konami, 1998–2016.

Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party (Dansu Dansu Rebornyūshon: Hottesuto Pātī), Konami, 2007.

EarthBound (Mazā Tsū Kīgu no Gyakushuu), Nintendo, 1994.

Elite Beat Agents, Nintendo, 2006.

FIFA –series, Electronic Arts, 1993–2016.

Guitar Hero –series, RedOctane / Activision, 2005–2015.

Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA –series, Sega, 2009–2016.

Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F, Sega, 2012.

Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA F 2nd, Sega, 2014.

Jam with the Band, Nintendo, 2010.

Just Dance –series, Ubisoft, 2009–2016.

Metal Gear (Metaru Gia) –series, Konami, 1987–2016.

Moero! Nekketsu Rizumu Damashii Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan 2, Nintendo, 2007.

Nier (Nīa Geshutaruto / Nīa Repurikanto), Square Enix, 2010.

Osu!, Dean Herbert, 2007.

Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan, Nintendo, 2005.

PaRappa the Rapper (Parappa Rappā), Sony, 1996.

- Patapon*, Sony Computer Entertainment, 2007.
- Pong*, Atari, 1972.
- Pop'n Music (Poppun Myūjikkū)* –series, Konami, 1998–2016.
- Pop'n Music (Poppun Myūjikkū)*, Konami, 2009.
- Rhythm Heaven (Rizumu Tengoku Gōrudo)*, Nintendo, 2008.
- Rock Band* –series, Electronic Arts / Harmonix, 2007–2016.
- Spacewar!*, Steve Russell, 1962.
- Taiko Drum Master*, Namco, 2004.
- Taiko no Tatsujin* –series, Namco / Bandai Namco Games / Bandai Namco Entertainment, 2001–2017.
- Taiko no Tatsujin Wii Dodōn to 2 dai me!*, Bandai Namco Games, 2009.
- Tennis for Two*, William Higginbotham, 1958.
- Tetris*, Alexey Pajitnov, 1984.
- The Legend of Zelda (Zeruda no Densetsu)* –series, Nintendo, 1986–2017.
- The Sims* –series, Electronic Arts, 2000–2014.
- The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, CD Projekt RED, 2015.
- YS VIII: Lacrimosa of Dana (Īsu Eito: Rakurimosa Obu Dāna)*, Nihon Falcom, 2016.

6. Why do you play *Taiko no Tatsujin*?¹

- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1) Because it's fun | 2) Characters are cute | 3) Want to challenge one's own skills |
| 4) Play with friends | 5) Like the game mechanics | 6) Like the music |
| 7) Want to get better | 8) Other | |

If you answered "Other" to the above, write the reason here.

7. What genre's songs do you play the most?

- | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1) J-POP | 2) Anime | 3) Vocaloid | 4) Variety |
| 5) Children's song | 6) Classical | 7) Game music | 8) Namco original |

8. How do you choose what song to play?²

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------|
| 1) Challenge / difficulty level | 2) Nice / liking | 3) Nostalgic / memories | 4) Friend chooses | 5) Other |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------|

If you answered "Other" to the above, write the reason here.

9. Which genre would you like to see getting new songs in the future?

- | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1) J-POP | 2) Anime | 3) Vocaloid | 4) Variety |
| 5) Children's song | 6) Classical | 7) Game music | 8) Namco original |

10. Have skills that you have learned in *Taiko no Tatsujin* been useful in other video games?³

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| 1) Reaction speed | 2) Rhythm sense | 3) Concentration |
| 4) Other | 5) Haven't been especially useful | |

If you answered "Other" to the above, write the skill(s) here.

¹Up to three choices can be chosen.

²Multiple choices can be chosen.

³Multiple choices can be chosen.

Arcade

11. How frequently do you play *Taiko no Tatsujin* at the arcade?

- 1) Every day 2) 2–6 times a week 3) Once a week 4) Once in a couple of weeks
5) Couple of times a month 6) Less frequently 7) Have never played

12. Do you use BANAPASSPORT card?

- 1) Yes 2) No

13. At the arcade do you usually play *Taiko no Tatsujin* with someone?

- 1) Yes, with friends or family 2) No, I usually play alone 3) Don't play at the arcade

14. How much money do you spend on *Taiko no Tatsujin* on average per month at the arcade?

- 1) 500 yen or less 2) 501–1000 yen 3) 1001–1500 yen 4) 1501–3000 yen
5) 3001–6000 yen 6) 6001–9999 yen 7) 10000 yen or more

15. Do you play rhythm games other than *Taiko no Tatsujin* at the arcade?⁴

- 1) beatmania 2) CHUNITHM 3) Groove Coaster 4) Dance Dance Revolution
5) GuitarFreaks / DrumMania 6) jubeat 7) maimai 8) pop'n music
9) Synchronica 10) Hatsune Miku: Project DIVA Arcade 11) Other 12) No, don't play

If you answered "Other" to the above, write the game(s) here.

16. Except rhythm games do you play other genres' games at the arcade?⁵

- 1) Racing 2) Shooting 3) Fighting
4) Card game 5) Other 6) No, don't play

If you answered "Other" to the above, write the genre(s) here.

⁴Multiple choices can be chosen.

⁵Multiple choices can be chosen.

Home

17. Do you play *Taiko no Tatsujin* at home?⁶

- 1) Yes, home console games (Wii, Wii U, PS2)
- 2) Yes, handheld console games (Nintendo DS, 3DS, PSP, PS Vita)
- 3) Yes, mobile games
- 4) No, don't play

18. Do you use a Tatacon controller when playing home console games?

- 1) Use
- 2) Use sometimes
- 3) Don't use
- 4) Don't play home console games

19. How frequently do you play *Taiko no Tatsujin* at home?

- 1) Every day
- 2) 2–6 times a week
- 3) Once a week
- 4) Once in a couple of weeks
- 5) Couple of times a month
- 6) Less frequently
- 7) Don't play

20. Do you play rhythm games other than *Taiko no Tatsujin* at home?⁷

- 1) Yes, home consoles' games (Wii, Wii U, PS3, PS4 etc.)
- 2) Yes, handheld consoles' games (Nintendo DS, 3DS, PSP, PS Vita)
- 3) Yes, mobile games
- 4) No, don't play

If you answered “Yes” to the above, write the game(s) here.

21. Not including rhythm games, do you play other genres' video games at home?⁸

- 1) Action (Super Mario, The Legend of Zelda, Metal Gear Solid etc.)
- 2) Adventure (Ace Attorney, STEINS;GATE etc.)
- 3) Shooting (Call of Duty, Star Fox etc.)
- 4) Sport (Mario Kart, Pro Evolution Soccer etc.)
- 5) Fighting (Tekken, Guilty Gear, Super Smash Bros. etc.)
- 6) Role-playing (Final Fantasy, Fire Emblem, Tales of etc.)
- 7) Other
- 8) No, don't play

⁶Multiple choices can be chosen.

⁷Multiple choices can be chosen.

⁸Multiple choices can be chosen. Do not take PC or mobile games into account.

If you answered “Other” to the above, write the genre(s) here.

22. At home do you usually play video games with someone?

- 1) Yes, with friends or family 2) No, I usually play alone 3) Don't play at home

5. What kind of music do you usually listen?¹

- | | | |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| 1) Electronic music | 2) Hip-hop | 3) Jazz |
| 4) Classical | 5) Game music | 6) Pop |
| 7) Rock | 8) Other | 9) Don't usually listen music |

If you answered "Other" to the above, write your answer here.

6. What country's music do you listen the most?

- | | | | |
|------------|-----------------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 1) Finland | 2) the United Kingdom | 3) Germany | 4) the United States |
| 5) Japan | 6) Korea | 7) Other | 8) Don't listen music |

If you answered "Other" to the above, write your answer here.

Video games

7. What is your primary gaming platform?²

- | | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1) PC | 2) Nintendo Wii U | 3) Nintendo 3DS | 4) Playstation 3 |
| 5) Playstation 4 | 6) Playstation Vita | 7) Xbox 360 | 8) Xbox One |
| 9) Other | | | |

If you answered "Other" to the above, write the used platform here.

8. What platforms do you actively use to play digital games?³

- | | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1) PC | 2) Nintendo Wii U | 3) Nintendo 3DS | 4) Playstation 3 |
| 5) Playstation 4 | 6) Playstation Vita | 7) Xbox 360 | 8) Xbox One |
| 9) Other | | | |

If you answered "Other" to the above, write the used platform(s) here.

¹Multiple choices can be chosen.

²Choose a platform that you play the most. Do not take mobile games into account.

³Multiple choices can be chosen. Choose also the platform which you chose in the above question. Do not take mobile games into account.

9. Not including possible rhythm games, how frequently do you play digital games?

- 1) Every day 2) 2–6 times a week 3) Once a week
4) Couple of times a month 5) Less frequently 6) Don't play video games

10. Not including rhythm games, what genres' video and computer games do you play?⁴

- 1) Shooting (Call of Duty, Star Fox etc.)
2) Role-playing (Final Fantasy, Fire Emblem, The Witcher etc.)
3) Adventure (Ace Attorney, The Walking Dead etc.)
4) Fighting (Tekken, Super Smash Bros. etc.)
5) Action (Super Mario, The Legend of Zelda, Metal Gear Solid etc.)
6) Sport (FIFA, Mario Kart etc.)
7) Other
8) Don't play video games

If you answered "Other" to the above, write the played genre(s) here.

11. Do you usually play digital games with someone?

- 1) Yes, with friends or family 2) No, I usually play alone 3) Don't play video games

Rhythm games

12. Do you play rhythm games?⁵

- 1) Every day 2) 2–6 times a week 3) Once a week
4) Once in a couple of weeks 5) Couple of times a month 6) Less frequently
7) Have tried in the past but do not play actively 8) Have never played

⁴Multiple choices can be chosen. Do not take mobile games into account.

⁵Take only home and handheld console games into account (no PC or mobile games).

If you have played rhythm games, what have you played? Write here.

13. What is the most important aspect in a rhythm game?

- | | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| 1) Graphics | 2) Challenge /
difficulty level | 3) Multiplayer /
social elements | 4) Music |
| 5) Game
mechanics | 6) Story | 7) Other | |

If you answered "Other" to the above, write your answer here.

14. What are the next most important aspects in a rhythm game?⁶

- | | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| 1) Graphics | 2) Challenge /
difficulty level | 3) Multiplayer /
social elements | 4) Music |
| 5) Game
mechanics | 6) Story | 7) Other | |

If you answered "Other" to the above, write your answer here.

15. What kind of music would you like to have in a rhythm game?⁷

- | | | |
|------------------------|--|----------|
| 1) Electronic
music | 2) Hip-hop | 3) Jazz |
| 4) Classical | 5) Game music | 6) Pop |
| 7) Rock | 8) Music specifically
composed for the game | 9) Other |

If you answered "Other" to the above, write the wanted genre(s) here.

16. What kind of music would you like to have in a rhythm game localized from Japan?

- 1) I want to preserve the original soundtrack
- 2) Except the music specifically composed for the game, I want the soundtrack localized with Western music
- 3) I want to localize the full soundtrack with Western music

17. Have you imported rhythm games from Japan?

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|-------|
| 1) Yes, several | 2) Yes, one | 3) No |
|-----------------|-------------|-------|

⁶Up to two choices can be chosen.

⁷Multiple choices can be chosen.

Appendix C

Questionnaire Form for Finnish *Anime* and *Manga* Fans

Background information

1. Sex

- 1) Male 2) Female

2. Age

- 1) 12 or under 2) 13–15 3) 16–18 4) 19–25
5) 26–35 6) 36–50 7) 51 or over

3. Occupation

- 1) Studying 2) Working 3) Part-time 4) Unemployed 5) Other
working

Anime/Manga background

4. Do you watch *anime*?¹

- 1) Watching more than five weekly airing series
2) Watching 1–5 weekly airing series
3) Watch actively already finished series
4) Watching from time to time but not actively
5) Have watched in the past but not watching at the moment
6) Have never watched

¹Up to two choices can be chosen.

5. Do you read *manga*?²

- 1) Reading more than five weekly/monthly releasing series
- 2) Reading 1–5 weekly/monthly releasing series
- 3) Reading more than five series when they are released as tankōbons
- 4) Reading 1–5 series when they are released as tankōbons
- 5) Reading randomly series that have already finished
- 6) Reading from time to time but not actively
- 7) Have read in the past but not reading at the moment
- 8) Have never read

Music background

6. How frequently do you spontaneously listen music?

- 1) Every day
- 2) 2–6 times a week
- 3) Once a week
- 4) Once in a couple of weeks
- 5) Couple of times a month
- 6) Less frequently
- 7) Don't listen music

7. What kind of music do you usually listen?³

- 1) Electronic music
- 2) Hip-hop
- 3) Jazz
- 4) Classical
- 5) Game music
- 6) Pop
- 7) Rock
- 8) Other
- 9) Don't usually listen music

If you answered “Other” to the above, write your answer here.

8. What country's music do you listen the most?

- 1) Finland
- 2) the United Kingdom
- 3) Germany
- 4) the United States
- 5) Japan
- 6) Korea
- 7) Other
- 8) Don't listen music

If you answered “Other” to the above, write your answer here.

²Up to four choices can be chosen.

³Multiple choices can be chosen.

Rhythm games

9. Do you play rhythm games?⁴

- 1) Every day 2) 2–6 times a week 3) Once a week
- 4) Once in a couple of weeks 5) Couple of times a month 6) Less frequently
- 7) Have tried in the past but do not play actively 8) Have never played

If you have played rhythm games, what have you played? Write here.

10. What is the most important aspect in a rhythm game?

- 1) Graphics 2) Challenge / difficulty level 3) Multiplayer / social elements 4) Music
- 5) Game mechanics 6) Story 7) Other

If you answered “Other” to the above, write your answer here.

11. What are the next most important aspects in a rhythm game?⁵

- 1) Graphics 2) Challenge / difficulty level 3) Multiplayer / social elements 4) Music
- 5) Game mechanics 6) Story 7) Other

If you answered “Other” to the above, write your answer here.

12. What kind of music would you like to have in a rhythm game?⁶

- 1) Electronic music 2) Hip-hop 3) Jazz
- 4) Classical 5) Game music 6) Pop
- 7) Rock 8) Music specifically composed for the game 9) Other

If you answered “Other” to the above, write the wanted genre(s) here.

⁴Take only home and handheld console games into account (no PC or mobile games).

⁵Up to two choices can be chosen.

⁶Multiple choices can be chosen.

13. What kind of music would you like to have in a rhythm game localized from Japan?

- 1) I want to preserve the original soundtrack
- 2) Except the music specifically composed for the game, I want the soundtrack localized with Western music
- 3) I want to localize the full soundtrack with Western music

14. Have you imported rhythm games from Japan?

- 1) Yes, several
- 2) Yes, one
- 3) No

Video games

15. Not including possible rhythm games, do you play video games?⁷

- 1) Every day
- 2) 2–6 times a week
- 3) Once a week
- 4) Couple of times a month
- 5) Less frequently
- 6) Don't play video games

16. Not including rhythm games, what genres' video games do you play?⁸

- 1) Shooting (Call of Duty, Star Fox etc.)
- 2) Role-playing (Final Fantasy, Fire Emblem, The Witcher etc.)
- 3) Adventure (Ace Attorney, The Walking Dead etc.)
- 4) Fighting (Tekken, Super Smash Bros. etc.)
- 5) Action (Super Mario, The Legend of Zelda, Metal Gear Solid etc.)
- 6) Sport (FIFA, Mario Kart etc.)
- 7) Other
- 8) Don't play video games

If you answered "Other" to the above, write the played genre(s) here.

17. Do you usually play digital games with someone?

- 1) Yes, with friends or family
- 2) No, I usually play alone
- 3) Don't play video games

⁷Do not take PC or mobile games into account.

⁸Multiple choices can be chosen. Do not take PC or mobile games into account.