



Video Game IP Adaptations

From Console to Screen

May Li

12/11/2023

Research Overview

Research Scope

- Live-action Adaptations
- Mostly TV series, with some Movie titles
- Time Range: 2020+

Research Goal

- Understand Trends in the Video Games Adaptation Market
- Break down Gaming Elements for Categorization
- Case Study & Comparison Analysis in Recent Adaptations
- Identify Adaptation Variables
- Build out “Successful Path” for different game types

Data Source

Desk Research

- Internal Deck Reports (*TLOU*, *Twisted Metal*, *God of War*, *The Sims*, *Underworld*)
- Industry Reports
- Rotten Tomatoes/IMDb/Variety/Deadline Reviews
- YouTube Gameplay Video
- Reddit/Twitter Discussions

*Consumer Survey

Research Questions

1. What types of game are considered applicable for TV adaptations?

THE GAME



THE GAME

2. What variables are important during adaptation?

THE SHOW

THE SHOW

3. Any specific preference from Gamers vs Non-gamers?

Agenda

Overview

- Definition of Video Game & Gamer
- Adaptation Trends & Performance
- Adaptation Goal

Gaming Elements & Categories

- Narrative-Driven
- Gameplay-Focused
- Open World
- Life Simulation

Case Study

- 4 Adaptation Paths

Implementations

- Decision-making Model
- Adaptation Variables

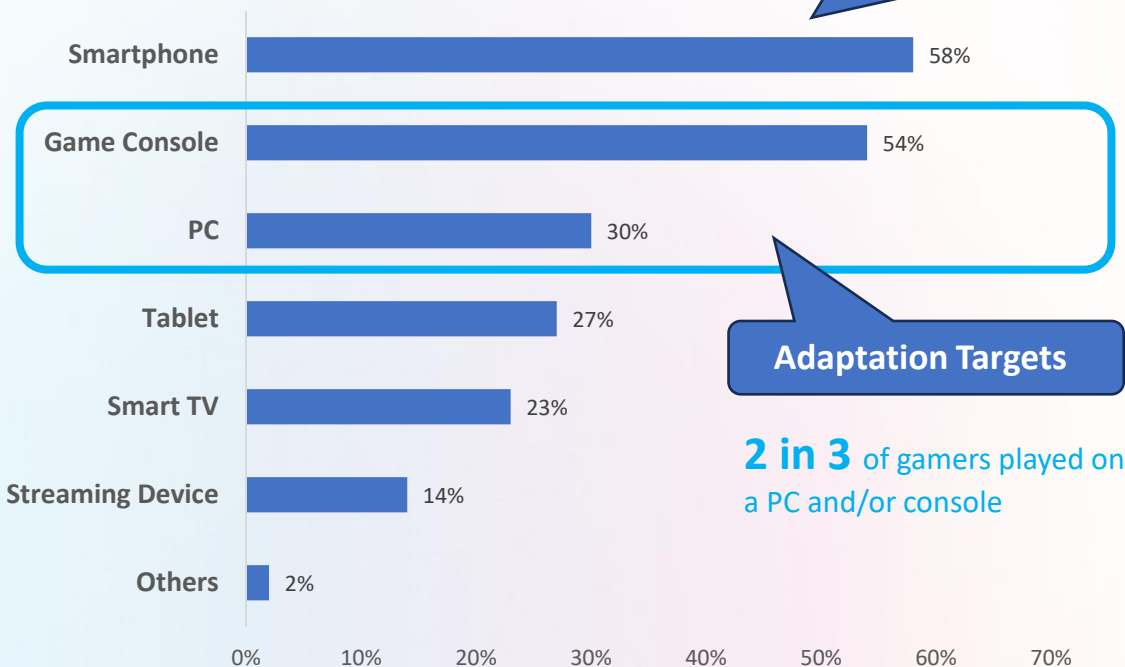
Overview

Definitions

Video Games

An electronic game in which players control images on a video screen

Most used devices for video games in the U.S. as of September 2023



Gamers

Playing Video Games vs Becoming a Gamer

- Active engagement
- Familiar with the trendy IPs
- Enthusiast for the industry

“I am a Gamer.”

Self Identification

Console and PC players are most likely to consider themselves “gamers”

In the past 7 days, how much time have you personally spent playing video games on console, PC, or mobile?

- None
- 1 to 3 hours
- 4 to 6 hours
- 7 to 9 hours
- 10 or more hours

Non-Gamer

Light-Gamer vs Heavy-Gamer

Habit Verification

Video Games Industry Trends

Market Potential

67% of gamers agree:

I'm more likely to watch a movie if it's based on a video game

vs **32%** non-gamers

48% of gamers have

watch a movie based on a video game

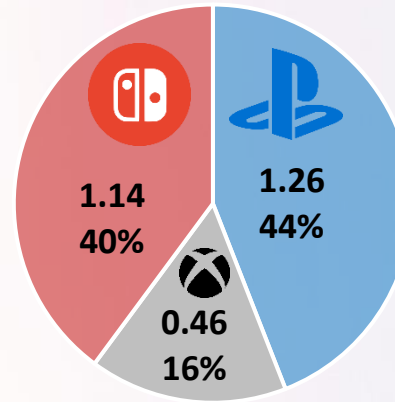
vs **30%** non-gamers

Gaming Development Trends:

- Darker and more mature themes
- More serious and intense narratives
- More complex and emotionally engaging storytelling

Console

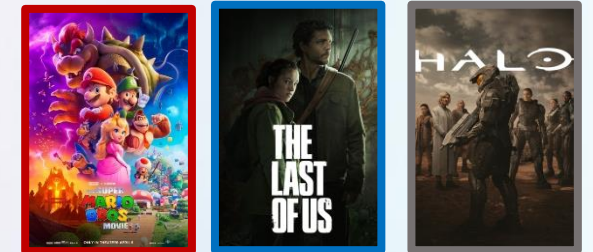
Q1 2023 Unit Sold
(in millions)



Top Games in 2023 based on MAU



Recent Adaptations

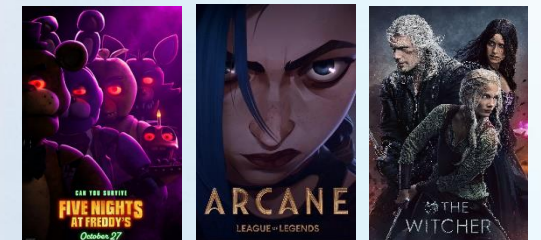


PC

Top Games in 2023 based on MAU



Recent Adaptations



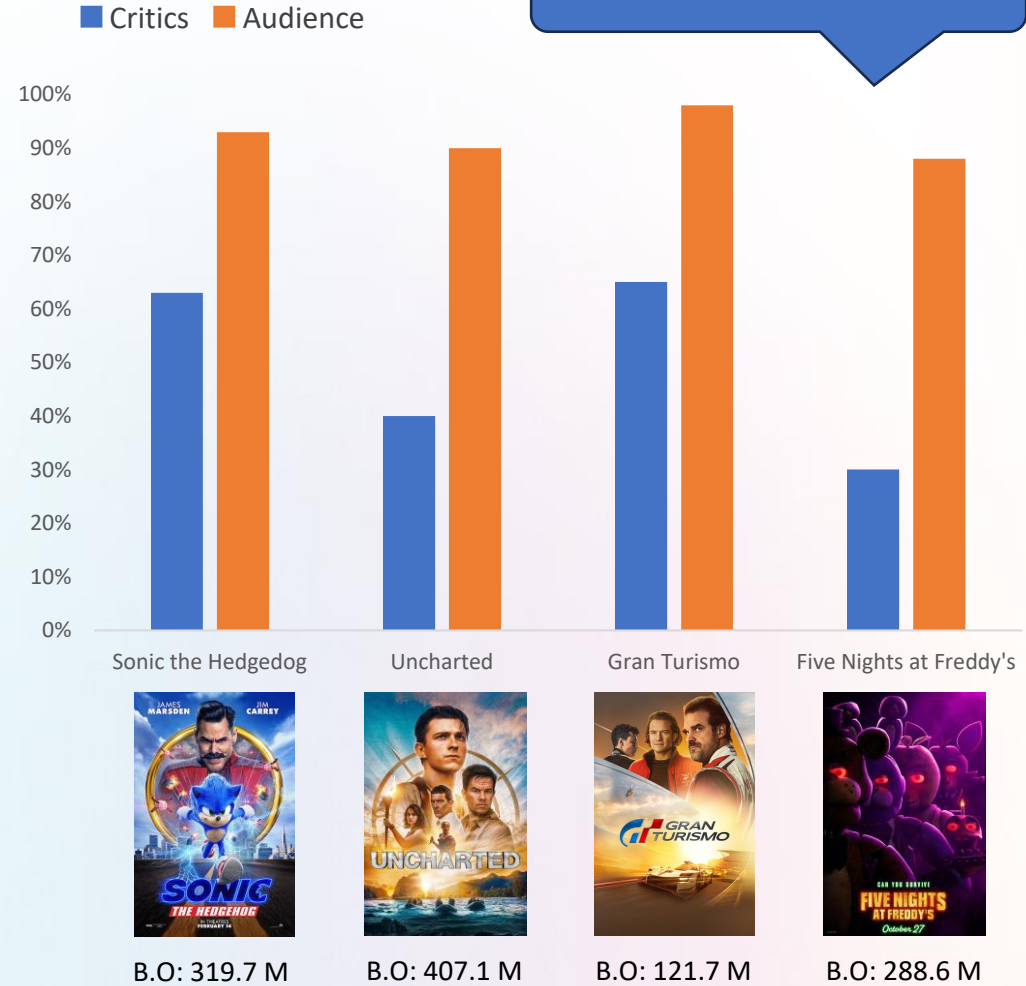
Adaptation Trends

Video Game Adaptations Timeline (United States, Live Action)

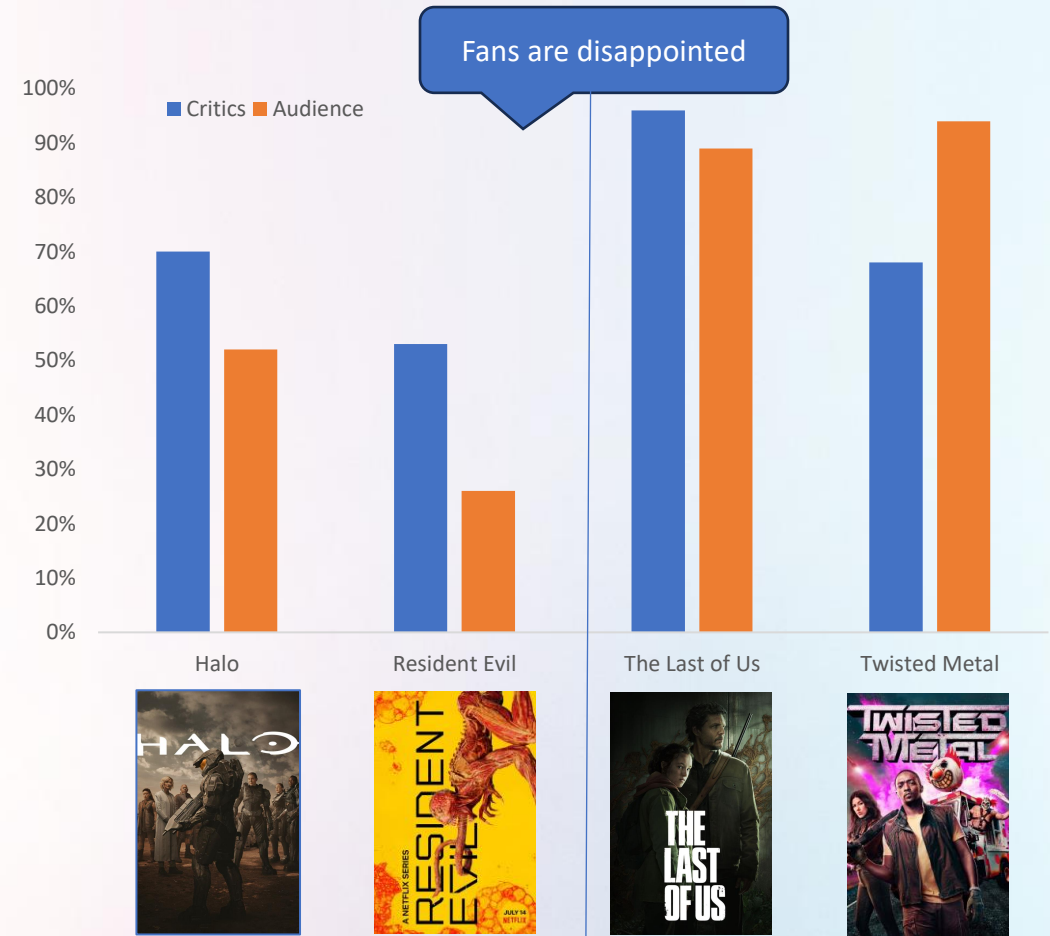


Adaptation Performance

Film Adaptations



TV Adaptations



Adaptation Goal



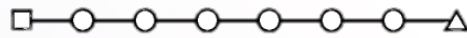
Gaming Elements & Categorization

Gaming Elements

Narrative

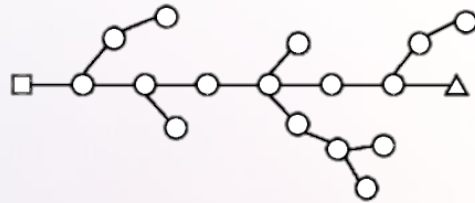
Linear

Players have one key storyline to follow



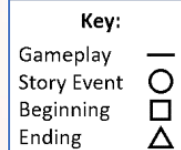
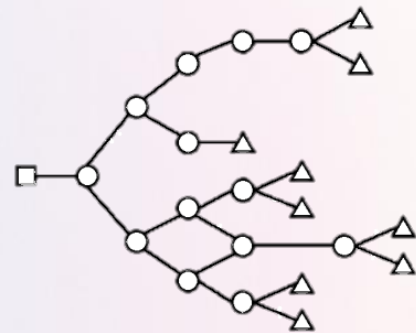
String/Pearls

The story can be interrupted by player freedom at times



Branching

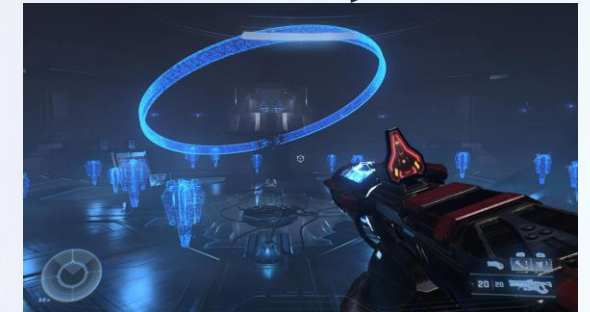
The story developed based on player's choices, with multiple endings



Player's Perspective



Third-Person



Sense of Control
Customization

First-Person

Main Goal

Narrative-Driven

Prioritize storytelling and character development, players explore the worlds and get immersive experience

Combat-Focused

Players defeat enemies, overcome obstacles, and excel in combat situations, multiplayer modes

Gameplay-Focused

Players enjoy diverse gameplay elements, such as racing or exploration to master the game's mechanics and have fun

Gaming Elements

Character

PREDEFINED CHARACTERS

RICH ARC

Eg: Joel and Ellie from *The Last of Us*



Usually follows
Third-Person
perspective

- Their identities and characteristics are established within the game's narrative
- Complex character development with emotional depth

SIMPLE ARC

Eg: Master Chief from *Halo*



Usually serves as a
First-Person Avatar

- Established character with his own identity, backstory, and personality
- Straightforward character development with less emotional complexity

CUSTOMIZATION

A DIVERSE CAST

Eg: Characters from *Twisted Metal*



Players can choose the
main character as their
Avatar

- Not RPG, but players have the freedom to customize their experience by choosing the main character

RPG

Eg: *The Sims*



Players customize their
Avatars and control them
from top-down viewpoint

- More choice-based
- Customizing experience and unique storylines

Gaming Categories

Narrative-Driven



Exploration / Open World



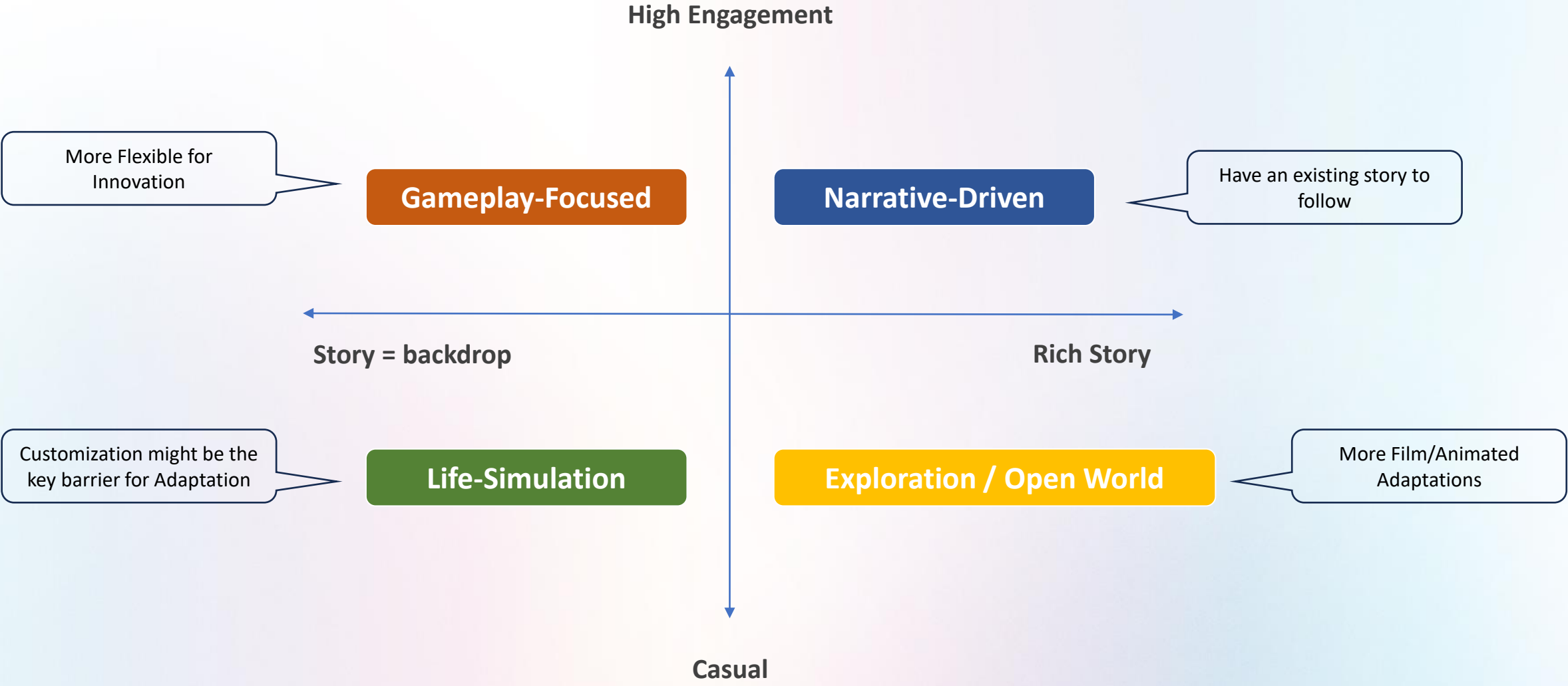
Gameplay-Focused



Life-Simulation



Gaming Categories

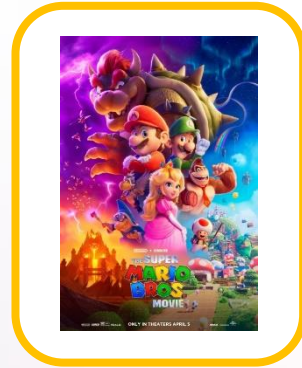


Case Study & Adaptation Paths

Adaptation Paths

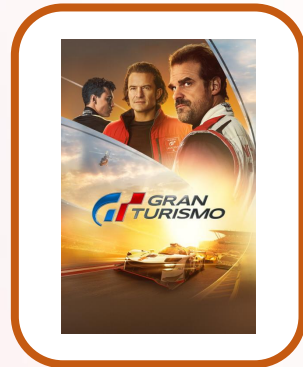
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Fan-Skewing



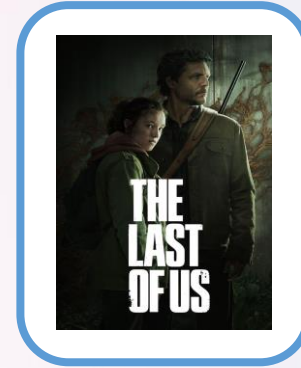
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Spinoff to the Game



3

Rich Storytelling



4

Genre Development



Path 1: Fan-Skewing



"Five Nights at Freddy's may be **fun to watch for fans** of the game, but most viewers of any other persuasion will find this adaptation **muddled and decidedly unscary**."



27%



88%

Critics hate it, but fans love it

Satisfying the fanbase was the "number one priority" for the team behind the movie

"Yes, it's important to make the movie enjoyable for people unfamiliar with the franchise. But the reality is that this movie wouldn't even be getting made if it weren't for the people who have been there from the beginning. It's thanks to the fans that I'm here doing this at all, and that the movie got made in the first place."

Loaded with inside jokes and easter eggs



Youtubers' cameo appearances

**GOOD QUALITY IS NOT A MUST,
FANS WILL BUY IT ANYWAY.**

Fan-Skewing
with Big IP



59%



95%

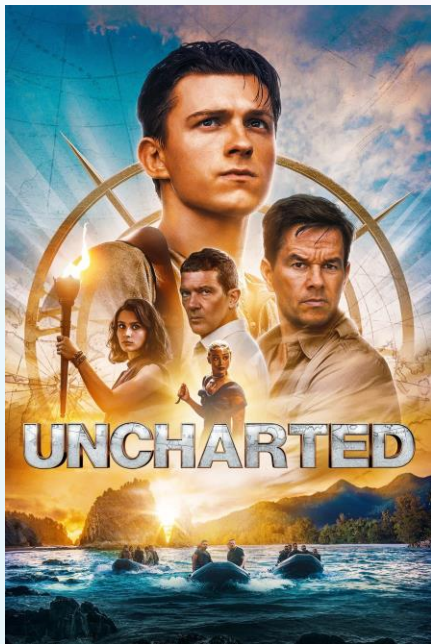
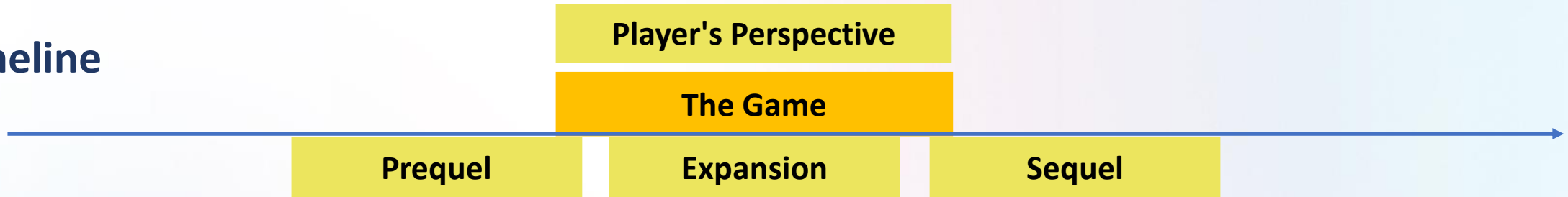
Tolerable enough for non-gamers



Has a broader fanbase already

Path 2: Spinoff to the Game

Timeline



Prequel of the Game

 40%  90%

- High-budget adventure film that appeals to both gamers and casual audience
- Making changes to the characters' origin story, while capturing the adventuring spirit of the games



Player's Perspective

 65%  98%

- Based on a true story
- Video game adaptation vs Sports story adaptation

"We're not inside the narrative of the game, which is almost every single video game film I can think of."

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE WITH RESPECT FOR THE SOURCE

Path 3: Rich Storytelling



Rich Storytelling




Appeal to both gamers and casual tv viewers

“The world, story and characters of the game were already so rich, emotional and well fleshed out”


- Take everything that's great about the story in the games
 - Narratives
 - Characters
 - Theme
- Remove some “distracting” video game elements
 - Gore
 - Action
 - Violence

Take Down the Potential Barriers for Non-Gamers

HBO's The Last of Us Is Perfect for People Who Hate Video Games

 kal3nteh • 6 mo. ago
my non-gamer sister really enjoyed the TV show. We would anticipate each episode every week back then. She does know about the games but didn't really care back then. she only knows Ellie lol. My brother's girlfriend also enjoyed it when we binged the show together at home.

↑ 3 ↓ Reply Share ...

 RepostersAnonymous • 6 mo. ago
I watched it with my partner, and she was so excited to watch me play through the game afterward.

↑ 3 ↓ Reply Share ...

THE STORY IS GOOD ENOUGH, AND ALSO SERVES AS THE SPIRIT OF THE GAME

Path 4: Genre Development



TARGET GENRE LOVERS



Appeal to both gamers and genre fans

SERIOUS VS FUNNY

The original game is a blend of seriousness and humor, while **players already have different preference for each.**

"It's quite an unexpected statement of tonal intent, given how dark and gritty the Twisted Metal universe is. That said, and obviously, it represents a small snapshot of a larger whole."

- Some fans hate it for taking away the seriousness of the game
- Loved by Genre Fans and casual TV viewers looking for dumb humor

THE CORE APPEAL IS GENRE-BASED

Limit the Use of Gaming Elements

Peacock's Twisted Metal Adaptation Takes Too Long to Get Into Gear



Didn't impact the overall enjoyment of genre fans

- Limited car battles
- No tournament
- Complaints about the show taking away game-like experience
- Expectations for more characters from the game

An Unsuccessful Example



CHANGE THE LORE



70%



52%

IP Fans are pissed off.

Changed the Source Materials, and Went Too Far from the Game

New Story Arc

Rather than follow the original story of survival and conflict on an alien Halo, the TV series is telling a completely new story.

"it mainly stems from the sheer amount of changes made to the source material at almost every turn."

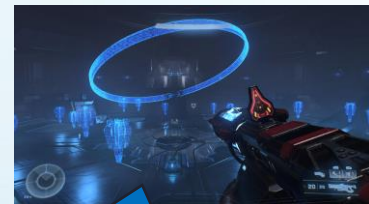
Character Mismatch

Selecting actors to fill roles based on talent and personality rather than a visual parity with those characters' previous appearances

"Face Reveal" of Master Chief

Master Chief has never removed his helmet in the game, but his face is revealed in the 1st episode of the show.

"It turns him into what I would consider a totally different character inherently disconnected from the gaming icon."



First-person perspective



Joseph Molina
@killers921

I canceled my Paramount Plus subscription because of Halo!!

3:41 PM · May 20, 2022

NOT NECESSARILY A BAD SHOW, BUT IT STEPS BEYOND THE BASELINE

Implementations

Decision-Making Model

1

What's the Game?

CATEGORY

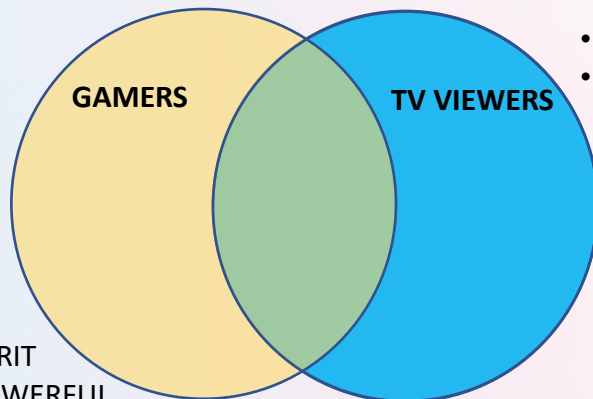
- Narrative-Driven
- Exploration
- Gameplay-Focused
- Life Simulation

KEY APPEAL

- Story
 - World Building
 - Character
 - Theme
 - Genre
- One/some of those elements will serve as the spirit of the game*

2

Who are the Target Audience?



- RESPECT THE SPIRIT
- NOSTALGIA IS POWERFUL
- OPEN FOR INNOVATION

- TOLERABLE EASTER EGGS
- STORY > GAMEPLAY

"The balance the whole time was to try and make something that I thought audiences who knew nothing about the game would find the movie interesting."

3

What's the Show?

A

The Use of Easter Eggs

- The more we use, the more we attract fans
- Make sure non-gamers could understand the show even if they know nothing about the game

B

The Change of Lore

- Most IP fans would prefer the show **staying loyal to the source**
- If we're going to explore something new, do not change the spirit of the game
- Some other game elements that doesn't hurt the spirit could be adjusted

Adaptation Variables

Story

Stay true to the narrative of the game

VS

An entirely original story

Perspective

Main Characters
Smaller Characters
New Characters
Players

...

Genre

Comedy
Drama
Fantasy
Action
Horror

...

Tone

Dark

VS

Light-hearted

Barrier

Newsie-Friendly

VS

Background knowledge required

Engagement

A show I can unwind to

VS

A show I need to pay attention

Watch with...

Other Gamers
People who know the game
People who know nothing about the game
Family members

...

The foundation for survey questions



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Appendix

Industry Trends

PlayStation Games Timeline



Light-hearted



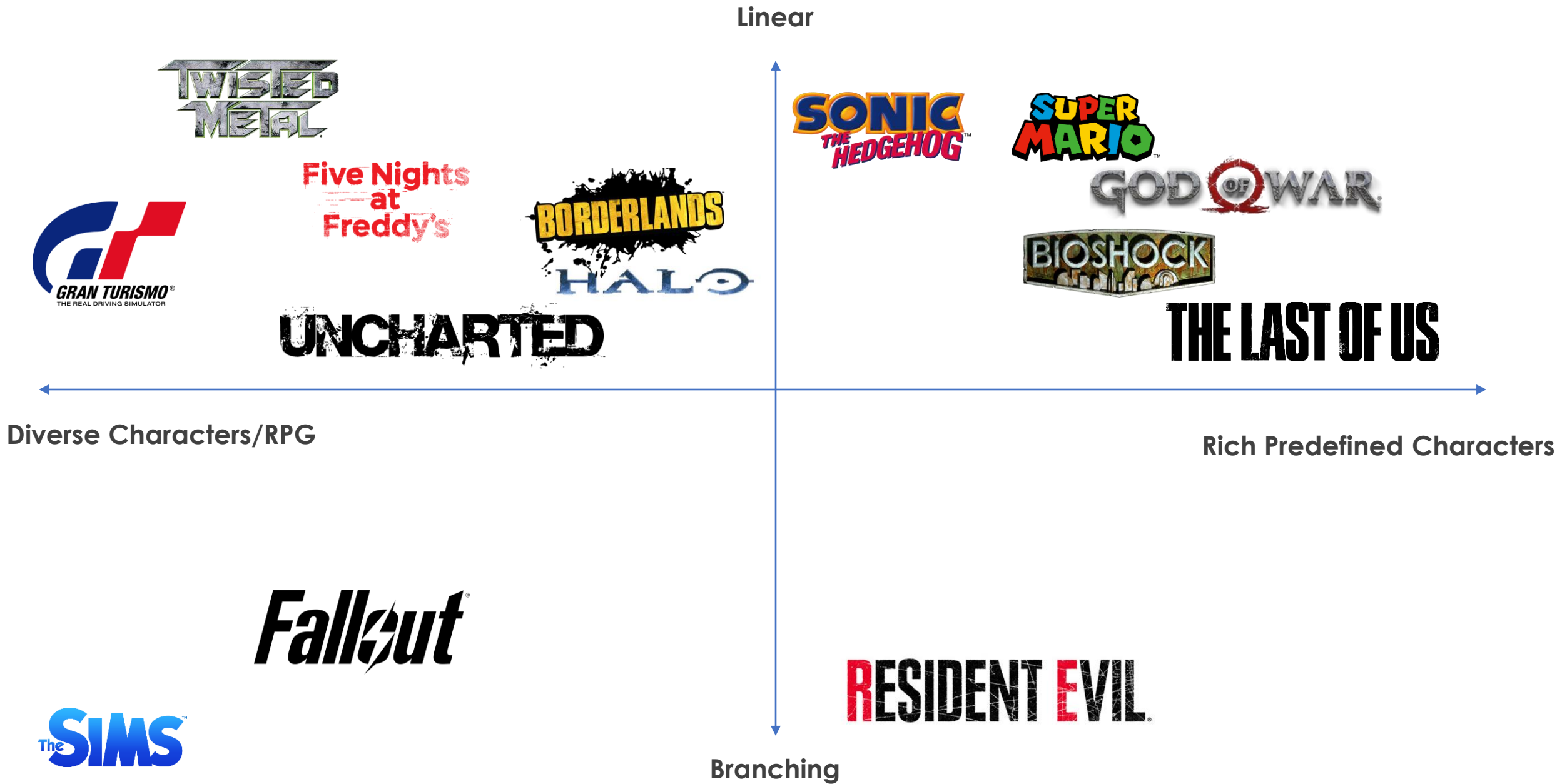
Narrative-Driven

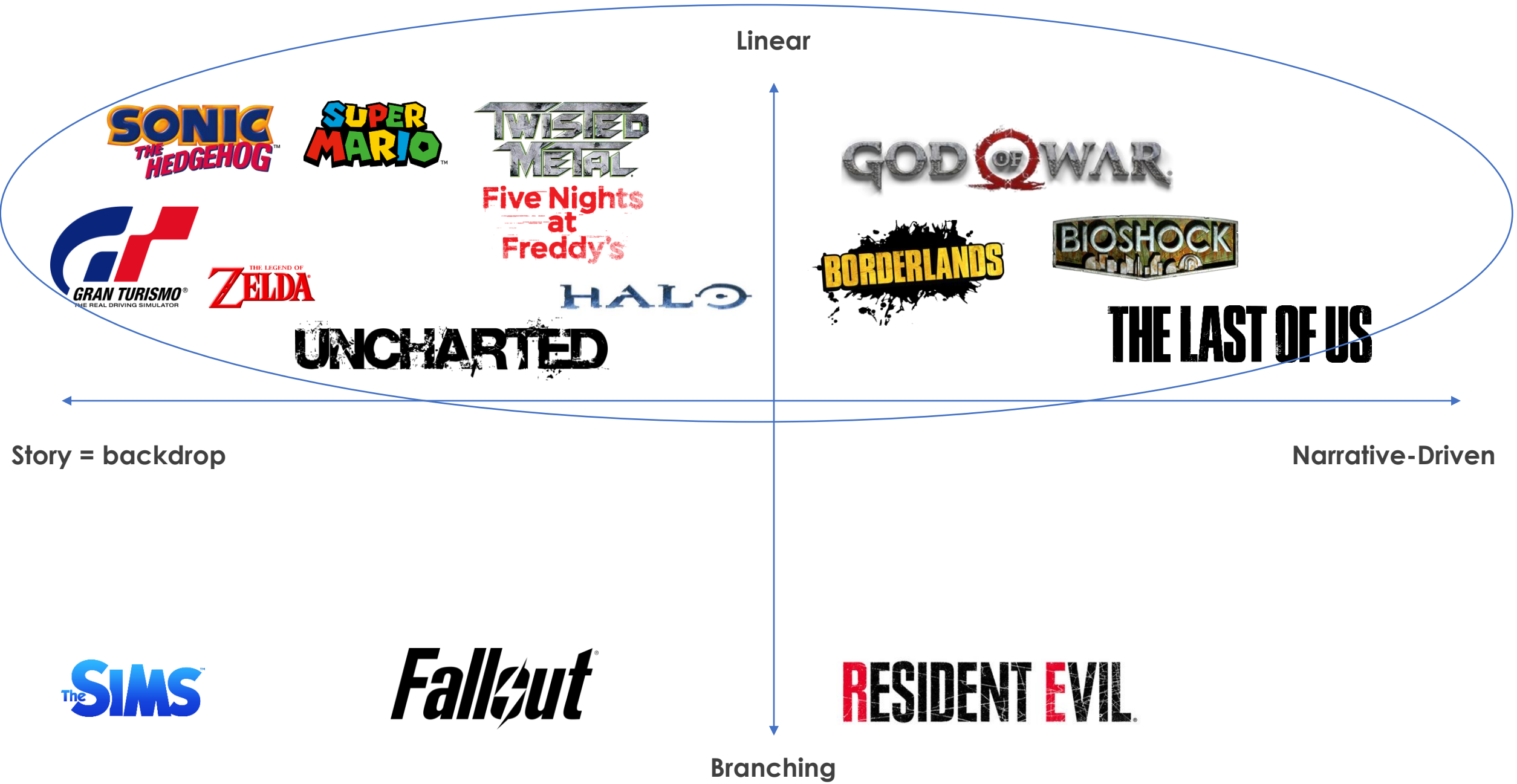


Dark

Story = backdrop

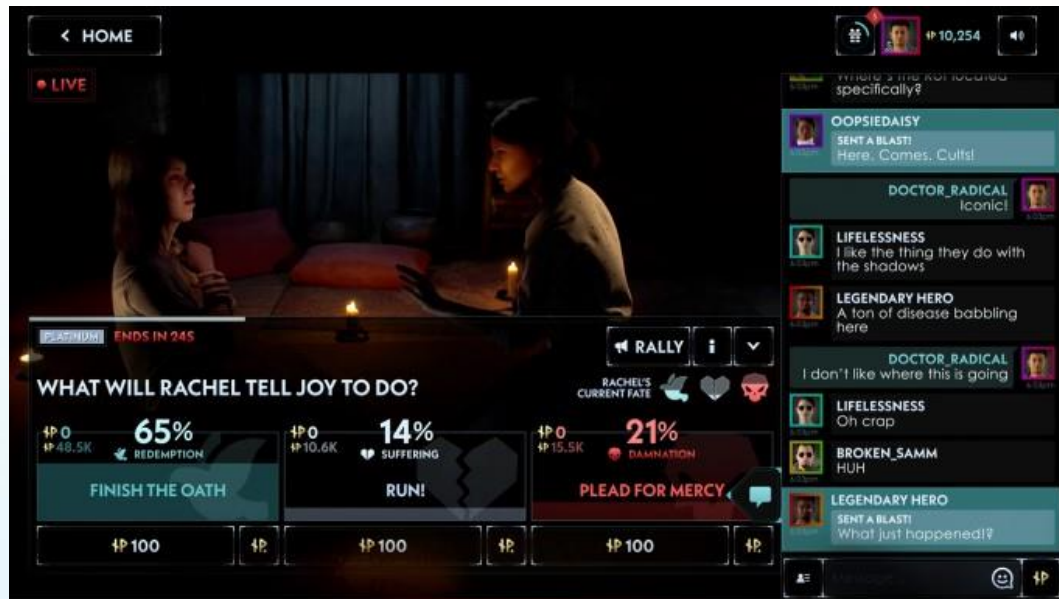






Future Area

Interactive Series



The fate of characters will be determined by the audience response, with dozens of potential outcomes

"we have no idea what choices they will make, or how it will end"



@CasualG-mer 1 hour ago

This could either go very well or very wrong...I'm all in.

30 Reply



@Katie-Waiting-For-You 1 hour ago

It's pointless because hundreds have to agree to get the decision you want

72 Reply