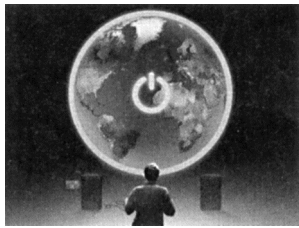


## The serious business of fun

1



OLD stereotypes die hard. Picture a video-game player and you will likely imagine a teenage boy, by himself, compulsively hammering away at a game involving rayguns and aliens that splatter when blasted. Ten years ago — an aeon in gaming time — that might have borne some relation to reality. But today a gamer is as likely to be a middle-aged commuter playing "Angry Birds" on her smartphone. In America, the biggest market, the average game-player is 37 years old. Two-fifths are female. Even teenagers with imaginary rayguns are more likely to be playing "Halo" with their friends than solo.

2

Over the past ten years the video-game industry has grown from a small niche business to a huge, mainstream one. With global sales of \$56 billion in 2010, it is more than twice the size of the recorded-music industry. Despite the downturn, it is growing by almost 9% a year.

3

Is this success due to luck or skill? The answer matters, because the rest of the entertainment industry has tended to treat gaming as being a lucky beneficiary of broader technological changes. Video gaming, unlike music, film or television, had the luck to be born digital: it never faced the struggle to convert from analogue. In fact, there is plenty for old media to learn.

4

Video games have certainly been swept along by two forces: demography and technology. The first gaming generation — the children of the 1970s and early 1980s — is now over 30. Many still love gaming, and can afford to spend far more on it now. As gaming establishes itself as a pastime for adults, the social stigma and the worries about moral corruption that have historically greeted all new media, from novels to pop music, have dissipated. Meanwhile rapid improvements in computing power have allowed game designers to offer experiences that are now often more cinematic than the cinema.

5

But even granted this good fortune, the game-makers have been clever. They have reached out to new customers with new gadgets: Nintendo's Wii console showed that games with cross-generational appeal can make money faster than a virtual Rafael Nadal returns your puny serve. They have branched out into education, corporate training and even warfare, and have embraced digital downloads and mobile devices with enthusiasm. Big-budget shoot-'em-up franchises such as "Call of Duty" and "Halo" are still popular, but much of the growth now comes from "casual" games that are simple, cheap and playable in short bursts on mobile phones or in web browsers. "Angry Birds" has been downloaded 500m times.

### On to the next level

6

The industry has excelled in two particular problematic areas: 10. In an era when people are disinclined to pay for content on the web, games publishers were quick to develop "freemium" models, where you rely on non-paying

customers to build an audience and then extract cash only from a fanatical few. In China, where illegal copying is rampant, many games can be played online for nothing. Firms instead make money by selling in-game perks and "virtual goods" to dedicated players. China is now the second-biggest gaming market, but does not even rank in the top 20 markets for the music business.

- 7 As gaming comes to be seen as just another medium, its tech-savvy approach could provide a welcome shot in the arm for existing media groups. Time Warner and Disney have bought games firms; big-budget games, meanwhile, now have Hollywood-style launches. *Homo ludens* is here to play.

*The Economist, 2011*

### Tekst 3 The serious business of fun

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- 1p 6 What is the function of paragraph 1?
- A to challenge the conventional image of a gamer
  - B to explain the popularity of gaming among different groups in society
  - C to illustrate the addictive potential of today's video games
  - D to question the idea that video games are about violence only
- 1p 7 Which of the following is true according to paragraph 2?
- A The constant growth of the video-gaming industry has come to a halt.
  - B The profits derived from video gaming have grown at the expense of the music industry.
  - C The revenues from video gaming have fluctuated over the past decade.
  - D The video-gaming business is more substantial than the music industry.
- 1p 8 Which of the following statements are in accordance with paragraphs 3 and 4?
- 1 Video-game players are receptive to the marketing of new technology.
  - 2 Appreciation of video games is not limited to the younger generation.
  - 3 The image of gaming has been significantly improved since adults started playing as well.
  - 4 The success of the cinema business has been undermined by technological developments in the video-game industry.
- A 1 and 2
  - B 1 and 3
  - C 1 and 4
  - D 2 and 3
  - E 2 and 4
  - F 3 and 4

“the game-makers have been clever” (eerste zin, alinea 5)

In alinea 5 worden drie marketingstrategieën van spellenmakers genoemd.

- 1p 9 Van welke strategie is onderstaande uitspraak een voorbeeld? Citeer de juiste strategie **of** schrijf de juiste strategie op in het Nederlands.

*My friend told me that this program would be different, and it was! It introduced me to the power of games, what I now know as experiential learning. One fun 15-minute game just blew me away. It showed me clearly why I kept messing up at work and what I needed to do to change it. Just 15 minutes to solve a problem I had struggled with for more than 2 years!*

*John Radclyffe*

based on <http://www.worldgames.com.au>

- 1p 10 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 6?
- A gifts and gadgets
  - B marketing and membership
  - C pricing and piracy
  - D supply and demand

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**Bronvermelding**

Een opsomming van de in dit examen gebruikte bronnen, zoals teksten en afbeeldingen, is te vinden in het bij dit examen behorende correctievoorschrift, dat na afloop van het examen wordt gepubliceerd.