Business Aspects Of Online Gaming Consoles

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Online Gaming: Consoles verses PC

Introduction

Online Gaming has been evolved for more than fifty years which are now part of our modern culture. This entertainment is considered an outstanding activity, not only for kids, but also for teenagers, adults, either men or women. First, online gaming was discovered and couple years later the consoles were introduced. Since then, video games entertainment’s activity it’s been getting more widespread, more creative and advanced in technology. In order to understand what we have now, we have to understand how online gaming and consoles started and how it has been gradually progressing or improving along these past, present and future years. Nowadays, online gaming with consoles is one of the most popular entertainment activities which is enjoy by many people and it’s been used to kill time, to experience a new adventure, to compete, to dance, to sing, and the most important thing to have fun. It’s just like going to the movies or going to a concert, but this entertainment it’s cheaper and it can be played at home with family and friends. Thus, we will give a brief history of online gaming and write about the seventh generations of consoles, write about its marketing, discuss some of the advantages and disadvantages from the most popular consoles, write about the eighth future’s generation and finally give our recommendation based on our research, which will be the best console to buy and why.
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In 1969, online gaming was originated, but it became more popular in the 1970s and 1980s along with the dial-up Bulletin Boards which provided a multi-user platform. Bulletin Boards became the first base for multi-user games, which have been now transformed into what is today popularly known as the “MMORPG” (Massively Multi-Player Online Role-Playing Games). On the other hand, the first generation of consoles which last four years it started in 1972 and it last to 1976. The Magnavox Odyssey was introduced in 1972 which was the first home video game. Magnavox Odyssey sold around 7,000 consoles the first year and 330,000 units in its lifetime. According to the article, From Vintage Video Game Console To Today, “One of their mistakes was misleading consumers into believing that the Odyssey would work only on Magnavox televisions.” (The Game Console) If it wasn’t for this misunderstood, Magnavox probably would it sell more consoles the first year and through its lifetime? Perhaps more people wanted to buy it, but they had a different television’s brand, so they were just afraid that the Odyssey console wouldn’t work with their televisions. In the same year the Atari was introduced with a very popular game called “Pong” a simple tennis game, which was the first successful commercially arcade video game. In 1976, Atari released the Breakout which the prototype was designed by Steve Jobs and Wozniak.

The second generation was around 1977 and it ended up in 1982. Atari 2600 or VCS, it was released in 1977 which was a successful video game console of its time; it sold more than thirty million consoles. As a matter of fact, many games were notable during this generation such as Pac-man, Monaco GP, Missile command, Space Wars, Galaga, Donkey Kong, Q-Bert, Megamania, etc. The arcade games were
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famous during these years which were the coin-operated entertainment machines, which were placed in hotels, restaurants, and other public places. In the 1980s Commercial Online Services were introduced and little by little interactive online games started playing online games when they started being offered to the users as added attraction with these services. The third generation started in 1983 and ended up in 1987. Nintendo ES was released in 1983 which it sold sixty two million consoles. During this generation many famous games came out such as Tetris, The Legend of Zelda, Balloon Fight, Contra, etc. In 1985 Nintendo was very popular with the super Mario Bros which it sold ten million copies the same year it was released.

The fourth generation started in 1988 and ended up in 1992. In 1988, the most successful launched of this generation was SEGA Genesis; it sold more than twenty nine consoles. During this generation many famous games came out to the market such as Sony the Hedgehog, street Fighter II, Mortal Kombat, etc.

The fifth generation started in 1993 and ended up in 1998. In 1994 Sony introduced the PlayStation which was the top seller console from this generation; it sold more than 125 million units. In 1995 the SEGA Saturn was introduced. Another great console was the color Gameboy which it was released by Nintendo in 1998, many kids wanted to have it because it was easy to carry it, they were able to take it to school to play during their breaks. The sixth generation started in 1999 and ended up in 2001. There were many introduction to the market in 1999 there was a released of SEGA’s Dreamcast. In 2000 Sony PlayStation 2 was introduced and by 2001 Microsoft Xbox and the Nintendo Game Cube were released. Finally, the seventh generation which is very popular and we are still enjoying, introduced the
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Xbox 360 in 2005, Sony’s PlayStation 3, and the Nintendo Wii in 2006. These technological giants such as Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo brought the advanced gaming consoles and many fascinating gaming software that have changed the entertainment of online gaming forever. Its consoles are very popular and very addicted around the world with millions of gamers who want to own one.

Demographics

When one thinks of the typical console gamer, images of a nerdy young boy come to mind. It is easy to dismiss video games as an activity that only teenagers indulge in. But the truth is, the age of the typical gamer is about 34 years of age. The average gamer spends about eight hours a week playing video games on the console platform and about 40% of all gamers are female. In a 2011 study, the Entertainment Software Association reported that 71% of all people ranging from six to forty-nine years of age have played video games. When looking at the above numbers, one can deduce that video games have transcended from a niche and nerd hobby only for teenagers into a legitimate form of entertainment within popular culture. Video games are not just for the hobbyists anymore.

This rise in regular video game players may be attributed to the games companies make for the casual gamer. With systems such as the Wii, the PlayStation, and the Xbox supporting more than one local player, playing video games has become a social experience. The Nintendo Wii uses motion control that allows the game play and controls for a lot of their games to be self explanatory and easy to pick up. There is a very little learning curve and family members of all ages can pick up the controls and begin playing. This may have given cause to the rise of the
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The average age of a typical video game player. The two other major console systems, the Sony PlayStation 3 and the Microsoft Xbox 360 gaming platforms, allow up to four players to play on the system simultaneously. Allowing more than one player play on the video game console has turned playing video games into a social experience. Technology is improving with time and integration with the Internet has expanded the possibilities of console gaming. Players can now go on the Internet and create a bigger social experience by playing with and against players from around the world.

As the video game industry has grown, a new avenue has appeared to move video game players from playing with other people locally on the same console to playing internationally on the Internet. Online gaming demographics have stayed relatively uniform to the demographics of the average console gamer. Of all people playing online console games, 58% are male while the remaining 42% are female. The age range for these console online video game players is twenty-five to forty-four. The income range for the online console video game player is between $35,000 to $75,000 per year. These salaries have contributed to making the online console gaming industry a very profitable industry, boasting a total net worth of $15 billion. Of the two more popular console online gaming networks, Sony’s PlayStation has about 77 million registered accounts on its PlayStation Network, while Microsoft’s Xbox 360 has about 35 million users for its Xbox Live subscription service.

Marketing Concepts

Marketing is defined as the practice of promoting and selling products and services through advertisement. Companies use commercials shown on television
programs to advertise their products. While television has been a popular avenue for advertisers, YouTube has allowed digital video content to be shared to other people online. According to AdWeek, companies enjoy using emotions, especially humor, as the catalyst to move their product in commercials. When commercials use humor, people tend to post the humorous videos on social networking sites and then the videos become viral. When these videos become more viral, they spread across the Internet, which allows for free advertising for the online gaming companies.

Online console video game companies have started to turn towards celebrity endorsers to help market their video games as video game culture has become more mainstream and generally more accepted. Celebrity endorsers bring validity to the product and brand recognition to the video game and the video game company in the eyes of the consumer. When a celebrity endorser brings validity to the product, it means that customers who see their favorite celebrity using a product or, in this case, playing their favorite video game want to play that video game as well. Celebrity endorsers can also bring brand recognition by associating online video game products with a famous actor with a successful marketing campaign and further extend brand awareness. Celebrities are put on a pedestal and, though it may not be true, are seen as experts when they market a product. Even though celebrities are seen higher than normal people, having a celebrity endorser brings connectivity to the average video game player. A popular commercial in recent memory comes from Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 entitled “The Vet & The n00b.” Activision casts Sam Worthington, an action star, as the Call of Duty veteran while
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Jonah Hill, a comedian, plays the Call of Duty rookie. Name recognition brings brand awareness to the video game product. The commercial also puts the actors in humorous situations, affirming the fact that marketers like to use humor in their commercials so that consumers can watch them over and over again and post these videos on social network sites so that the videos become viral. The commercial also features celebrity cameos, most notably Dwight Howard, a professional basketball player for the Orlando Magic. The commercial ends with the phrase “Jump In,” communicating to the consumer that online gaming is a party and that they should jump in the party like everyone else has.

There is a rise of social network sites and social media. Among the leaders of this social networking movement are Facebook and Twitter, with many companies using its resources to create broader brand and product awareness. Facebook boasts more than 800 million active users while Twitter has about 100 million active users logging into the site every day. There is a lot of potential tapping into these markets with one’s product and many companies realize this. Not only do online console gaming companies use these social networking sites to gain followers, they communicate with their followers of updates and upcoming dates in the context of their games. These video game companies attract followers on their respective social media sites by releasing special codes for exclusive downloadable content. Downloadable content is a huge part of what makes the console online gaming experience. Players can download special game packs, such as playing as secret characters, special weapon upgrades, or unlocking extra maps not normally found on the game for the game’s release. These social networks also give the
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console online gaming players a contact point in case there are problems with the game. Through these social networking sites, the players can voice their concerns over the game and games can release downloadable content that updates the game and fixes and bug errors that might be corrupting the software.

PlayStation 3

Sony has developed a game console to out-do any others. They have created a console that has multiple functions that cover a wide range of applications for its use. Their most recent is the PlayStation 3, also known as PS3. The PlayStation 3 is the third generation PlayStation console. It comes equipped with a Blu-Ray DVD player as well as an HDMI cable, which can become quite expensive when you have to purchase it separately. Having the Blu-Ray as a part of the PlayStation 3 give Sony a comparative advantage over competitors because other companies do not include the Blu-Ray player, making it more costly for consumers to purchase and use alternative consoles. The controllers for the PlayStation 3 are a lot smaller than competitors and require only a charge, no batteries needed. This makes it more attractive to consumers because of the fact it is less bulky and you don’t have to worry about changing the battery in order to keep playing. The graphics on the PlayStation 3 are superior to competitors because it actually displays at a 1080 pixel count. This gives the PlayStation 3 higher detail capability when rendering graphics into their games. Having the clarity and high pixel count makes playing games more fun and interesting because you get to see the details game designers took the time to create. Having the High pixel count and Blu-Ray makes watching movies more clear and that is a major factor in a lot of consumers’ decision when purchasing any
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item relating to TV shows and movies. Another great marketing tool Sony uses, is to make online play free. Their network, PlayStation Network, is free to join and be a part of giving the consumer more time and money to spend buying more games, other programs, or even channels. Some disadvantages to having the free network is the fact there is less money for Sony to spend on advancements and options available to consumers while being a part of Sony’s PlayStation Network. Another downside to Sony’s PlayStation 3 is the fact it has a very limited number of PlayStation exclusive games. This enables competitors to capture more of the market share as compared to if there were more PlayStation exclusive games.

An interview conducted with Peter Arth, an avid “gamer” and owner of multiple game consoles, shows that he revered PlayStation at a much higher level than the other consoles he owned. He owns, plays games, and watches movies on an Xbox 360, Wii, and a Personal Computer. He stated that the PlayStation is very superior to the Wii and Personal computer in terms of graphics and controller. The Xbox 360 was a close match because he preferred a few of games exclusive to the Xbox 360, but the controllers were too bulky and the graphics seemed enlarged. He could see a noticeable different in the graphics between the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3. This shows that a consumer who has each console does prefer the PlayStation 3. An option that Sony could consider is that they could invest some money into creating games or signing contracts with companies who create games, to design a wide variety of games that are exclusive to the PlayStation 3. If they did this, it would enable them to capture some of the customers who like specific games. Currently if the game is available on PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360, the consumer has
two choices. If Sony takes that option away but creating new innovative games covering a variety of genres, they create brand loyalty by taking the consumers’ option of playing the same game but on another console.

**Xbox 360**

Microsoft has a long history in creating computers and high-tech machines capable of extraordinary things. Their latest gaming console is the Xbox 360. The Xbox 360 was the first next generation gaming console (Chamberlain, 2009). It is a very unique console because Microsoft has used their comparative advantage and implemented their innovative computer technologies into the Xbox 360. It has a well-known reputation amongst gamers for being their console of choice, in contrast when compared to the previously mentioned interview. Consumers choose Xbox because of the exclusive games that are compatible only to Xbox 360, there are programs and applications similar to that of a Personal Computer. The Xbox is equipped with a HD-DVD player and does not come with an HDMI cable at the time of purchase. This could be a possible downfall to consumers who purchase the Xbox 360. The Xbox users do have to pay for their network, known as Xbox Live. Microsoft takes advantage of the fact that their players are willing to pay to play online. Microsoft uses this money in order to better their online network. Investing more money into the Xbox Live will definitely give them a comparative advantage over competitors, even while their consumers will be paying for that online service. By investing more money into this aspect of their Xbox 360, they have created a more personable experience. On Xbox Live, it is easier to find friends and you are able to have exclusive chat rooms during gameplay, which is not available through
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competitors such as Sony’s PlayStation 3. The controllers have batteries, which can be removed and charged on a charger. An advantage of having detachable batteries could be if a consumer had multiple batteries, they could essential have less downtime between charging periods and not be bound to the distance of a charging cable while playing. A downside to the Xbox is its lack of Blu-Ray capability. In order to watch Blu-Ray on an Xbox 360 would be to purchase a separate attachment, which is more expensive to the consumer but creates more revenue to Microsoft. Being able to continue to play a game when already playing is essential to a gamer. The amount of exclusive games strictly to Xbox 360 is very large and includes a wide variety of genres. This also creates more revenue for Microsoft compared to if they had no exclusive games because there are consumers who prefer to play a certain game, but if the choice was given to play that game on another system, they could essential become a lost customer. A well-known game that is an Xbox 360 exclusive is the game called Halo. The interviewee Peter Arth stated that he would rather play Halo on PS3 if it were an option. This shows that having a large number of games that are exclusive to Xbox 360 enable Microsoft to capture a larger market share than if they did not have those games as exclusive to Xbox 360.

A way for Microsoft to capture an even larger amount of the market share would be to use their extensive technologies and develop a new version of the Xbox that will have unparalleled graphics, include the Blu-Ray player built in, and include an HDMI cable with the Xbox at time of purchase. The HDMI would be such a minimal cost but would create added revenue from those consumers who do not
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want to have to purchase an expensive cable in addition to their purchase of the Xbox 360.

Nintendo Wii

Nintendo Wii is a home video game console that was introduced in 2006 with is several advanced and revolutionary features. Nintendo Wii is marketed towards young people, and it has become the bestselling latest generation console system in the world. With the price of $250, Wii is a lot cheaper than the Sony. The console is equipped with built-in Wi-Fi capability, wireless motion-sensitive remote controller, and hosts other features. Because of these updated features, Wii is primitively competing with Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3, and its target focuses on broader demographic, comparing to its other rivals.

Besides, there are also some major disadvantages associated with playing Wii Nintendo. One of the disadvantages that most users often complain at Wii Nintendo is that each individual game costs about $50-$100 while the console itself does not cost much. Some of other potential problems are gamers are addicted on playing football or tennis rather than play those games real. In video game console more generally, the rewards for gamers are intrinsic. Those rewards can be moving to the next level, getting the highest players’ names on the “hall of fame,” improving the higher score, beating your friends’ score. In online gaming, there is no stop for the game and it has the potential for gamers to play endlessly against other real activities. Because of this, for a small minority of people, this causes an addiction where online gaming console becomes the most important activity in that person’s life and all other activities. According to Mark Griffiths, an educational psychologist,
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he states that “an adolescent cannot become addicted to something unless they are constantly rewarded for the behavior they are engaged in” (Griffiths).

Although there is a negative side of video game consoles, there are a lot evidences proving that gaming console can have a positive effect on people’s lives. Many people argue that spending their time playing game online will be more positive than drinking alcohol, using drug, or gambling. Some recent research shows that one third of online gamers make good friends in the games (Cole and Griffiths, 2007). Furthermore, there are couples other advantages of playing Wii. Firstly, the price for the console itself is really cheap, it costs about $200. With Wii Nintendo, it offers players endless possibilities such as different channels as a TV that allows players to select their favorite section easily. On the other hand, the motion sensing controllers enable the console to tack the things to do for gamers and translate those things in to action quickly. Because the Wii Nintendo is trying to compete with other consoles, it is equipped with the most useful features that allow gamers to perform some common functions that a computer can provide. Wireless internet access is provided that enables us to play games online and browse other facilities. Another advantage of Wii Nintendo is that new games are always available every month to attract more gamers.

Personal Computers

Personal Computers are often referred to as PCs. Differing than the video home console game, PC game is an online that is played on personal computer. PC game is distributed on DVDs, CDs, and floppy software or through online services such as Steam or Direct2Drive. PC game is equipped with a community features,
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automated game updates, in-game voice and chat functionality. Most of PC games often require specialized hardware on the player’s computer in order to play. Currently, PC game is focusing on the improvements on the 3D graphics; and thus it is designed to target not only the young generations but also the adults.

One of the major advantages of PC game is that it is very easy to use. With the affordable high bandwidth internet connections, PC game enables large number of gamers play together, and thus offering particular use in vastly multiplayer online role-playing games. Because of this, PC game offers a massive community that allows users to make friends online easily. More specifically, users enable to chat while playing game or start conversation with their friends. With PC game, games can be played completely disk free because licensing is often authenticated through user’s login. This can also increase a potential benefit for users to avoid their account from being lost or stolen. Another advantage from PC gaming is that video graphic display is really good, comparing to PS3. Additionally, some of the games from PS3, PS2, PS1, Wii, and Xbox can also be played in the PC game, enabling users to save a great amount of money instead of buying a console. On the other hand, PC game can offer educational benefits to gamers because such games allow players to accumulate money and points to exchange equipment that advance their interests in playing games. These features can become commodities in reality, and in fact can stimulate markets, and thus the game teaches players some purchasing and negotiating strategies.

Aside from offering players a lot of benefits, PC game can also have a negative influence on social relations and health due to users’ addiction. A research shows
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that PC game addicts tend to become isolated, and they completely withdrawn from their social networks and give up other hobbies (Bakker). Although, too much PC gaming seems relatively harmless compared with the dangers of too much drinking or a drug overdose, it may ruin people’s lives. In fact, a person who spends five hours or longer a day has no time for playing sports or socializing with their friends and family. On the other hand, playing online PC game may become costly since most of the games often require the latest hardware, RAM, and others in order to install the games. In fact, such hardware device like heat-sink, cooler master, HDD, and VGA card are very expensive. Additionally, the client updates are very often, and this requires you to pay a certain amount of money in order to update user’s account. Some of other complaints from the users are that prices vary from different locations, depending on the place people live.

Conclusion

Console online gaming is going in a different direction than PC online gaming. PC game developers are narrowly focused on just adding more content. They want their games to go deeper with more levels and more characters. Console games want more content, but will also be more focused on new technologies and adding entertainment to their systems such as movie streaming and social interaction. 3-D and advanced motion detectors, as well as a plethora of downloadable content, such as new characters and advanced levels, are also in the works.
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The next generation of consoles is considered the eighth generation. Nintendo will already be coming out with their new Wii U in 2012. The Wii U comes with a new controller that has its own screen and allows play without connecting to a TV. It will also have precision motion controls and HD graphics along with a front facing camera for video-chat.

Although Sony does not have an official release date, gamers can expect the PlayStation 4 will most likely come out at the end of 2012. Previous generations of PlayStation consoles follow a trend of releasing the new console about 6 years after the previous one. PlayStation 1 was released in Japan in 1994. In 2000 came the PlayStation 2, which gave the first console the 6 year shelf life. The most recent release of PlayStation 3 was in 2006, again coming 6 years after the previous release. This indicates the next console will come out in 2012.

The PlayStation 4 gaming console is anticipated to be made with 60% of eco-friendly materials. It will also be configured to turn off automatically after 30 minutes of no activity. The expected 1.5 TB hard drive will supply gamers with plenty of space to store a large number of games. It will also have full 3D support along with 3D Blu-Ray capabilities.

Microsoft’s Xbox is more of a mystery than its 2 major competitors. Reports have come out that suggest a release date towards the end of 2013. The new
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console will most likely be smaller and cheaper with a different type of media such as Blu-ray, flash-drives, or even Nintendo style cartridges. It will also be more Kinect-focused. “AMD reckons it will be a beast of a machine, pumping out graphics that offer Avatar-levels of detail.” (Evans, Dean. Xbox 720: every rumor about the new Xbox).

The new games coming out are getting deeper into the Role Playing by letting the gamer decide his or her game experience as they go by the selections they make. 3-D is also becoming more and more popular and will most likely eventually be the norm as more 3-D capable TVs are sold. Games will also be moved to the ‘cloud’. Instead of buying the media that you use to play from such as a disc or cartridge, you won’t install the software, but instead it will be streamed. The gamer may pay for the actual usage, rather than a one-time cost. It could also be similar to how Netflix has monthly fees. There is even talk about consoles going away and being replaced by tablets that receive the streaming and then display on your TV through wireless technologies.

Our Opinion

After the extensive research we did and talking with several serious online console gamers, we found that Sony’s PlayStation 3 and Microsoft’s Xbox 360 are both at the top for different reasons. Different gamers have different needs and wants. While some gamers prefer detailed graphics and deeper content, others
prefer games that require less thinking and less stress and don’t care as much with detailed graphics. There are several different genres that gamers can select from.

Role-playing games give players the ability to choose their own path, use tools and weapons that they select, and have deeper content. The top role playing games include The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim and Fable III. Then there are games with shallow content and considered family-oriented games such as Wii Sports Resort and Just Dance. In the middle of the role playing and family games would be the action and adventure games such as Mario Bros. and Donkey Kong Country.

The PlayStation 3 has better hardware that is more advanced and more reliable. It uses Blu-ray which adds to the graphical capabilities and visual experience. It also has more features such as the free online gaming service, PlayStation Network. Role playing games such as The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim and Final Fantasy XIII are known for their detailed graphics and extensive content. The Blu-ray technology is able to display the best visual experience for gamers. Gamers can also use the console for its downloadable content and watch thousands of movies and shows in Blu-ray quality. This allows for the whole family to utilize its services. In October of 2010, it came out with the Move motion-sensing game controller. It uses a controller wand that is tracked by the PlayStation Eye camera and has inertial sensors to detect its motion. This gave it similar capabilities to the Nintendo Wii.
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Although the Xbox is known for having bad hardware with overheating consoles, it has more games to select from and offers a better social gaming experience. Xbox Live gives the gamer the ability to connect with friends using the live chat and allows for interactive online gaming with their friends. Since there is a fee for this service, it is more reliable than the PlayStation Network and offers much more. There are also many downloadable games to select from. Movie and TV show streaming is available through the console with Netflix and Hulu. Xbox Kinect was released in late 2010. The Kinect has no controllers and uses body movement or gestures and voice commands to control the games. This was their way to compete with the Wii Motion and PlayStation Move.

Wii is also a great system that offers more family fun where you are in the same room and being active. It’s a different experience than the other 2 consoles in that it lacks in the sense that the games don’t go very deep with content and there aren’t many role playing games. Wii focuses more on the physical interaction that can be utilized with its MotionPlus technology. The MotionPlus is connected to the game controller and enables it to more accurately capture complex motion. The sensor works with the Sensor Bar and accelerometer to render the gamer’s actions identically on the display. This allows for an overall better physical online gaming experience.
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In conclusion, we agree that all 3 online gaming consoles, the Sony PlayStation3, Microsoft Xbox 360, Nintendo Wii, and Personal Computers, all have their own special place in the industry. They each have different offerings to satisfy every type of gamer.
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