**Call of duty multiplayer**

In this essay I will be looking at where microtransactions started and where they are now in call of duty. Instead, of detailing every microtransaction in every call of duty I will choose the main points where they started to change and evolve into what they are now. For example, call of duty black ops 3 introduced the zombie’s player base to the first iteration of microtransactions that drastically affected the core gameplay. This was in the form of ‘gobble gums’. The next two call of duty instalments (call of duty infinite warfare and call of duty World War 2) implemented their own variations of gobble gums. These being ‘fortune cards’ in infinite warfare and ‘consumables’ in World War 2. not only are these just blatant gobble gum reskinning but they are also underwhelming when compared to gobble gums.

Call of duty’s first microtransaction was in black ops 2 with personalisation packs. Call of duty black ops 2 offered microtransactions from “$1 to $5 offer various upgrades, from additional weapon skins to extra create-a-class slots. …Personalization Packs, which offer up a unique weapon camo, new targeting reticles, and a custom calling card--each for 160 Microsoft” (Sheridan, 2013)

The first personalized pack trailer allowed the player base to vote for their favourite two packs out of paladin, cyborg, comics and dragon. Each pack would come with a main skin that could be applied to every gun and shield in the game, alongside a call-in card and three unique retiles for just £1.69. There would be 25 total personalisation packs added in call of duty: black ops 2. These were received well due to it being cosmetic only and gave an extra layer of customisation for a low price.

“Currently, there is no way to unlock the Damascus camo in Warzone 2.0 and MW2. However, players can get their hands on the elusive camo by purchasing the upcoming **Tracer Pack: Damascus Forge 2** from the in-game store.

The bundle contains the Damascus camo applied on the P890 and the Chimera AR. Although the camo is not available for every weapon in the game, it is still a great way to get your hands on the most demanding camo players had to unlock in MW (2019) and Warzone 1.” (Murshed, 2022),

To earn this skin in modern warfare 1, it took a lot of dedication. For it to be sold for £15 in the next instalment of modern warfare felt like a slap in the face to a lot of people that put in the hours to earn this skin. This has left a lot of people wary to spend so many hours for skins because they could just be added in the store later.

Microtransactions in call of duties multiplayer is evolving into a negative practise. I would say that this affects a small number of players by making them wary to invest so much time for skins that they could just buy later. This could result in players playing the game during the initial release, but then instead of putting in the hours to earn the in game items and generating more in game time, People are getting the impression that they can just wait until the item comes out in the store.

Although, this does not have any visible effects on overall sales of a game. As “Activision shared that Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 has seen $800 million in launch sales in three days since the game's full release.” (Tolbert, 2022)

Whereas “Activision has announced today that Call of Duty: Black Ops 2 has sold $1 billion worth of copies in 15 days since launch.” (Tassi, 2012) so modern warfare 2 is guaranteed to overtake 1b in revenue by its 15-day mark.

“Activision Blizzard revealed that they raked in $1.2 billion from microtransactions during Q2 2022, which they said was a solid increase from Q1.” (Mackay, 2022)

showing that activation can still generate high amounts of revenue from microtransactions alone. So, it must be working for call of duty.

This also makes it harder for a franchise like call of duty to die out. This is because they can take profits from microtransactions and put it into future call of duty games instead of relying only on base game sale numbers and DLC.

Microtransactions have allowed gaming companies like activation to treat their franchises like a tv series. I mean this by each game release acts as an episode in an overall series. Allowing companies to promise higher production in a future release, regardless of the previous sale numbers.

With multiplayer microtransactions being so successful in black ops 2 Activision started to take inspiration on how they could evolve their microtransaction practises. They looked at games such as CS-GO by Adding things like loot boxes in call of duty: advanced warfare. These were initially badly received due to the gambling implications that they provided. They were vastly considered as “a necessary evil that we will have to live with.” The main problems with loot boxes were the exceptionally low odds that you will get anything that you want. The greed levels from activation grew to the point that most things that you got from the supply drops were ‘pistol grips’. Pistol grips were not visible as they were under the character models hand, so they served little use outside of diluting the ‘loot pool’ out. This was done to force players to pay more if they intended on getting what they wanted. Leaving most of the player base to say “Love them or hate em, you can decide whether to spend the cash. Love them or hate em, you can decide whether to spend the cash”

(Needler, 2018)

There was a small blog post covering the issues that most of the community had about pistol grips in call of duty: World War 2(Caesar, 2017)

This was the point players had enough of loot boxes.

**Call of duty zombies.**

Call of duty: black ops 3 introduced zombies to its first form of microtransaction that affected the core gameplay. This was in the form of ‘gobble gums. Black ops 3 was released on the 6th of November 2015. Although liquid diviniums were there since Lauch ‘cod points’ were not. Cod points were/are used to purchase almost anything in call of duty including liquid diviniums. They were then able to be converted into gobble gums.

This was the quote that activation made as introducing ‘cod points’ to the call of duty franchise.

"we’re introducing Call of Duty Points—a new optional virtual currency for players on PS4, Xbox One, and PC. Starting [today], fans can purchase Call of Duty Points and use them to acquire Rare Supply Drops in Black Ops 3.

"For zombie's fans, Call of Duty Points can also be used to purchase Vials of Liquid Divinium otherwise earned by playing Shadows of Evil or The Giant Bonus Map, which can be used to create Gobble gums in Dr. Monty’s Factory and aid in the fight against the undead hordes."(skrebels, 2015)

Gobble gums were great for replay-ability.

These three quotes from Arron Kluz show case the amount of life gobble-gums (zombies microtransactions) breathed back into the call of duty zombies game mode.

This revitalised the zombies formular for the existing player base and made the game mode a lot more fun and accessible for new audiences. Proving that microtransactions can be good for both a gaming company and their player base.

“Gobble-gums were successful in *Black Ops 3* for a variety of reasons. A large part of their popularity with fans was that the system gave them more of a reason to continue investing in the mode” ”The system also encouraged players to at least check in on the mode every day, as there was a daily rotation that would allow players to transform multiple less desirable Gobble gums into rarer ones” “The random element of which Gobble-gum players were given at any point in a match also helped the system shake up typical Zombies matches so that players had to react and adapt to what powers they were given each round. This Gobble gum trait was also a big factor because it mixed up how players had to approach their matches.” (Kluz, 2021)

With the success of call of duty: black ops 3’s micro transactions in both multiplayer and zombies. It was guaranteed that gobble gums would make a return in one way or another.

Call of duty: Black ops 4 was the next instalment in Treyarch zombies. Fans were excited to have gobble gums back as the mass player base found ‘fortune cards’ in infinite warfare and ‘consumables’ in World War 2 underwhelming. Gobble gums did make a return but in the form of elixirs.

Elixers were optimized way too much to get the player to spend as much as possible on nebulium plasmas. This was done essentially by making it way extremely slow to earn nebulium plasmas through in game actions. This forced the player to play without elixirs and the fun they would have had with gobble gums or just spend money on them.

This video from a highly known call of duty zombies youtuber (although not professional) lists everything wrong with black ops 4’s elixirs. (Why Black Ops 4 Zombies Microtransactions are a COMPLETE Ripoff.., 2018)

Activation must have seen the sale numbers of black ops 4 under World War 2 sales numbers as a failure because this was the last call of duty zombie's game that had any consumable type microtransactions. “Call of Duty: WWII – 19.82 million” “Call of duty: black ops 4- 14.3 million” (Radic 2021)

They would replace it with the current weapon blueprints system that carry’s over from multiplayer into zombies. This has made modern warfare, cold war and vanguards multiplayer and zombies microtransactions mostly cosmetic with a few exceptions, for example “Not only does it do more damage, “recoil is 100% different,” he explained. “Whether you have attachments or not, it’s going to be different.” The standard MAC-10’s recoil pattern curves in an ‘S’ shape, while the Gallantry’s recoil simply goes up and to the right. The latter is much easier to control, making the SMG more accurate” (Mackay, 2021)

## This seemed to work as modern warfare beat black ops 3 in the updated sales numbers. “Call Of Duty: Black Ops III (2015) — 26 Million Copies” “Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019) — 30 Million Copies” (Sapienza, 2023)

“Blueprints offer you the opportunity to gain access to rare and special custom weapons in Call of Duty Vanguard. You will especially come across these items when you play the multiplayer mode in COD. You can either unlock these blueprints with the help of Battle Passes or by earning them from challenges.” (D’souza, 2021)

Blueprints are still the current main microtransaction in call of duty: modern warfare 2.

In conclusion microtransactions in call of duty are great for them to grow revenue on games that could have otherwise caused the death of the franchise. It took activation a couple of instalments to get things right. Earlier instalments had players paying for random items or high amounts of money to potentially get an item they wanted. Now microtransactions are mostly just cool weapons skins, outfits and XP tokens. The player can directly buy the items that they want for a set price. This doesn’t alienate players that don’t spend money on microtransactions by making the game pay to win as they are mostly cosmetic only. Microtransactions made zombies a lot more repayable but multiplayer unfair in most cases. If a game is unfairly balanced behind pay walls it can severally cut a games life span short like it did for the development of black ops 4 as halfway through production funding and resources got moved to the next call of duty instalment because it wasn’t as profitable as activation was expecting. The current form of microtransactions in call of duty is healthy for the game's life cycle and will most likely be reproduced for future call of duty games to come. This is because players know what they are going to get and are more willing to spend £10 plus for an item in the shop that they like versus a ‘slot machine’ type microtransaction system. The system currently in place adds replay-ability but does not affect core gameplay. Although not as cheap as they started off in black ops 2, they are also more complex.

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