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## Abstract

Since their inception, loot boxes, game items where players pay a real world fee to unlock a box of randomised in-game content, have become a core pillar of revenue for developers in the video game industry. During this time, the controversy surrounding loot boxes has grown in line with the revenue they have produced, leading to players, scholars, and world leaders alike questioning their place in the video game industry. Discourse has arisen due to the similarities between loot boxes in video games and traditional gambling, and the dangers these similarities pose to players. The controversy has been compounded by the video game industry's refusal to acknowledge these similarities, while continuing to profit from loot boxes. Using *FIFA Ultimate Team* as a case study, I seek to discover in what way gambling mechanics are implemented to be as effective as possible, and how the use of these mechanics in the wider video game industry harms players. I will answer the questions put forward in this research through an analysis of mechanics used in *FIFA Ultimate Team*, as well as analysis of research in the field of loot boxes and problem gambling.

As concern has risen, questions of loot box regulation have grown to prominence. Efforts have been made by the industry in order to self-regulate, however these have not mitigated the controversy surrounding loot boxes. World governments have also attempted regulation with mixed success, but ultimately failing to address the dangers presented to players. While scholars have proposed possible alterations to loot boxes and legislation, making them safer for players, there has been little in the way of possible alternatives to the loot box. Based on my research, I have proposed an alternative to the loot box that protects the health of players, while also providing the financial benefit necessary for developers. I propose that a subscription-based model where players pay a flat fee to access certain content could replace the loot box model that currently exists. Such a model would provide developers with the financial reward they desire, and would remove the need to include paid loot boxes that result in the harm of players.