

# Global Multimedia Value Chain Mapping Analysis of the Game League of Legends (2006-2025)

Swettie Ayu Calista

*Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur*  
swettiecalista@gmail.com

Ilmi Arrasikha

*Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur*  
ilmiarrasikha0502@gmail.com

Nabilah Andiati Putri

*Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur*  
nabilah04andiati@gmail.com

Adiasri Putri Purbantina

*Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur*  
adiasri.hi@upnjatim.ac.id

## Abstract

This paper conducts a qualitative analysis of the Multiplayer Online Battle Arena game League of Legends, examining its Global Value Chain as defined by Riot Games and its interactions with external actors and companies worldwide throughout its creation and development. Online games continuously evolve across multiple aspects, and in many cases, their development involves not only internal teams but also collaborations with freelancers, partner studios, and other external companies. In the case of League of Legends, this results in a unique configuration of global partnerships, in which Riot Games coordinates multiple actors across production, localization, marketing, and esports operations. This paper draws on the Global Multimedia Value Chain theory to understand how global collaboration shapes the game's production and its reception among players, providing a comprehensive picture of how Riot Games manages its internal operation alongside its external partnerships.

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini melakukan analisis kualitatif terhadap permainan Multiplayer Online Battle Arena League of Legends, dengan mengkaji Global Value Chain yang ditetapkan oleh Riot Games serta interaksinya dengan aktor dan perusahaan eksternal di seluruh dunia sepanjang proses penciptaan dan pengembangannya. Permainan online terus berkembang dalam berbagai aspek, dan dalam banyak kasus, pengembangannya tidak hanya melibatkan tim internal tetapi juga kolaborasi dengan pekerja lepas, studio mitra, dan perusahaan eksternal lainnya. Dalam kasus League of Legends, hal ini menghasilkan

**Article History:** Received 14 April 2026, Revised 21 April 2026,

Accepted 22 April 2026, Available online 01 May 2026

Copyright: © 2026. The authors.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International

konfigurasi kemitraan global yang unik, di mana Riot Games mengoordinasikan berbagai aktor dalam produksi, lokalisasi, pemasaran, dan operasional esports. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori Global Multimedia Value Chain untuk memahami bagaimana kolaborasi global membentuk proses produksi permainan serta penerimaannya di kalangan pemain, sekaligus memberikan gambaran komprehensif tentang bagaimana Riot Games mengelola operasional internalnya bersamaan dengan kemitraan eksternal.

**Keywords:** Global Value Chain; Global Multimedia Value Chain; League of Legends; Game Industry.

## Introduction

Games are no longer perceived solely as a form of entertainment; they also play a significant role in economic activities. Approximately 83,6 percent of global internet users have played games<sup>1</sup>. In addition to the high level of global consumer participation, the game industry has experienced substantial economic growth. The global game market reached approximately US\$298.98 billion in 2024 and is projected to grow to around US\$600 billion by 2030<sup>2</sup>. The rapid growth of the game industry in the globalization era shows its value as a part of the global creative and digital economy. Furthermore, contemporary game development is also conducted across national borders involving multiple actors from diverse cultural backgrounds. Accordingly, this paper identifies and analyzes the Global Multimedia Value Chain of League of Legends, a Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) that continuously develops through collaboration among multiple cross-border studios and individuals, each adding value to the game.

League of Legends was designed in 2008 by Riot Games, a company founded by Marc Merrill and Brandon Beck. Riot Games itself was established in 2006 with the objective of developing player-focused games and delivering innovative experiences within the online gaming industry. During its development process, League of Legends was inspired by Defense of the Ancients (DotA), a modification originating from Warcraft III, where Marc Merrill and Brandon Beck collaborated with a former DotA developer, Steve "Guinsoo" Feak.<sup>3</sup> In 2006, the demonstration of the then-called League of Legends: Clash of Fates was built within the Warcraft III engine in four months. The development continued as Riot Games created its own engine and features from 2007 to 2008 and finally released League of Legends in 2009, dropping subtitles. Upon release, League of Legends received generally favorable reviews from critics, with much praise for the gameplay and the number of selectable champions<sup>4</sup>.

Players are divided into two teams, each consisting of five players, with each player controlling a Champion, with the main objective of destroying the heart of the enemy's base, called the Nexus. Battles take place on the Summoner's Rift, a symmetrical battlefield divided into three lanes: the top lane, the mid lane, and the bottom lane. Each lane has a distinct strategic role,

spacing, and interaction pattern. These lanes are connected by a jungle area filled with neutral monsters and bushes, or so-called Brush around the map that conceal the champion when they are inside them. The lane differences lead to the use of specific champions in each lane; there are five types of champion roles: Baron Lane, Jungle, Mid Lane, Dragon Lane, and Support. The main purpose of each role is: Attack Damage Carry (ADC) or Dragon Lane is the main damage dealer in the team; Support or Tank is to protect the team ADC in the early game and crowd control; Mid or Mage is usually magic damage and holds the Mid Lane; Jungle is to kill the monsters and dragons for the team Gold or money (use to buy Item to develop); and Baron is to be self-sufficient, durable fighters in 1v1, and creates pressure on the map <sup>5</sup>. Although champions do not always play in a single role, many can fulfill different roles, depending on the player's choice of lane and playstyle. For example, Morgana can be played in several roles, including Support, Mid Lane, or Jungle, depending on the team composition and strategy.

After the favorable reviews and reception released in 2011, the active monthly users climbed from 15 million in 2011 to 131 million in 2025. A peak of 152 million active users was observed in 2022 and 2023, with a significant chunk of players from China, at over 70 million monthly <sup>6</sup>. The game has had continual updates to add value; 26 major updates, known as patches, have been released. These patches aim to add new content into the game and ensure the game remains balanced, so that no gameplay strategy can become dominant. Smaller patches, i.e., V25.24 and V25.23, signify bug fixes, while larger patches like V25 serve to overhaul the gameplay experience <sup>7</sup>. While League of Legends utilizes a free-to-play business model, its primary source of revenue is through the sale of in-game cosmetic goods that have no impact on gameplay. This ensures the game has a large player base, with only a fraction of the players purchasing the cosmetic items. Even with the single-digit percentage of players contributing to the revenue stream, a 2016 analysis estimated a monthly revenue of US\$150 million <sup>8</sup>. The developer Riot Games was bought out in 2011 by the Chinese conglomerate Tencent for an estimated US\$400 million <sup>9</sup>. Having published no other games prior to League of Legends and none before its acquisition, the entirety of the value was created through League of Legends.

In the field of Summoner's Rift, a symmetrical battlefield is divided into three lanes called the dragon lane, the baron lane, and the mid lane. Each lane has a pattern, a strategic role, spacing, and an interaction pattern. These lanes are connected by a jungle area filled with neutral monsters and so-called Brush, bushes around the map that conceal the champion when they are inside them. The lane differences lead to the use of specific champions in each lane. There are five types of champion roles: Baron Lane, Jungle, Mid Lane, Dragon Lane, and Support. Although champions do not always play in a single role, many can fulfill different roles, depending on the player's choice of lane and playstyle. For

example, one of the champions, Morgana, can be used in one of the four roles: Support, Mid Lane, or Jungle. This varies the use of each champion.

## Methodology

### The Global Creative Value Chain

When discussing the Global Value Chain (GVC), the concept is often understood through the lens of traditional manufacturing industries originally developed by Gerrefi <sup>10</sup> . Originally, GVC by Porter views a firm as a system of activities (logistics, operations, marketing, etc.) to create a product, enabling companies to find competitive advantages by optimizing the internal steps and linkages with suppliers/customers. <sup>11</sup> As an intangible digital product, League of Legends derives its value not from physical production but from creative design, continuous development, and intellectual property (IP) embedded within its gameplay, characters, and ecosystem.

De Voldere explains that within the mapping of the Global Creative Value Chain, there are two main functions: core functions and support functions. When the context is about games, De Voldere maps out the Global Multimedia Value Chain. In the Multimedia Value Chain framework proposed by De Voldere, value creation in the game industry takes place through various stages, including production, distribution, and promotion or marketing. The process of value addition involves multiple actors, such as illustrators, concept artists, story writers, programmers, animators, voice actors, as well as marketing and distribution actors. The core function encompasses the entire creative process, from the formulation of ideas to the creation of the finished product. The support function includes activities that facilitate these processes, such as archiving the game, training of the people who work on the game, and the management and regulations of the IP rights <sup>12</sup>.

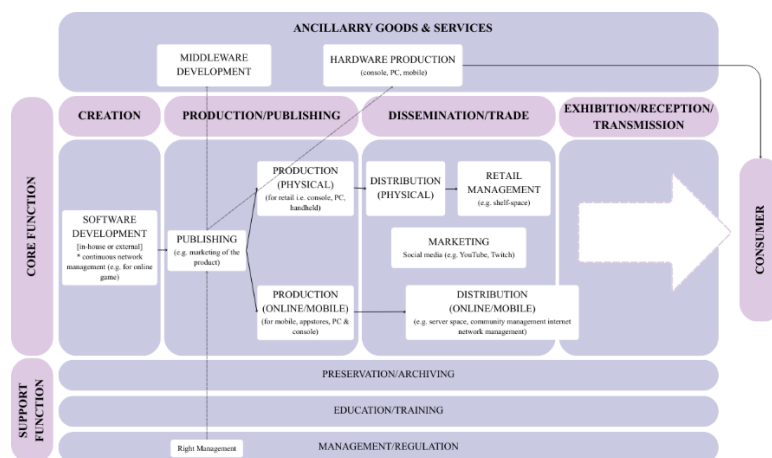


Figure 1. De Voldere's Global Multimedia Value Chain Mapping  
Source: Authors

According to De Voldere et al. (2017), the core function in the Multimedia Value Chain consists of four main stages: creation, production or publishing, distribution or trade, and exhibition. Reception, or transmission. The creation stage represents the initial phase of software development and in-game content creation. At this stage, game developers are involved in the entire creative process, ranging from the formulation of narrative concepts to the completion of the final product in the form of software. This process includes various aspects such as narrative writing, gameplay system design, animation, character design, music production, and programming. Software development may be conducted in-house by the publisher or through collaboration with external studios or agencies via outsourcing arrangements<sup>13</sup>.

The next stage is production or publishing, which includes activities such as content aggregation, compilation, licensing, pricing, and promotion carried out by the publisher. At this stage, publishers are responsible for product promotion, quality testing, and adapting the release of gameplay demos or preview clips on application stores to attract consumer interest and gather feedback. Following this, the distribution or trade stage marks the entry of the product into marketing and distribution processes. Games are distributed digitally through online platforms such as the official websites of the game developer or third-party platforms (e.g., Steam, Google Play, and the Apple App Store), and/or physically through game retailers and online marketplaces such as Amazon. The final stage, exhibition, reception, or transmission, focuses on the audience's experience of the product. This stage may take the form of game launches, exhibitions, community events, or live broadcasts that involve direct consumer participation. At this point, the final product is received by users and actively interacts with the market<sup>14</sup>.

The support function within the Global Multimedia Value Chain consists of three components: preservation or archiving, education or training, and management or regulation. These components serve as supporting elements that ensure the continuity of the core function within the Global Multimedia Value Chain. Preservation or archiving activities involve the storage and documentation of the game through the platforms on which it is distributed<sup>15</sup>. Platforms such as Riot Games function as digital archiving spaces that store games in non-physical or dematerialized forms, facilitating long-term access and preservation.

The education or training component aims to enhance the competencies and skills of human resources involved in game development. Both technical and creative skills are essential for producing high-quality games, making education and training crucial for sustaining the industry. Competition among game companies often depends on their ability to attract and retain skilled workers with expertise relevant to industry needs<sup>16</sup>. However, educational frameworks within the creative industries tend to develop more

slowly than industry practices. As a result, workers in the creative industry often acquire knowledge and develop skills through direct, hands-on experience. The management or regulation component includes copyright management and the implementation of regulations governing the distribution and ownership of digital content. In the game industry, copyright is generally divided into two main categories: copyrights held by game developers and those held by game publishers. Each plays a distinct role in the protection and management of the economic value of game products <sup>17</sup>.

## Result and Discussion

### 1. Core Function of League of Legends

The creation stage of League of Legends development includes activities conducted by Riot Games, as well as the involvement of external actors in certain aspects. We map down the activities and the actors as such in Table 1, starting with the game concept. Riot Games designs and develops League of Legends internally, where it is heavily inspired by Defense of the Ancients (DotA), a modification originating from Warcraft III. Brandon Beck and Marc Merrill partnered with Steve “Guinsoo” Feak, a former DotA developer, to work on League of Legends with Riot Games. Thus, shaping the concept and gameplay of League of Legends <sup>18</sup>.

Table 1. Creation Stage

Activity	In-House	External Company/Studio	Freelancer
Game Concept	Riot Games	-	-
Worldbuilding	Riot Games Worldbuilding Team	-	-
Programmer	Riot Games Programmer Team		
In-Game Design	Riot Games Designer Team	Envar [SE] - Virtuos [SG] - Sixmorevodka Studio [DE] - DragonFly Studio; Grafit Studio [RU] - Kudos Productions [TW] - Polar Engine [IDE] - West Studio [US] - Pandart Studio [US] - Sperasoft Studio [US] - Mooncolony Studio [UK] - MAR Studio [BR] - Puppetworks Animation Studio [HU]	-

Music Design	Riot Music Team	Two Feathers [US] - Hollywood Scoring [US] - Fascination Street Studios [SE]	Jean-Gabriel Raynaud [FR] - Cedric Baravaglio [SE] - Zac Zinger [US] - Ben Hicks [US]
Voice Casts	Riot Games Localization Teams [US, AE, CN, CZ, FR, DE, GR, HU, IT, JP, KR, PL, BR, RO, RU, ES, TR]	Formosa Interactive [US] - 81 Produce [JP] - Rush Style [JP] - Mafilm Audio Kft. [HU] Masterfilm Digital [HU] - Mikroszinkron [HU] - Power Media Productions [GR] - Magic Picture Studio [GR] -	Cristina Valenzuela; Xander Mobus; Fred Tatasciore [US] - Taketora; Sanae Kobayashi; Jin Urayama [JP] - Adrién Pekár, Adél Martin, Adél Martin [HU] - Dinos Soutis, Christodoulos Stilianou, Aggelos Liagkos [GR]

Source: Authors

In the in-game design process, Riot Games primarily relies on its internal design team, while also collaborating with a wide range of external studios to support asset production and visual development. Riot Games collaborated with external studios for splash art and champion visual designs. These studios include, not limited to, Envar Studio, Virtuos Studio, Sixmorevodka Studio, DragonFly Studio, Grafit Studio, Kudos Productions, Polar Engine, West Studio, Pandart Studio, Sperasoft Studio, Mooncolony Studio, MAR Studio, and Puppetworks Animation Studio, which are studios across Europe, Asia, and America<sup>19</sup>. In terms of collaboration mechanisms, Riot Games' partnership with external studios generally follows a co-development model rather than a fully outsourced production process. External studios work closely with Riot Games' internal teams throughout the visual development stage. For Envas Studios, they particularly contribute the pre-polish assets that are later refined and finalized in-house<sup>20</sup>. These collaborations often involve joint coordination with Riot Games' internal team, with external studios supporting specific visual components, including conceptual exploration, 2D game development, and gameplay oversight.

The Music design for League of Legends is primarily led by the internal Riot Games Music Team, which is responsible for defining the overall musical direction, maintaining thematic consistency, and integrating music with gameplay and narrative elements. Riot Games collaborates with specialized external music studios such as Two Feathers, Hollywood Scoring, and Fascination Street Studios in America and Sweden<sup>21</sup>. Furthermore, Riot Games also works with individual composers and musicians, including Jean-Gabriel Raunaud, Cendric Baravaglio, Zac Zinger, and Ben Hicks<sup>22</sup>. These individuals

contribute to the compositions, arrangements, and musical experimentation within the League of Legends universe.

Content development in League of Legends is not limited to internal activities conducted by Riot Games but also involves contributions from external parties in specific areas, such as champion voice acting. Based on observations of question-and-answer (Q&A) sessions with several voice actors shared on the TikTok platform, it can be observed that Riot Games generally initiates direct contact with voice actors. The recruitment process for voice acting roles tends to be proactive on the part of Riot Games, rather than relying on open job applications from voice actors. For example, Vanille Velasquez, the English voice actor for Zeri, stated in a TikTok video that Riot Games directly contacted her via email and invited her to audition for the role, rather than relying on an open casting call<sup>23</sup>. A similar approach was described by Neil Kaplan, the English voice actor for Aurelion Sol, who noted that the voice casting director had previously worked with him on another project and subsequently considered him a suitable fit for voicing a champion in League of Legends<sup>24</sup>.

In the production/publishing stage, De Voldere defines this stage as focusing on the aggregation, presentation, licensing, pricing, and marketing of the multimedia product by publishers. In the case of League of Legends, the production of the game is carried out entirely in-house by Riot Games, as discussed in the creation stage. The subsequent activity identified in this stage is publishing and distribution. Riot Games acts as the global publisher of League of Legends; however, in certain regions, distribution has been conducted in cooperation with external companies.

Table 2. Production Stage

Activity	Details	In-House	External Company/Studio
Production	League of Legends	Riot Games	-
Publishing & distributing	Global	Riot Games	-
	Europe		GOA (2009 - 2010)
	Southeast Asia		Garena (2010 - 2022)
	China		Tencent (2011 - Present)
	Vietnam		VNGGames (2023 - Present)
	Taiwan		Taiwan Mobile (2023 - Present)

Quality Assurance	Engineer	Jane Jeffers [US] – Sebren Green [US] – Alvin Koh [SG] – Kyungmin Hong [KR]	-
	Language	Ananda Putri Laras [ID] – Dariusz Ostrach [PL] – Naphat Trimaethawee [TH]	-
Localization	-	François-Xavier Ngo [US] – Piotr Godlewski [IE] – Dmitry S. [RU] – F. Theo Cuny [CA] – Manuela Stoicescu [DE] – Fakhri Prasetyo Putra [ID]	-
Intellectual Property Rights	-	Riot Games	Tencent

Source: Authors

In 2009, Riot Games partnered with GOA, a subsidiary of France Telecom Group, to manage the publishing and distribution of League of Legends in Europe <sup>25</sup>. During this partnership period, European players experienced communication and service-related challenges, which have been associated with delays in information flow between GOA and Riot Games. GOA used to be a publisher and distributor for League of Legends Europe, but they did not work properly to bridge Riot Games and the Players <sup>26</sup>. Thus, Riot Games decided to internalize the distribution of the League of Legends in Europe. In Southeast Asia, League of Legends was distributed by Garena from 2010 to 2022. This partnership was established due to Riot Games' limited local resources and infrastructure in the region at the time, and ended following the expansion of the company's regional capabilities <sup>27</sup>.

After the partnership with Garena ended, the distribution of League of Legends in Southeast Asia was transitioned to Riot Games, while VNGGames, a leading game publisher in Vietnam, was appointed to manage publishing and distribution specifically for the Vietnamese market <sup>28</sup>. A similar arrangement was implemented in Taiwan, where Riot Games partnered with Taiwan Mobile to manage the publishing and distribution of League of Legends for the local market. In China, League of Legends has been published and distributed by Tencent since its launch. The Tencent acquisition in 2011 resulted in Riot Games becoming a wholly owned subsidiary of Tencent <sup>29</sup>. Despite this acquisition, Riot Games continues to operate as an independent studio. Tencent's role primarily involves regional publishing, distribution, and strategic investment, including

financial support for game development, while the creative and production processes remain led by Riot Games.

In addition to publishing and distribution arrangements with external vendors, Riot Games also manages these stages through internal systems of quality assurance (QA) and localization quality assurance (LQA). QA is critical for live-service games such as League of Legends, as the product is frequently updated through patches, which introduce new game mechanics, characters, and bug fixes. As such, Riot Games' QA process includes technical testing, which manages backend performance of the game and user experience testing which tests the game balance, usability, accessibility, and player experience. The QA process is supported by Riot Games' internal engineering and language specialists belonging to localization teams, which include individual contributors working across regions and languages to ensure concurrent and frequent releases of updates in the global market, catering to all regions<sup>30</sup>.

Localization is an important factor in the global multimedia value chain of League of Legends, as the game has a large and diverse player base. The localization team not only serves to translate the content, but also ensures the meaning, tone, and cultural references remain consistent across regions. A key feature of Riot Games' LQA process is that it is deeply integrated into the wider production pipeline, which allows the localization producers to coordinate with the game development team and regional language teams to test the localization quality for patches. Internal tools at Riot Games support the localization workflow to ensure coordination and improve localization outcomes in the frequent patch releases<sup>31</sup>. As mentioned previously, Riot Games was acquired by Tencent in 2011. Riot Games, however, operates with a degree of autonomy even while it is embedded in a large multinational corporate structure. This ownership arrangement results in Tencent being the parent corporation that benefits from the commercial value of the IP generated by Riot Games.

The dissemination/trade stage of the global multimedia value chain in the context of League of Legends refers to the circulation of the game and its supporting content into the market through distribution channels, commercial channels, and the mechanisms that enable consumers to access the game. For League of Legends, this is primarily digital, as most products offered by the developer are intangible and virtual. Riot Games distributed League of Legends globally through its own launcher and infrastructure. The launcher acts as the central access point for all users to download, update, and play the game. Unlike traditional value chains, logistics plays a relatively insignificant role in the global value chain of League of Legends, as it only serves to allow users to purchase merchandise related to the game. Instead, League of Legends relies on global digital networks and server infrastructure to deliver the product to players.

Table 3. Distribution Stage

Activity		Detail	In-House	External Company/Studio
<b>Regional Publishing/Distribution (Historical)</b>		Europe distribution partner (2009-2010)	-	GOA (Europe, 2009-2010)
<b>Regional Publishing/Distribution (Historical)</b>		Southeast Asia distribution partner (2010-2022)	-	Garena (SEA, 2010-2022)
<b>Regional Publishing/Distribution (Current)</b>		China publishing/distribution	-	Tencent (China, 2011-Present)
<b>Regional Publishing/Distribution (Current)</b>		Vietnam publishing/distribution	-	VNGGames (Vietnam, 2023-Present)
<b>Regional Publishing/Distribution (Current)</b>		Taiwan publishing/distribution	-	Taiwan Mobile (Taiwan, 2023-Present)
<b>Monetization / In-Game Purchases</b>		Sale of virtual cosmetic goods through the in-game store	Riot Games	Payment processors/platform infrastructure (not listed publicly)
<b>Esports Broadcasting and Media Transmission</b>		Live tournament broadcasts and media distribution (Arcane movie, music releases)	Riot Games E-Sports	Streaming Platforms (YouTube, Twitch, Netflix)
<b>Marketing and Promotional Material</b>		Official trailers, patch previews, champion spotlights, social media campaigns	Riot Games Publishing and Marketing	External creative agencies
<b>Community Dissemination (Player-Driven)</b>	<b>Circulation of gameplay clips, guides, meta-analysis, and forums</b>	Riot Games Official		Fan communities + third-party sites

<b>Merchandising Trade</b>	Physical merchandise sold via the Riot store	Riot Games Merch	Logistics/Fulfillment Partners
----------------------------	--	------------------	--------------------------------

Source: Authors

The dissemination model used by Riot Games involves regional distribution partnerships that have historically played an important role in how League of Legends entered certain markets. These distributors provide servers that host game instances close to players to increase game performance. As outlined earlier, Riot Games partnered with GOA for European publishing and distribution during 2009-2010. This short-lived agreement was internalized due to service-related challenges and poor communication flow between the publisher and the players. Similarly, Garena played a major role in distributing League of Legends in Southeast Asia from 2010 to 2022, at which point Riot Games shifted towards self-publishing in the Asia Pacific region to unify the player experience and address player complaints with Garena's service. These shifts show how Riot Games has increasingly internalized dissemination functions to maintain control over user experience and maintain consistency across its diverse player base.

The dissemination of League of Legends does not stop at the game itself. As previously mentioned, Riot Games uses a free-to-play business model, meaning the core service is free with revenue generated from the sale of cosmetic digital goods. These transactions are a key component of the trade in the value chain, where value is not extracted from selling the base product but is created from continuous content consumption and player engagement. This is a part of a larger trend in the global digital economy where platforms are monetized through microtransactions and subscription-based models instead of one-time purchases.

Furthermore, dissemination in League of Legends cannot be discussed without the context of its role as a multimedia ecosystem rather than simply a game product. The game circulates online not only through the Riot Launcher but also through online platforms such as YouTube, Twitch, Netflix, and user forums, which host gameplay content, esports broadcasts, media content such as movies and songs based on the games, and community engagement content. Social media further serves to attract player attention and create demand for new patch releases.

League of Legends Esports, also known as Worlds, is broadcast and transmitted to further extend the dissemination of the game by transforming gameplay into a spectator-oriented media product. Riot Games Esports manages the production and coordination of live tournament broadcasts, while global streaming platforms such as YouTube, Twitch, and TikTok Live function as distribution channels that enable real-time access for international audiences. Finally, dissemination in League of Legends must also be understood through its use of a global server architecture and regional service provisioning. As

previously mentioned, external companies and studios have and continue to play a major role in supporting the global demand for League of Legends, improving both market access and infrastructure capacity. The details of these vendor relations and the activities they perform are tabulated below.

According to De Voldere (2017), the exhibition, reception, or transmission stage focuses on the audience's experience of the multimedia product. This stage takes the form of a game launch exhibition, community events, or live broadcasts that involve direct consumer participation. Rather than being limited to distribution, this phase is how the audience accesses, engages with, and responds to the product<sup>32</sup>. In the case of League of Legends, exhibition and transmission were initially shaped through Riot Games' early efforts in introducing the game to the global audience. In 2009, during the E3 gaming expo, Riot Games introduced League of Legends through an unconventional exhibition strategy that took place outside of the official convention space. Riot Games held a party at the Lucky Strike Bowling Alley, billed as "Booze, Bowling, and Brawl." Media were invited to play the beta version of League of Legends, where Riot Games set up 10 fully equipped computers and a bowling alley with the League of Legends theme<sup>33</sup>.

As the game became increasingly popular, Riot Games began to formalize competitive play into an esports ecosystem. What initially started as community-driven tournaments gradually evolved into structured competition supported directly by Riot Games. In 2011, Riot Games organized the first League of Legends World Championship<sup>34</sup>. Over time, Riot Games established regional professional leagues, such as the League of Legends Championship Series (LCS), League of Legends European Championship (LEC), League of Legends Championship Korea (LCK), and League of Legends Pro League (LPL)<sup>35</sup>. These international tournaments attract large global audiences, with major events reaching viewership figures of approximately 6.8 million viewers<sup>36</sup>. Beyond large-scale tournaments, League of Legends also operates through continuous digital engagement facilitated by streaming platforms and social media.

## **2. Support Function of League of Legends**

Within the Global Multimedia Value Chain, support functions play a role in sustaining the long-term production, distribution, and consumption of League of Legends. These functions do not directly generate in-game content, but they provide the institutional, organizational, and infrastructural foundations that enable core activities to operate effectively. In the case of League of Legends, key support functions include archiving, licensing, and internal education. Archiving in League of Legends is conducted through a combination of internal management by Riot Games and participatory contributions from the player community. Internally, Riot Games maintains archives of game assets, updates, patch notes, cinematic content, and esports-related materials to ensure

consistency and continuity in game development and live service operations. Externally, the community also does the archiving through fan-maintained databases, forums, and wikis (League of Legends Wiki) that document gameplay mechanics, champion histories, balance changes, and competitive records <sup>37</sup>. Allowing a collaborative archiving process contributes to knowledge preservation, facilitates player engagement, and supports the game as a digital cultural product.

Primarily, the League of Legends Intellectual Property (IP) rights are managed by Riot Games in partnership with its parent company, Tencent. Riot Games retains intellectual property rights over League of Legends, including its characters, narrative universe, visual assets, and branding. Through licensing agreements, these intellectual properties are legally extended for various commercial uses, such as merchandise, media adaptations, and esports broadcasting. At the same time, Tencent's involvement strengthens Riot Games' global market access, particularly in China, by supporting regulatory compliance, distribution rights, and commercial partnerships <sup>38</sup>. Riot Games grants users a limited, revocable license to use, display, and create derivative works based on its intellectual property for personal and non-commercial community purposes. Riot Games retains the authority to withdraw permission at any time, with or without cause, if the use of its IP is deemed inappropriate <sup>39</sup>. Riot Games owns the League of Legends IP rights and continues to manage its use, licensing, and regulation across related products and platforms.

Internal education serves as an organizational support function within Riot Games. This function focuses on developing employee (Rioters) competencies, aligning teams with company standards, and ensuring consistent production quality across global operations. Internal training programs are designed to equip Rioters with the skills and knowledge needed to perform effectively within Riot Games. "Agile Team Leadership Model" is one of the efforts where Riot Games reimagines traditional agile roles to better fit the company's emphasis on flexibility, team autonomy, and growth. Rather than relying on rigid predefined roles, Riot developed a set of leadership "hats", Team Captain, Product Lead, Delivery Lead, and Craft Lead, that can be worn dynamically <sup>40</sup>. This model supports the facilitation guides and structured discussion that helped teams map responsibilities to the roles that best fit them.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This paper maps the Global Multimedia Value Chain of League of Legends to understand the various activities involved in the creation, production/publishing, dissemination/trade, exhibition/reception/transmission, and preservation/archiving, as the core function, and training/education, management/regulation, as the support function. The findings show that Riot Games occupies a central coordinating role across the whole stage, while also relying on external actors from various companies, studios, and individuals

across multiple regions. Riot Games coordinates its regional publishers with Tencent, GOA, Garena, VNGGames, and Taiwan Mobile. Adding the global value, Riot Games executes official tournaments at multiple competitive levels, ranging from local and regional leagues to international championships. Maintaining the game through internal training supports the consistent production quality of League of Legends. As such, this paper serves as a case study applying De Voldere's Global Multimedia Value Chain framework to the game industry of League of Legends. By mapping its core and support functions, this study demonstrates how the framework can be used to examine the organization and coordination of activities within a large-scale, live-service game. It is hoped that this paper will contribute to further research using De Voldere's framework across different games of various genres, enabling comparative analysis and a deeper understanding of how the game industry manages its stages.

## References

- Art, Grafit. "Grafit Art," n.d. <https://www.grafitart.com/>.
- Ashraf, Amirul. "Riot Games To Self-Publish League Of Legends, Teamfight Tactics In Southeast Asia From 2023." *GamerMatters*, 2022. <https://gamer matters.com/riot-games-to-self-publish-league-of-legends-teamfight-tactics-in-southeast-asia-from-2023/>.
- Cao, Y. "Analysis on the Impact of Tencent's Acquisition of Riot Game." *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research*, 2022. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368496258\\_Analysis\\_on\\_the\\_impact\\_of\\_Tencent's\\_Acquisition\\_of\\_Riot\\_Game](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368496258_Analysis_on_the_impact_of_Tencent's_Acquisition_of_Riot_Game).
- Charts, Esports. "League of Legends Statistics," 2025. <https://escharts.com/games/lol>.
- Clement, J. "Share of Internet Users Worldwide Who Play Video Games on Any Device as of 3rd Quarter 2024, by Region." *Statista*, 2025. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/195768/global-gaming-reach-by-country/>.
- Games, Riot. "League of Legends and TFT Will Be Published in Southeast Asia," 2022. <https://www.riotgames.com/en/news/riot-games-self-publish-league-legends-teamfight-tactics-southeast-asia>.
- . "Legal Jibber Jabber." *Riot Games*, n.d. <https://www.riotgames.com/en/legal>.
- . "Riot's Agile Team Leadership Model," 2017. <https://www.riotgames.com/en/work-with-us/disciplines/dev-management/riots-agile-team-leadership-model-a-story-of-challenging-convention>.
- . "The League of Legends Esports Ecosystem," n.d. <https://competitiveops.riotgames.com/en-US/league-of-legends>.

- GBay99. "I Met the Man Responsible for League of Legends (And DotA)," 2022. <https://youtu.be/VvWPjgoDy4Y>.
- Gereffi, Gary, John Humphrey, and Timothy Sturgeon. "The Governance of Global Value Chains." *Review of International Political Economy* 12, no. 1 (2005): 78–104.
- Gloop, Weird. "League of Legends Wiki," n.d. <https://wiki.leagueoflegends.com/en-us/>.
- IGN. "Riot Games and Goa Sign Deal to Bring League Of Legends To Europe," 2009. <https://www.ign.com/articles/2009/02/12/riot-games-and-go-a-sign-deal-to-bring-league-of-legends-to-europe>.
- Kaplan, Neil. "A Little 'Behind the Scenes' Tale from League of Legends Voice Actor." *TikTok*, 2025. <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS5WvTv5H/>.
- Legends, League of. "Briar Champion Theme." *YouTube*, 2024. <https://youtu.be/5LqjJYU6EP8>.
- . "Faerie Court (Skin Theme)." *YouTube*, 2025. <https://youtu.be/QqaPWAocvPs>.
- . "Hwei Champion Theme." *YouTube*, 2023. <https://youtu.be/FsQGLz7Fvig>.
- . "Jax, the Grandmaster at Arms." *YouTube*, 2021. <https://youtu.be/ETaX9DZBSEk>.
- . "League of Legends Origins." *YouTube*, 2019. <https://youtu.be/74wlkXNmNdg>.
- . "Patch Notes," 2025. <https://www.leagueoflegends.com/en-gb/news/tags/patch-notes/>.
- . "Rell, The Iron Maiden | Champion Theme (Ft. Ecce Vandal)." *YouTube*, 2021. <https://youtu.be/ETaX9DZBSEk>.
- . "Take a Closer Look at Riot's Localization Process—and How It Sometimes Goes Awry," 2018. <https://nexus.leagueoflegends.com/en-us/2017/12/dev-kayn-and-the-showerhunter/>.
- Nikolai. "League of Legends At E3 2009 - 10 Years Later." *YouTube*, 2020. <https://youtu.be/3iKg3SEw6sw>.
- Parallel 38. "Agile Korea 2018." *Medium*, 2018. <https://medium.com/@parallel38/agile-korea-2018-b8faf5670ce8>.
- Pearson, D. "Tencent Acquires Riot Games for around \$400 Million," 2011. <https://www.gamesindustry.biz/tencent-acquires-riot-games-for-around-usd400-million>.
- Porter, M E. *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*, 1980.
- Research, Grand View. "Video Game Market (2025 - 2030)," 2025. <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/video-game-market>.
- Research, Nielsen Media. "2018 Year In Review Digital Games and Interactive Media," 2018. <https://share.google/3kbMY6E2omr9Osk4l>.

- Stewart, J. "LoL World Champions 2011-2025: Every Winner and Team." *Red Bull*, 2025. <https://www.redbull.com/in-en/league-of-legends-history-of-worlds>.
- Studio, Dragon Fly. "Dragon Fly Studio," n.d. <https://www.dragon-fly.biz/>.
- Studio, Envar. "Envar Studio," n.d. <https://www.envarstudio.com/>.
- . "Envar Studio Instagram Post," 2025. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DM0Mc2uOhIH/>.
- Studio, M A R. "MAR Studio." *ArtStation*, n.d. [https://www.artstation.com/mar\\_studio](https://www.artstation.com/mar_studio).
- Tang, S. "League of Legends Roles Explained & Who Does Them Best." *Esports Insider*, 2025. <https://esportsinsider.com/league-of-legends-roles-explained>.
- Turbosmurfs. "League of Legends: Player Count and Statistics 2025," 2025. <https://turbosmurfs.gg/article/league-of-legends-player-count-and-statistics>.
- Udemans, C. "From Funded to Funder: How Tencent Places Its VC Bets." *Technode*, 2020. <https://technode.com/2020/06/17/from-funded-to-funder-how-tencent-places-its-vc-bets/>.
- Velasquez, Vanille. "Hey Vanille, How Did You Get to Voice in League and Valorant?" *TikTok*, 2022. <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS5WvVGBF/>.
- Virtuos. "Virtuos," n.d. <https://www.virtuosgames.com/>.
- Vodka, Six More. "Six More Vodka," n.d. <https://www.sixmorevodka.com/home>.
- Voldere, De, Isabelle., Steven. Knotter, Philippe. Kern, Arthur. Le Gall, Evrim. Engin, Eveline. Durinck, Jean-François. Romainville, et al. *Mapping the Creative Value Chains : A Study on the Economy of Culture in the Digital Age : Final Report*, 2017.

## Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> J Clement, "Share of Internet Users Worldwide Who Play Video Games on Any Device as of 3rd Quarter 2024, by Region," *Statista*, 2025, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/195768/global-gaming-reach-by-country/>.

<sup>2</sup> Grand View Research, "Video Game Market (2025 - 2030)," 2025, <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/video-game-market>.

<sup>3</sup> GBay99, "I Met the Man Responsible for League of Legends (And DotA)," 2022, <https://youtu.be/VvWPjgoDy4Y>.

<sup>4</sup> Parallel 38, "Agile Korea 2018," *Medium*, 2018, <https://medium.com/@parallel38/agile-korea-2018-b8faf5670ce8>.

<sup>5</sup> S Tang, "League of Legends Roles Explained & Who Does Them Best," *Esports Insider*, 2025, <https://esportsinsider.com/league-of-legends-roles-explained>.

<sup>6</sup> Turbosmurfs, "League of Legends: Player Count and Statistics 2025," 2025, <https://turbosmurfs.gg/article/league-of-legends-player-count-and-statistics>.

- 
- <sup>7</sup> League of Legends, "Patch Notes," 2025, <https://www.leagueoflegends.com/en-gb/news/tags/patch-notes/>.
- <sup>8</sup> Nielsen Media Research, "2018 Year In Review Digital Games and Interactive Media," 2018, <https://share.google/3kbMY6E2omr9Osk4l>.
- <sup>9</sup> C Udeman, "From Funded to Funder: How Tencent Places Its VC Bets," *Technode*, 2020, <https://technode.com/2020/06/17/from-funded-to-funder-how-tencent-places-its-vc-bets/>.
- <sup>10</sup> Gary Gereffi, John Humphrey, and Timothy Sturgeon, "The Governance of Global Value Chains," *Review of International Political Economy* 12, no. 1 (2005): 78–104.
- <sup>11</sup> M E Porter, *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*, 1980.
- <sup>12</sup> Isabelle. Voldere, De et al., *Mapping the Creative Value Chains : A Study on the Economy of Culture in the Digital Age : Final Report*, 2017.
- <sup>13</sup> Voldere, De et al.
- <sup>14</sup> Voldere, De et al.
- <sup>15</sup> Voldere, De et al.
- <sup>16</sup> Voldere, De et al.
- <sup>17</sup> Voldere, De et al.
- <sup>18</sup> GBay99, "I Met the Man Responsible for League of Legends (And DotA)."
- <sup>19</sup> Dragon Fly Studio, "Dragon Fly Studio," n.d., <https://www.dragon-fly.biz/>; Envar Studio, "Envar Studio," n.d., <https://www.envarstudio.com/>; Grafit Art, "Grafit Art," n.d., <https://www.grafitart.com/>; M A R Studio, "MAR Studio," *ArtStation*, n.d., [https://www.artstation.com/mar\\_studio](https://www.artstation.com/mar_studio); Six More Vodka, "Six More Vodka," n.d., <https://www.sixmorevodka.com/home>; Virtuos, "Virtuos," n.d., <https://www.virtuosgames.com/>.
- <sup>20</sup> Envar Studio, "Envar Studio Instagram Post," 2025, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DM0Mc2uOhIH/>.
- <sup>21</sup> League of Legends, "Rell, The Iron Maiden | Champion Theme (Ft. Ecce Vandal)," *YouTube*, 2021, <https://youtu.be/ETaX9DZBSEk>; League of Legends, "Hwei Champion Theme," *YouTube*, 2023, <https://youtu.be/FsQGLz7Fvig>; League of Legends, "Briar Champion Theme," *YouTube*, 2024, <https://youtu.be/5LqjYU6EP8>.
- <sup>22</sup> League of Legends, "Jax, the Grandmaster at Arms," *YouTube*, 2021, <https://youtu.be/ETaX9DZBSEk>; League of Legends, "Faerie Court (Skin Theme)," *YouTube*, 2025, <https://youtu.be/QqaPWAocvPs>.
- <sup>23</sup> Vanille Velasquez, "Hey Vanille, How Did You Get to Voice in League and Valorant?," *TikTok*, 2022, <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS5WvVGBF/>.
- <sup>24</sup> Neil Kaplan, "A Little 'Behind the Scenes' Tale from League of Legends Voice Actor," *TikTok*, 2025, <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS5WvTv5H/>.
- <sup>25</sup> IGN, "Riot Games and Goa Sign Deal to Bring League Of Legends To Europe," 2009, <https://www.ign.com/articles/2009/02/12/riot-games-and-go-a-sign-deal-to-bring-league-of-legends-to-europe>.
- <sup>26</sup> League of Legends, "League of Legends Origins," *YouTube*, 2019, <https://youtu.be/74wlkXNmNdg>.
- <sup>27</sup> Riot Games, "League of Legends and TFT Will Be Published in Southeast Asia," 2022, <https://www.riotgames.com/en/news/riot-games-self-publish-league-legends-teamfight-tactics-southeast-asia>.

<sup>28</sup> Amirul Ashraf, "Riot Games To Self-Publish League Of Legends, Teamfight Tactics In Southeast Asia From 2023," *GamerMatters*, 2022, <https://gammatters.com/riot-games-to-self-publish-league-of-legends-teamfight-tactics-in-southeast-asia-from-2023/>.

<sup>29</sup> D Pearson, "Tencent Acquires Riot Games for around \$400 Million," 2011, <https://www.gamesindustry.biz/tencent-acquires-riot-games-for-around-usd400-million>.

<sup>30</sup> League of Legends, "Take a Closer Look at Riot's Localization Process—and How It Sometimes Goes Awry," 2018, <https://nexus.leagueoflegends.com/en-us/2017/12/dev-kayn-and-the-showerhunter/>.

<sup>31</sup> Legends.

<sup>32</sup> Voldere, De et al., *Mapping the Creative Value Chains : A Study on the Economy of Culture in the Digital Age : Final Report*.

<sup>33</sup> Nikolai, "League of Legends At E3 2009 - 10 Years Later," *YouTube*, 2020, <https://youtu.be/3iKg3SEw6sw>.

<sup>34</sup> J Stewart, "LoL World Champions 2011-2025: Every Winner and Team," *Red Bull*, 2025, <https://www.redbull.com/in-en/league-of-legends-history-of-worlds>.

<sup>35</sup> Riot Games, "The League of Legends Esports Ecosystem," n.d., <https://competitiveops.riotgames.com/en-US/league-of-legends>.

<sup>36</sup> Esports Charts, "League of Legends Statistics," 2025, <https://escharts.com/games/lol>.

<sup>37</sup> Weird Gloop, "League of Legends Wiki," n.d., <https://wiki.leagueoflegends.com/en-us/>.

<sup>38</sup> Y Cao, "Analysis on the Impact of Tencent's Acquisition of Riot Game," *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research*, 2022, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368496258\\_Analysis\\_on\\_the\\_Impact\\_of\\_Tencent's\\_Acquisition\\_of\\_Riot\\_Game](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368496258_Analysis_on_the_Impact_of_Tencent's_Acquisition_of_Riot_Game).

<sup>39</sup> Riot Games, "Legal Jibber Jabber," *Riot Games*, n.d., <https://www.riotgames.com/en/legal>.

<sup>40</sup> Riot Games, "Riot's Agile Team Leadership Model," 2017, <https://www.riotgames.com/en/work-with-us/disciplines/dev-management/riots-agile-team-leadership-model-a-story-of-challenging-convention>.