

Adsup case, TAGLINE
English version

How to turn 5M players into zombies? The promotion of Age of Z mobile strategy game with Adsup

It's all began when **Camel Games**, a world — famous mobile game developer and publisher requested **Adsup LLC** — Mobile Revenue Acquisition agency to introduce and promote the brand new mobile game Age of Z at the markets of Russia, CIS, and Europe.

Age of Z is the mobile MMO strategy game with the story set of a zombie apocalypse. The aim of the game is the construction of players' own city, the formation of Z — Force Resistance with the purpose of defending survivals and defeating the army of zombies.

It will take about 7 minutes to study the case.

During this time we will uncover some of our creative approaches as well as some results of its' testing: 2 hypotheses, 5 promotional approaches, and a couple of insights.

Traffic sources: MyTarget, Applovin, Google Ads, Yandex Direct, Telegram, VK (Target & Market Platform), Snapchat.

GEO: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, UK.

OS: Android, iOS.

Period of collaboration: Nov 28, 2018 — till now.

Goals and solutions: The main strategic goal was to successfully penetrate the Russian market.

As we should keep up with multiple KPIs during the promotion of Age of Z, it is useful to separate its' achievement into a couple of tactical tasks:

Task 1: Keep up with quantitative KPI — 6 000 daily installs.

Task 2: Keep up with qualitative KPIs: Retention Rate Day 2 > 18% (*Retention Rate — the indicator, shows the ratio of users, who returned to the app on the next day after the install, to the whole number of installs*).

Loyal User Rate Day 2 > 15% (*Loyal User Rate — the ratio of loyal users to the whole number of installs. Loyal user — user, who plays 3 and more daily sessions*).

Except for KPIs of the advertiser, we place our in — house indicators to keep up with.

It's not necessary to uncover it completely, thus it's better to focus on 2 major indicators to evaluate the quality of ad creative: CTR and CR.

CTR: click —through rate, is the ratio of users who click on a specific link to the number of total users who view a page in Store.

CR: conversion rate, is the ratio of users who view the page in Store to the number of those, who download the app.

We came up with the following optimal KPI values for social traffic from MyTarget and VKontakte:

CTR — about 1%

CR — from 18 to 20%

I. The first symptoms of the Z virus infection.

Identifying the target audience profile is the heart of the issue for any marketing campaign.

Using our expertise and experience, we created the operating profile of the target audience.

So, who is the perfect player of the Age of Z?

Male in the age of 18 — 45, who follows some thematic publics in social networks, frequently plays mobile games, loves the zombie spots and movies about post — apocalypse.

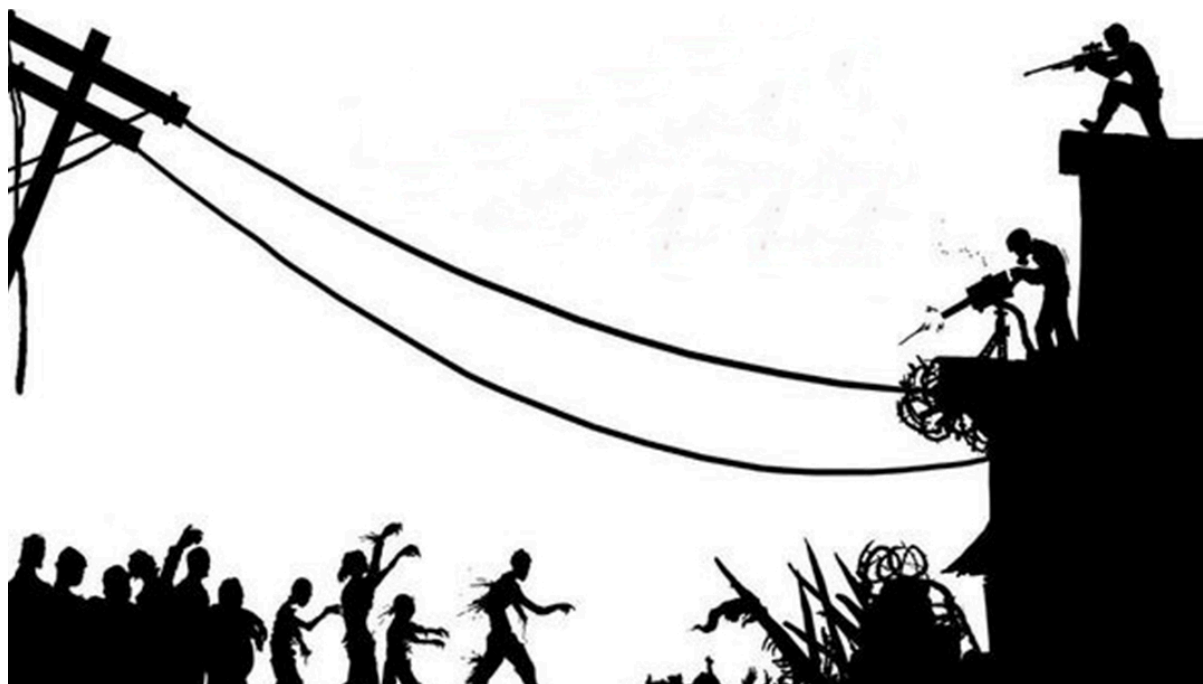
Based on the profile we came up with the first hypothesis.

Meanwhile, before announcing it and moving on, it's necessary to explain what we suggest as a **«hypothesis»**, and how it's different to **«approach»**. Hypothesis is a statement, made from observation and experience. Approach is how the hypothesis might be executed in order to be proved; for us — the combination of ad creatives and targeting settings.

Hypothesis №1.

Advertising campaign on the Target Audience — male the age of 18 – 45, who are interested in zombie thematic.

We produced a static native banner, which available beneath.



Pic. 1 Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis was confirmed: CTR = 1,2% CR = 12%
RR = 19% , Loyal = 15%

The quality of traffic satisfied the KPIs of advertiser for 2 months. Meanwhile, CTR exceeded the optimal value against the CR, which was lower than we expected.

The conclusion is — it was not very clear of what kind of game the Age of Z is from the banner we've made: the fans of action games, shooters, and strategies followed the link to the Store, but only the ones who enjoy the strategies actually downloaded it.

Thus, we decided to divide the potential audience into segments and narrow the targeting to fans of strategy games only.

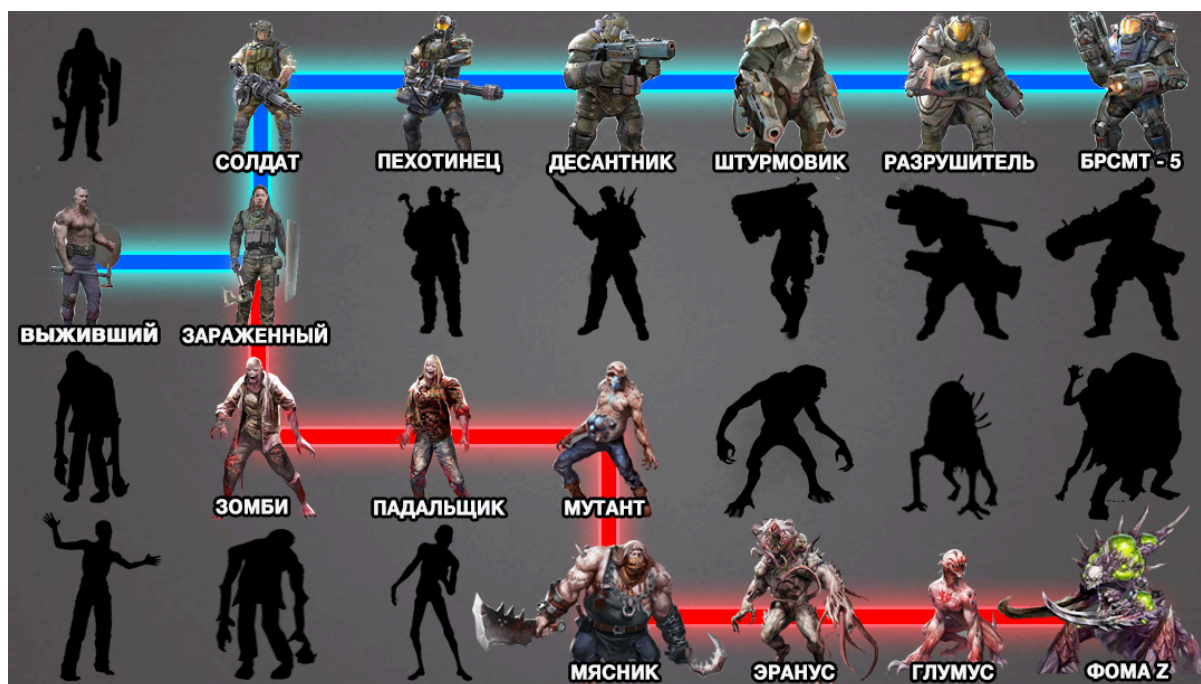
Hypothesis №2.

Advertising campaign on the narrowed Target Audience — fans of strategy games with a zombie story. Dividing the audience into segments in compliance with testing of different approaches. KPIs — RR 18% & Loyal 15%.

We divided the game process of Age of Z into «component part», which might be interesting for different segments of our target audience: the growth of hero, construction of the city, tower defense, element of economic strategy, epic battles with bosses.

As a result, we formed several approaches to test within this hypothesis.

1. «The branches of development» — the point is to show how the hero might be developed throughout the game.



Pic. 2 Hypothesis 2, approach 1

Results of testing:

Loyal = 14%, RR = 18%
CTR = 0,5%, CR = 7%

This approach was not very clear for most of users; despite we were able to keep up with advertisers' KPIs, the CTR and CR were very low, which means this approach is unscalable, so we decided to move on.

2. «Action» approach — the key spot for this approach is battle itself as well as epic battles with bosses.

Results of testing:

Loyal = 12%, RR = 16%
CTR = 0,7%, CR = 18%

With this approach, we nearly hit the target: a lot of traffic, but the lack of quality.

What case the scaling is not an option (the quality can not be increased via higher volumes), so we decided to move on.

INSIGHT #1.

The conversion of users with kids 1—3 years old was the best.

3. «City Builder» approach is obviously for ones, who like city—building simulators with the ability to build some houses, develop infrastructure, improve the defenses and so on.

Moreover, almost every strategy game contains some city—building elements and the Age of Z is not an exception.

Results of testing:

Loyal = 14%, RR = 18%
CTR = 0,7%, CR = 18%

And here we finally hit the target: our campaigns performed the qualitative traffic and we were able to scale it up till the needed daily volume.

4. «Tower Defense» approach — the whole point of tower defense is to stop the hostile forces of destroying your castle by building and improving the defense towers on their way.

We came up with this approach by making a lot of research of our target audience behavior. Curiously, for the moment the Age of Z didn't have such a mechanic, but the results were very good nevertheless.

Results of testing:

Loyal = 17%, RR = 21%
CTR = 0,9%, CR = 18,5%

This approach was beneficial for 4 months with a daily traffic volume of 6 000 installs.

Bloody creative — killer! As a result, Camel Games themselves decided to add the mechanics of tower defense into the Age of Z.

Therefore, we definitely recommend not to stuck on a single functional option, but keep thinking and testing, make fresh creatives. This is the key to success.

5. «Shooter» approach — ad creatives contains the scenes in the style of the first — person shooter.

Honestly, this approach is pretty risky. The Age of Z is a strategy game, and do not have any FPS mechanics. Meanwhile, it was necessary to check if this approach is suitable for our purposes.

Results of testing:

Loyal= 5%, RR =10%

CTR =1,2%, CR = 29,5%

Obviously this approach was the most successful in the matters of acquisition; CTR and CR exceeded the optimal value. The quality of traffic, however, was the problem; after launching the game the player faced, let's say, «the effect of deceived expectations», and most of them immediately deleted the game. Thus, the KPIs of advertiser were not satisfied, and we stopped the campaigns.

INSIGHT #2.

One of the best days to promote games on Android is Sunday; the number of impressions this day is nearly equal to the rest of the week, but the number of creatives, launched on Sunday is lower.

Mobile Marketing (the good one) is so tough to perform because it's really complicated to identify the target audience profile correctly and to predict their behavior.

The creative—killer is accessible but in 99% of cases go through the testing and continuous optimization.

II

Where zombies are coming from: MyTarget, Facebook, VK, AppLovin, Google — what infects better?

MyTarget (MT) — the advertising platform by Mail.ru Group became the first traffic source we used for the Age of Z promotion. And it's no surprise, we are working with MT for 6 years already, Adsup is among the few certified partners of MyTarget!; we evolve together, and perfectly familiar with all the tools of this platform.

As the primary goal for the Age of Z was penetration on the Russian market, MyTarget! is the perfect source to start with for sure: the platform combines the biggest social networks in Russia and CIS with a whole media outreach of 140M.

The strategy we used worked brilliantly — the volumes and quality were really good, but only for the moment: up to the middle of Q1 2019 the quality of traffic eroded. This fact is pretty sorry but natural nevertheless.

Our next step was to seek an alternative source of traffic with equal efficiency: we've analyzed and tested the pack of traffic sources including **VKTarget**, different in—apps, even messengers like Telegram. We've used the same approaches, but the results were obviously pretty different.

Despite the daily limitation for the advertising posts, VK (Vkontakte — Russia, and CIS leading social network) performed exceptionally good.. Due to the limitation we've choose our best—performing ad creatives and place it 3 times per day in relevant communities.

It's worth to note, the **ARPU** (Average Revenue Per User) for the traffic from VK communities was much higher compared to the traffic from MyTarget!

As the alternative traffic sources for the Russian market and primary for Western Europe, we've tested **Snapchat** and **Google Ads**. The ARPU was pretty good; the rest of KPIs, however, were not satisfying. As the whole ring, the traffic from these sources was less valuable for us.

With **Applovin** we were able to keep up with some of KPIs, such as Retention Rate, which was higher compared to Snapchat and Google; the Loyal User Rate and ARPU, however, were the problem. It is worth noting, that in—app traffic is characterized by low CR and high CTR, therefore, we realized that we should not rely on the same CR and CTR indicators that were defined for social traffic from MyTarget and VK. We constantly monitored users' behavior and their activity in the app to exclude possibility of fraud traffic.

Nevertheless, we've acquired 34 000 of users for the Age of Z from Applovin.

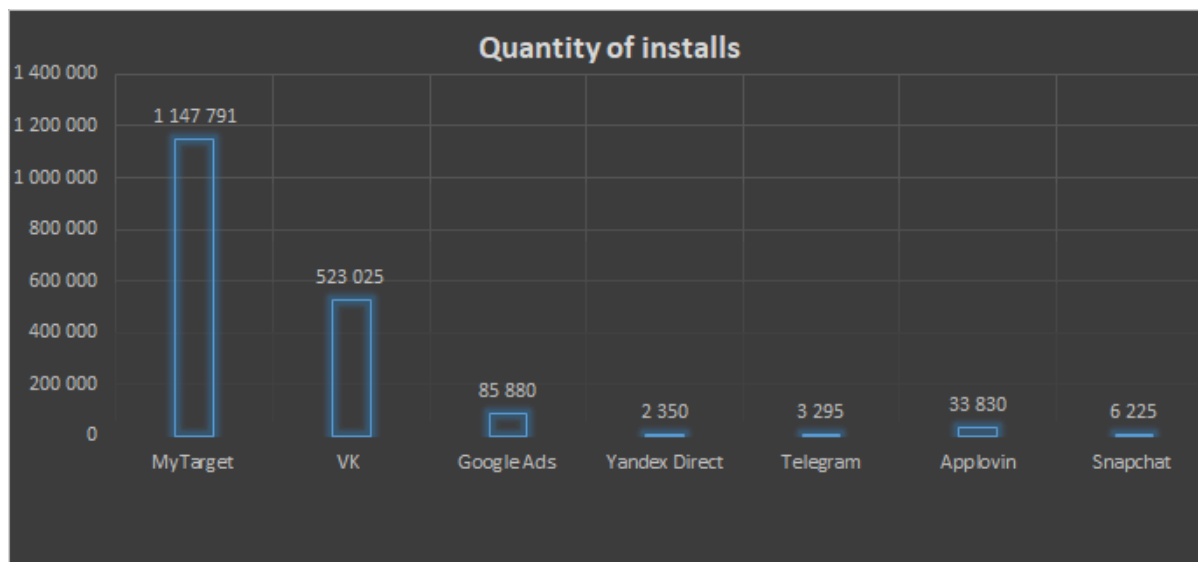
Among the whole pack of traffic sources we've tried in Russia and CIS, it is MyTarget! and VK (Target & Market—platform), which became truly «Golden» for us; the majority of qualitative traffic came from these traffic sources specifically.

Meanwhile, regardless of any specific source of traffic, we are focused on localization and optimization of ad creatives with a strong reflection on special aspects of the target audience profile on different geos. It always has a positive impact on the quality of traffic and really helps to satisfy the target KPIs.

Results.

During the whole period of working on Age of Z (Nov 2018 — Sept 2019) the number of downloads exceeded 5M(5 000 000). This amount includes the users, acquired by Adsup via paid channels, as well as organic traffic, acquired by the boost, which inevitably happens as the result of paid acquisition.

The number of installs, generated by Adsup using pain acquisition from a perspective of sources of traffic is:



Pic. 3 Bar graph of installs

Source	CTR	CR
MyTarget:	> 1%	18% — 20%
VK	> 1%	15% — 18%
Google Ads:	> 2%	14% — 18%
Applovin:	> 20%	1% — 1,5%
Snapchat:	> 1%	10% — 12%
Telegram:	> 20%	0,50%

Pic. 4 Bar graph of installs

The data effective on Sep. 23, 2019

The figures speak for themselves: more than 5 million installs were acquired, corresponding to the advertiser's KPI; high solvency of users and "infection" of almost all of Russia, the CIS countries and Europe - this is the result of our work for a period of 9 months.

We tested lots of hypotheses, traffic sources and various formats of advertising creatives, that were localized and adapted to the needs of the target audience. Running an advertising campaign is a complex process, that requires coordinated work of a team of experts, such as Adsup.