Trolls vs Vikings 2 analysis

Breakdown

In short, I think the analysis done is pertinent in some areas and lackluster in other areas. Below my thoughts on this:

- Tutorial : Somewhat agree with the initial tutorial loop as well as tutorializing or allowing interrogation other/later parts of the game, but disagree with a thoroughly hand-holding throughout the game (from experience, both the lack of tutorials or too many tutorials is bad for retention)
- Gacha: Agree with giving more details into what gacha packs give, but disagree with multiple gacha mechanisms (one mechanism that helps grow your rooster is enough, make it central to the core loop)
- City builder: Disagree with "no other competitor does city builder hence why do it", I find it pretty absurd to make assumptions on user behavior on a title that wants to brings something innovative to the genre
- Monetization: Somewhat agree on better monetizing different parts of the game (more info found in the enhanced paragraph)
- Nielsen: Disagree with most of that analysis; sample size is a bit small for the Nielsen test, giving a high error margin in the base population, to be statistically relevant for this genre for which the approximate population of players are around 2 mil (quick average of F2P tower defense games), best practices say that a sample size of minimum 1000 should be acquired. As the sample size increases, the confidence in the estimates also increases, yielding a greater precision of the confidence intervals (the margin of error).
- Retention: Agreed with the D1 retention analysis, Day 1 retention for a mid-core game should be around 35%, allowing place to drop down to around 25% until Day 7. In comparison, for a casual game Day 1 retention should be 50% , allowing place to drop down to 35-30% until Day 7
- CTR: Agreed with the CTR benchmark, CTR is low – 0.7% is low, around 1.5% or above is what is expected. Consider slightly changing the creatives and try again, running an A/B test, as well as changing the scheme of colors that are used in the ad (e.g. studies show that male population prefer colors such as green, blue, red whilst female population usually prefer more mallow colors such as pink, yellow, purple)
- CPI : Disagree with CPI analysis, CPI is extremely high (7.53$) – If we look on Chartboost statistics (https://www.chartboost.com/insights/?platform=iOS), you can see that for NL it average around 1.5$ for strategy games. Since this is based on their global data, I would say from experience that usually reality for this is around 3$. They mentioned 5$, that's usually true for countries such as UK and US. Consider capping the campaign price (if you didn't

already) assuming that you use Facebook or 3rd party partners as Chartboost/Flurry/AdMob/InMobi, you can cap your campaigns to a certain price per day or per CPI, this of course will affect the number of impressions that you will get, but the quality of the users resulted from this, will be better

- Conclusion: The recommendations seem to be based on Nonstop Knight data in general (as said before I worked on this title at Tag Games and had access to some of this data) and I find it unfruitful to compare 2 different genres with 2 different audiences

Issues, improvements and new features

Whilst playing TVV2, found a couple of issues (marked with ¤), spotted a few ways to improve things (marked with ×) and designed a few new features that can be added later down the road (marked with ⚡):

¤ Game gets stuck in infinite loading (text continues to scroll) if the Google Play popup isn't dismissed quickly

¤ Game sometimes (2/5) gets stuck with an infinitely loading icon on either the city or map

¤ Trials don't seem to reward anything (per level basis) and are not explained on how they work

¤ Lag in level select after finishing a level (particles might not be garbage collected, since it seems the deeper I was into an area, the more it will lag for a couple of seconds after I finished a level)

¤ Spells aren't tutorialized (can be just the first one; I messed a few couple of times the spell casting since I didn't know if it's drag and drop or tap and tap behavior)

¤ In the second level (tutorial) you can go back a step (although it seems to not be allowed) but previous step is locked (can't go back from there)

¤ It seems to be easily exploited to play an early level a couple of times (for the same amount of XP as the last level in that area)

¤ Bad contrast between skeleton head (skull level, last in an area) and number above it (white on white) on the level select map

¤ Trials level progress seems to end when the bar is just missing 5% of progress

¤ Sometimes (1/5) ceremony after finishing a level is skipped straight to chests (not showing the XP collected)

¤ Low tier potion can upgrade the unit, higher tier potion says maxed

- ¤ Damage per second text is cut from some unit's info screen

- ¤ (although this might be intended) 2 Brute units can hit the same square if you move one of them to the square on which the enemy unit sits and one behind that engaged beforehand

- ¤ Building under town hall goes to gems page, i feel like that's not intended since there's the gem mine as well (having the same behavior)

- ✕ No push notification system (game needs one to help with retention)

- ✕ Tweak the advisor, needs to be more fleshed out, make her more involved (she might recommend you stuff to do from time to time, like a "did you know…" sort of hints)

- ✕ Create conflict (game seems pretty static, from time to time create events saying that Vikings raided your village and you have to fight them to get back your stuff)

- ✕ Trials should award something on tiers (25%, 50%, 100% so people are engaged enough to continue to play) and maybe add time limited events into Trials

- ✕ Convert all mojo left at the end of a successfully completed level to gold coins (not at a 1:1 ratio), but allow it just once (after completing a level, no replay mojo conversion)

- ✕ It is not clear enough what each unit ability is (or what units have abilities in the first place), hence an enhanced bestiary, available in Baracks for example (for both your units and enemy units would be very helpful and/or standardize what each unit can do, one passive, one user activated ability, would suggest against having just passive like Punk or just user activated like Zap)

- ✕ Also not clear enough how much XP you get out of each level (link this with a better star explanation; initially I didn't knew I could tap the stars in the screen before entering a level, so I could see what's the actual requirement of stars also include why would I bother getting more than 1 star)

- ✕ Better explain or tutorialize Warchief level (was quite confussed at the start if XP is shared between units or my general/Warchief level)

- ✕ Allow the user to change its Warchief icon

- ✕ Gacha/chests don't seem clear enough (what's the drop rate if possible, what I can get from them)

- ✕ Ad rewards are too high (e.g. in post-win menu, you can get the rest of

chests - 3 – by watching an ad, hence it's safe to assume no one would pay a pretty steep amount of gems to do that instantly), suggesting to lower rewards (e.g. 1 chest per ad watch, one max ad per post-win menu)

× Leveling up (in general) is very low-key, need more grandiose ceremonies

× Buildings, spells and upgrades should not be instant (add timers, allow to spend gems to sped up timers, basically plug-in retention hooks)

× Shards need a bit of clarifying (if it's prestige for old units or unlocks for new units)

× Clarify map progression (seems like most things are clickable but are not really, make it clear what's locked and what's unlocked, use clouds, dim the screen areas etc.)

× No progression locked premium options (I see no good reason for doing this)

× Allow expanding village space (space seems very limited, make sure players know you can have more space to build stuff)

× Explain/tutorialize Army Strength (I am still unsure what that actually is, since it doesn't seem to be linked to the number of units to be spawned)

× Explain mushrooms (it's energy and I played half of the first area without even realizing there's an energy system, which is good but also need explaining to maximize UX)

× Attach a brand (a well-known one if possible), e.g. of big brands: Trolls brand from Dreamworks/NBC; Vikings brand (and flip the name and gameplay) from Blizzard (Lost Vikings) or just any fantasy brand that has included a Nordic mythology since it has peaked recently (God of War, Hellblade, The Banner Saga): Ubisoft (Heroes of Might and Magic), Microsoft (Age of Mythology);

× Based on the D1 estimations (which are low), taking another look at the FTUE

× Tweak daily events (the map positioning doesn't help to make it clear that a daily event will always be open, no matter if weekend or weekdays)

× Low key ceremonies in winning, last level in an area (skull level), suggest adding more pizazz to the scene, maybe the skull levels having a boss level (all rows would fire on the row that the boss is on)

× Explain what starred levels (has a star icon) are

× Show mushrooms counter on the level select (since it seems to cost mushrooms to play a level, but you don't see currency/mushrooms

actually being taken from your reserve)

- ✕ Enhance "not enough screen", currently if not enough currency, if you try to harvest via the popup, you will get a connection error (400 bad request)

- ✕ Tweak the unit progression a bit (keep the main 4 tutorial unlocks, but unlock 2 more earlier, so users feel like they actually have an option, e.g. around level 6 seems like a good way to unlock the first and around level 9 for the second unit unlock, as for the third level around level 15 and so forth)

- ✕ Better wording in Mobile Defense/weekly event (Victories remaining = Daily tries, or so I understood from its messaging, but it's not quite clear for a normal user)

- ✕ Mobile Defense/weekly event does not automatically move the level selector to the next level (e.g. I accidentally played the same level)

- ✕ Allow to pay for Mobile Defense/weekly event (play more than once a day if you pay an amount of gems), also consider having a few tiers (sort of like prestige for Mobile Defense/weekly event

- ✕ Game seems to hit an energy (mushroom) paywall just about when going into the multiplayer section (level 11), hence suggesting to make Multiplayer be unlocked earlier (it's a high retention and monetization mechanism in most of the games I worked on, so better unlock it as soon as possible so people know that's a valid option as early as possible)

- ✕ When getting full shards for a new unit, the sprite stays on screen (overlays on top of other messages) for the remainder of any "Loot" rewards
- ✕ You can save yourself from losing a level by paying gems, so as an alternative allow (once or twice per day maybe) to watch an ad in order to save yourself (maximize ad revenue)

- ✕ Do not give chest on second replays (can be exploited, early levels replayed for chests)

- ✕ Clarify UI/icons (e.g. wasn't sure what the golden leaf XP is until I actually checked the Warchief Level bar, suggesting to always show the currency bar and do an animated ceremony if on that specific screen that currency can be awarded or spent)

- ✕ Suggesting to give a bit of Warchief XP when leveling up units or spells (so users feel like everything helps progress a bit, instant gratification is great)

- ✕ Suggesting that even a loss would award you something (with a small amount of XP or 1 item, everybody's a winner mentality works great in

incentivizing users to not give up on the game)

✕ Since mojo seems to be an abstract currency (available just in TD levels), possibly give a way to gain mojo in-game (by doing actions in between heavy waves)

✕ Consider moving currency buildings next to town hall for increased importance and always center on town hall when moving to village (if no other events are occurring at the time in your village)

✕ Consider making the map less horizontal (vertical or more points on the screen at one time so players feel the progression happening more vividly)

✕ Google Play Games popup keeps showing up at each game launch (once it's cancelled, not signed in, it shouldn't show up anymore)

✕ Give a little bit more insight on "Coming in future updates" buildings (allow players to hype about a feature, give them something to hype about ☺)

⚡ Time Limited Events (high grossing elements in all of the games I have worked on)
   o Upside Down Day (you play as Vikings against trolls in an alternate universe, link it to one of the realms in Nordic Mythology)
   o Lost in Space (you play as Trolls against sci-fi upgraded Vikings counterpart, similar to Upside Down Day, link it to one of the realms in Nordic Mythology)

⚡ Cross-promo (great for naturally growing the userbase)
   o Rovio: Rock Troll Mode (shot trolls through a slingshot towards a Viking castle)
   o Warner Brothers: Trolls vs Middle Earth (Middle Earth based levels, may it be backgrounds or even reskinned Viking units)

⚡ Tongue-in-cheek Marketing
   o Memes: Trolls vs Trolls (e.g put multiple fake apps on the store)
   o Facebook ads: Troll of the Month (e.g. pick each month the best TVV2 player or use a creative way to engage people with the brand)

⚡ Multiplayer (you mentioned the Multiplayer aspect but I think it can work with a little bit of tweaking, for example, a few FP2 TD games that have working multiplayer:
   o Bloons TD Battles (1v1)
   o Orcs Must Die! Unchained (coop)

⚡ City Builder Multiplayer
   o Allow challenging other players
   o Allow other players visiting your city to help or raid

⚡ Clans (this fits with the theme and with the game type)
   o Clan vs Clan battles (a larger TD level where you and your clan fights against another clan)

- o Clan Chest Event (pending a suite of levels to be completed, where all the players get the same reward in the end, based on how well the clan progressed you and your clan gets a better tier of Chest once per week)

Conclusion

Since I feel like the brand option (best possible option) might be an uphill battle and quite time consuming, I suggest focusing what's already there (in-game).

In conclusion, the game's potential is clearly there, but in my opinion, the problem is not really scalability (the game is ripe and can be grown in healthy live-ops), but tweaking what's already there, hence I would push towards an overhaul (FTUE/tutorials/allow interrogation via holding the finger on the screen, base building, progression/unlocks, retention and monetization), whilst keeping the TD gameplay mostly intact (since I think that's what works the best).

The current state of the game, based on my analysis and personal opinion, it's success is an uncertainty.