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Not Actual Gameplay, but is it Real Life? Live-Action Footage in Digital Game Trailers and Advertising as Gamerspace

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Abstract

This article examines this boundary between the virtual and the real in digital game trailers and argues that the blurring of this boundary through live action footage creates a third space that encompasses the virtual world and the physical world, called "gamerspace." This study reports on focus groups with gamers who responded to four different game trailers. The participants' interpretation of the trailers demonstrates how the gamers saw digital gameplay enacted in different spaces besides just the virtual world of the game itself. The presence of live action scenes in digital game trailers complicate the boundaries of digital games and has implications for the ways games are marketed for mass audiences.

Keywords: Trailers, Digital games, Gamerspace, Live action footage, Play

Digital games have drawn many of their elements from film since their creation, from narrative, to imagery, to the look and feel of the games we play. As digital games have grown in sophistication both graphically and in storytelling, nearing the cinematic in production value, so too has this evolution been reflected in trailers advertising these games. Many trailers now use a combination of game footage with live-action reenactments of game sequences with human actors. These trailers often advertise the narratives, situations, and concepts of digital games using both scenes from the games themselves as well as scenes with human actors as the game characters, thereby blurring the real and the virtual.

The boundary between real and virtual worlds has long been of interest in game studies, and a perpetual criticism of gamers is that they cannot distinguish between the two. Many popular press accounts explore the tendency to assuage blame of certain acts of violence or societal trends upon digital games (Grossman, 1996; Anderson, 2003; Kutner & Olson, 2008). These criticisms have not held up to research scrutiny, however, and gamers can certainly distinguish between digital games and what lies outside of them. The boundaries between the two are more complicated, however. In this paper, I explore this boundary through the genre of the digital game trailer.

King and Krzywinska (2002) identify the multiple ways that games draw from the language of film, whether through letterboxing, cinematic landscapes, or long, well-developed cut scenes. In many ways, King and Krzywinska argue, digital games are more highly rated when they appear more film-like to viewers, yet they cannot be analyzed through the same frameworks or theories. People just want to play the film, but as Brookey (2010) argues, it is not a 1-1 translation; it's not possible just to play the film. Interactivity is the most important point of difference between film and games, as King & Krzywinska argue. Games are meant to be played, engaged in an active way that just doesn't happen when viewing a film. Digital game trailers walk this line between film and game and use cinematic elements to represent and advertise game play, through a medium developed for the advertisement of film.

Trailers have long been analyzed in film studies and are broadly seen as advertisements for coming attractions, as Kernan (2004) suggests. They are also considered suppositional

"window shopping" or part of King's (2002) suggestion of "saturation" advertising strategy amongst producers. Yet little research has been devoted to studying these practices in games. Mou & Peng (2009) examined notions of gender and racial stereotypes in digital game trailers, while Hixson (2006) found that trailers were useful in guiding consumer purchases. Paul (2012) noted that Nintendo used live action footage of actors playing hockey to demonstrate the authenticity of play within their sports games. Live action footage, and the seamless way in which it is integrated into game trailers, lets players imagine themselves within the game, a practice which blurs the boundary between the real and virtual and how gamers define the space of the digital game.

In this article, I examine this boundary through the perceptions of self-identified gamers. I first discuss this divide between the virtual and the real and argue that the blurring of this boundary through live action game trailers create a third space that encompasses the virtual world and the physical world, which I define as "gamerspace." I then report on the results of four different focus groups with gamers who viewed and responded to four different digital game trailers that used live action footage. The participants' interpretation of the trailers demonstrates how the gamers saw digital game play enacted in different spaces besides just in the virtual world of the game itself. The presence of live action scenes in digital game trailers complicates the boundaries of digital games, and I argue in this paper that gamerspace is a productive concept through which to consider this relationship.

Theoretical Framework

Play

This study is concerned with the ways that digital game trailers mix game play with cinema elements by adding live-action footage and examines gamers' perceptions of these trailers. These trailers provide an opportunity through which to interrogate the boundaries of digital games and what constitutes play. I will rely on Huizinga's (1955) definition of "play" as "a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is 'different' from

'ordinary life'" (p. 28). Huizinga noted that the term can be used to describe "everything we call 'play' in animals, children, and grown ups" from formal games to "exhibitions and performances of all kinds" (p. 28). Huizinga, then, saw play as an activity different for other aspects of daily life, like labor, yet he also defined it as central to culture (Kücklich, 2005, p. 235). Brian Sutton-Smith (1997) described play as a fundamental human activity, "a voluntary exercise," but one that occurred regardless of culture or era.

Many theorists rely on notions of play that emphasize the boundaries of a particular game; while these definitions can be productive ways to consider the limits of play, I argue that this perspective ignores the importance of the cultural spaces surrounding digital games, such as game trailers, and their role in expanding gamespace. Caillois (1962), for example, defined the activity of play through these boundaries: "All play presupposes the temporary acceptance, if not of an illusion (indeed this last word means nothing less than beginning a game: *in-lusio*), then at least of a closed, conventional, and, in certain respects, imaginary universe" (p. 19). The activity of play, however, does not end at the edge of the virtual world of the game itself, and these boundaries are not closed, but rather blur into other spaces.

Digital trailers, for example, need to represent game play in order to advertise the game to consumers. In order to understand and engage with that trailer, viewers have to imagine that game play and how they themselves might experience it. This process, I argue, expands play itself outside of the game. In an effective game trailer, viewers experience gameplay. In doing so, they create a fan space outside of the game itself where play occurs. I call this space "gamerspace."

Gamerspace

Many scholars, such as MacTavish (2002), have considered gamespace, or the world of the virtual game, only in the ways that it translates and replicates physical spaces in "real life." Jørgensen (2012) described what she called "gameworlds" as "representations designed with a particular gameplay in mind and characterized by game-system information that enables meaningful player interaction" (p. 3). The gameworld is "an interface to the formal game system" (p. 4), and it connects the player to the game system itself; it is the means through

which the player can interact with that system. Burrill (2008) described gamespace through the "mobilized virtual gaze": "the structure of digital space . . . works through a type of 'vision machine' where the player and the avatar become the producers of the space" (p. 47). Gamespace is constructed by the frame of the screen and the action within the game. Yet many of these definitions lack the nuance to fully explain these digital game boundaries. Huizinga also drew boundaries around game activities, noting that all play moves through a space that has been marked off as separate. This "magic circle," as Huizinga called it, has been taken up by digital games scholars to examine what Ensslin (2012) described as "the psychological sphere players are immersed in during gameplay" (p. 99). Schut (2013) described the ways that scholars conceive of games as places where "the normal rules don't apply" (p. 64), and "in-game actions are completely different from out-of-game actions" (p. 64). Morris (2002) pointed out that the types of language acceptable within the magic circle, such as taunting and trash talk, would not be acceptable outside of that circle. Ensslin emphasized Huizinga's notion that within the magic circle, the social rules of the everyday world are replaced with those of the game temporarily.

For a number of researchers, the notion of the magic circle is a contested one. Castranova (2005) and Consalvo (2007) have critiqued the concept of the magic circle because of its permeable nature. Castranova noted that it "can be considered a shield of sorts, protecting the fantasy world from the outside world" (p. 147), but this is a porous boundary that is often influenced by issues outside. For this reason, Castranova used the term "synthetic world" to describe the space of a digital game, which "cannot be sealed completely; people are crossing it all the time in both directions, carrying their behavioral assumptions and attitudes with them" (p. 147). Values important in games, then, Castranova argued, become important on both sides of the boundary, blurring the lines completely between virtual and physical spaces. Giddings (2014) connected gamespace to other forms of participatory media. He described this process as "the transduction of images and forms from the virtual gameworlds of video games across actual spaces of the home and playground, and their shaping of new games" (p. 14). What Giddings called "gameworlds" cannot be divided into digital game play and offline play, and "these gameworlds have a sense of their own universe but are not bounded by the edges of the virtual environment or TV screen" (p. 14).

I argue that Castranova and others don't take the concept far enough, and that the term "gamerspace" is a more productive concept through which to consider the boundaries and influence of digital games. It is this expansion of gamespace to participatory culture that this dissertation examines.

Gamerspace, as I define it, is a fan space that surrounds and encompasses digital games. It is the sandbox game of digital gaming culture; digital games provide tools and elements upon which gamers can build, to create their own content and make their own meanings. I contend that we cannot separate this activity from what occurs within the digital game itself. This fan activity is, in fact, still a type of play that is occurring within a discursive space outside of the confines of the digital game console.

Fan production of their favorite chosen property and/media has extended into forms previously not thought available to amateurs. Fans, professional and amateur alike, now have access to video editing tools that once lay only in the hands of industry professionals. Whether its machinima on YouTube, cosplay photos on Flickr, fan art on DeviantArt, digital convergence has allowed any number of ways for fans to express their love and passion for differing media properties. Gamerspace not only contains fan cultural practices and production, but studio-created media as well, including trailers, walkthroughs, and other discursive content surrounding digital games. Gamerspace is a space built by the cultural practices of gaming, including everything from participatory media using game content to game trailers. It is a physical and nonphysical network that binds gamers through play and materiality to create a culture space influenced by digital games. For this paper, I am concerned with just one aspect of gamerspace: game trailers.

Game Trailers and Gamerspace

Digital game trailers sit squarely within gamerspace, through both their content and their reception. Trailers that combine game footage with live action content, as noted in the introduction, blur the boundaries between the real and virtual. Some digital game trailers provide cinematic scenes that do not exist within the digital game itself but aim instead to represent the experience or feeling a player would have when playing the game. Other game

trailers stage cut scenes with human actors in order to dramatize particularly cinematic aspects of the game, or they have human actors represent the primary characters within the game. These trailers package digital games to a gaming audience using the language of film; they contain cinematic shots, including landscapes, wide pans, and close ups.

Their primary function, however, is to communicate the experience of gameplay for gamers. Live action footage adds an aspect of "immediacy" (Bolter & Grusin, 1999) to the trailer. By filming human actors in game situations, video game manufacturers attempt to remove the notion of computer fabrication and the console as intermediaries to the gaming experience and situate the viewer directly within the game world. Street scenes, battles, and interactions with other game characters come to life, and the viewer can experience life within the world of the game. As Bolter and Grusin (1999) argue with virtual reality, digital game trailers are also part of what they describe as the "double logic of remediation." When game trailers move from live action cinematic elements to show actual game play, the trailer becomes hypermediated: status and indicator bars appear on screen, game weapons and movements are shown from the first-person shooter interface, or they show gamers perform in-game actions. The game trailers are both immediate and hypermediated. Viewers, then, experience gameplay through the trailers, both as a player and as a figure within the game itself. The boundaries between the real and the virtual blur, and this distinction becomes less important. This blurring is gamerspace, and in order for a digital game trailer to be effective, I contend, they must evoke this space for the gaming audience. This study is concerned with how this live-action footage is received by the gaming public as a part of gamerspace, and the rest of the article reports on an investigation of gamers' perceptions of four different digital game trailers that utilize live action footage.

Methodology

To explore concepts of gamerspace and its boundaries in these game trailers, I conducted focus groups to answer these research questions:

RQ1: How do gamers distinguish between live-action and in-game visual imagery in the digital game trailers?

RQ2: Do gamers perceive these trailers to contain elements of play?

RQ3: Do they consider these trailers to be within gamerspace?

Focus Groups

A commonly used qualitative research method in digital games studies, focus groups allow an in-depth exploration of a topic and the collective development of meaning surrounding a particular topic within the participating group. Kitzinger (1994) chronicled the role of focus groups as a research method from their use in marketing research in the 1920s to their popularity within communication research, especially in diverse areas of media studies research, during the 1970s and 1980s. The distinguishing feature of focus groups, according to Kitzinger, is their interactive nature; the interaction between members of the focus group becomes an important part of the data (p. 104). Poels, de Kort and Ijsselsteijn (2007) described focus groups as being exploratory in nature; they serve as a source of new theories and hypotheses, and they allow the researcher to explore a topic in depth from a number of different perspectives (p. 84). These scholars noted that this method also can explore specific experiences in depth: "focus group methodology lends itself for *interpretation* of the experiences and thoughts reported by the target audience. As such, it enables researchers to get a clearer view on the *why* of behavior [sic]" (p. 84). The advantage of focus groups, then, is the ability to explore a concept and its meaning in context.

While focus group methods are used less frequently within game studies compared to some ethnographic and interpretive approaches, they are well suited to social science and especially media studies investigations of digital games, in order to explore specific concepts and experiences of digital gamers that are not centered within the study of one specific social group of gamers who play together. Poels, de Kort and Ijsselsteijn (2007), for example, used focus group methods in order to examine experiences and motivations of different digital game players. Similarly, Sherry *et al.* (2006) used focus groups to explore motivations and media effects of digital games. Focus groups were appropriate for this study because it asked similar questions, considering definitions of gamerspace and its place in participatory media. For the purposes of the research, focus groups allow for the exploration of the research questions listed above in order to investigate gamers' collective and individual perceptions of live action material in digital games.

Study Population

This study included 4 focus groups of 3-5 people for a total of 20 participants. The participants were recruited from the undergraduate student population at a private college in the Northeastern United States. The participants self-identified as gamers, and the study did not stipulate criteria on for inclusion in the study. Juul (2010) noted a scholarly divide between those who study games and those who study gamers, similar to the divide in film studies between those concerned with the films themselves and those concerned with audiences (p. 146), though this remains a false dichotomy. Morris (2002) drew a distinction between the terms "player" and "gamer," which is also key to this project. A "player," according to Morris, is an individual engaged in the activity of a game, but a "gamer" is more specific and "implies the adoption of a subjective positioning based on gaming practices" (p. 85). Morris continued, "functionally, it tends to mean that the person plays games regularly, has developed a respectable degree of proficiency at them and is party to a certain degree of shared knowledge held by those who identify as gamers" (p. 85). Morris' definition is key to my own conception of gamers, emphasizing in particular the regular game play and "shared knowledge," which gamers draw on when creating participatory culture that exists within gaming culture. For this reason, I included any individuals who considered themselves as members of gaming culture.

Trailers

Each focus group was shown 4 trailers, *Assassin's Creed 4: Black Flag, Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3, Need for Speed: Most Wanted,* and *Metroid: Other M*. In order to better understand these specific trailers and the amount of live action footage in each, I will describe them in detail.

The *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag* trailer begins submerged underwater as a fierce battle rages on the ship above. We see a number of slain sailors' bodies and a large amount of debris floating in the depths as the camera rises to the surface through the bowels of the vessel onto the main deck itself. As the camera sweeps across the upper decks, we see pirates

and sailors engaged in battle with the pirates gaining the upper hand, including one cornered frightened sailor begging for his life. The live-action portion of the trailer ends with a view of the assassin, notorious pirate Edward Kenway, atop the highest mast staring into the dark abyss lit through them fires of destruction as the word "Defy" appears over him on screen. The trailer then shifts into actual gameplay as Kenway dives off the mast into day-lit action below, a hallmark of the game series. Various scenes of murder and mayhem follow, all representative of Black Flag's gameplay and particular mechanics in their digital cinematic form.

Hollywood stars are on display as experienced gamer "The Vet" Sam Worthington guides "The N00b" Jonah Hill though the action-packed first-person shooter *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3*. Worthington plays the straight man to Hill's comedy foil in the trailer, with the duo playing through various in-game scenarios with only the slightest CGI scene between them. Worthington dispatches enemies with expert efficiency as they globe trot from theatre to theatre whilst Hill flounders with grenades, bazookas, and using his weapon correctly. Eventually, Hill is shown to have shed his n00b status, telling Worthington, "Take a break, big dog. I got this." The trailer ends with NBA star Dwight Howard running into the frame firing wildly about while viscerally screaming in joy and anticipation of the game. Hill snarks "Go get 'em," as he and Worthington stride off with the "There's a soldier in all of us" tagline. Though filmed predominately in-live action, the trailer contains some CGI effects that represent game spaces, including rockets and other weapons and explosions. Many of the scenes are also recognizable to those who have played preceding games in the *Call of Duty* series.

The *Need for Speed: Most Wanted* trailer begins with an Old West showdown in the modern urban climes the game takes place in. For every speed demon renegade that appears at the eerily abandoned downtown intersection in the trailer, an equally imposing police vehicle; squad cars to marked SUVs, roll in from the other side. Eventually the tenseness of the moment is humorously broken by a spinning yellow coupe with the driver's pixiliated middle finger poised provocatively taunting both parties involved with the chorus of "Apache" by the Sugarhill Gang, a rollicking dirty worthy as the soundtrack for a high speed chase through downtown, blaring over the top of the coupe's entrance. Up to this point, the entire scene has

been in live action, but without warning, the ensuing car chase turns into digital game play displaying the graphical prowess of the game. It was so complete, several participants could not identify when the switch to the digital took place, and one never thought it was anything but actual Corvettes and Thunderbirds spinning out on screen.

For *Metroid: Other M*, the camera follows protagonist Samus Aran as she walks through a number of scenes, including the burned out, dystopian husk of her homeworld, her time training as a soldier with the Galactic Federation, to her later battles against the Metroid, and ultimately the tragedy of Mother Brain killing the Metroid hatchling Samus adopted as her own. Unlike the other trailers used in the study, there is digital gameplay and imagery represented throughout the film as a co-presence to the live-action actors. Samus arrives at a point whereupon the actress is covered in a digital Power Suit of the game, and pure gameplay is shown with Samus fighting new enemies in new environments. At the very end of the trailer, the actress who plays Samus can be seen through the Power Suit's visor, but this could be a digital representation. Could it be that the trailer makers want to accentuate the gamerspace that lies within? That viewers, as gamers, can enter the Power Suit and save the galaxy just as the actress does? These game trailers provide diverse but compelling uses of live footage for promoting digital games, and each provides a rich example through which to consider gamerspace.

Study Procedures

After viewing the trailers, I asked each focus group questions in order to explore gamers' perceptions of these trailers as representations of actual game play along with their conceptions of gamerspace. The concept of gamerspace was explored primarily through the gamers' perspectives of play and what they determined to be the boundaries of game play. A content analysis was performed on the transcripts of the focus group discussions to identify main themes.

Results

While the small sample size of this study means that I cannot draw broad conclusions from the data beyond this population, the focus group results suggest findings of interest for further study. As a whole, while the focus group participants could tell the difference between live action footage and game play, this was in a part an acknowledgement of gamerspace. As gamers, these participants attributed these differences to their experiences with the games and the difference in specific video elements, especially lighting. Most participants saw the trailers not as representations of the game, but instead as portraying elements of the game other than game play, including narrative, tone, and setting. Digital game trailers promote games through the language of film, and therefore, many participants compared elements of these trailers to film, as in this example:

> They were made to look really cool and they actually kind of seemed like they ripped sort of from a movie…the Metroid trailer looks like it came from like a science fiction kind of movie…They looked very cinematic, and they did look very cool. Whether or not that reflects the actual game is a different question. ("Max,"[1] focus group participant)

For this participant, the *Metroid* trailer was compelling in a telling the game's premise and narrative in a cinematic way. Max did distinguish, however, between the trailer and the digital game itself, reserving judgment of the game because scenes from the game itself were not shown. The experience of playing the game is privileged over narrative by many of the focus group participants. Representing the experience of play was a crucial element of these trailers for most of them.

Others saw the trailers primarily as advertisements for a series or franchise that invited gamers in, such as this example emphasizing excitement and tone by connecting the trailers to similar ones done for *Halo*:

> I remember a while back Bungee did similar trailers for *Halo 3* and *Halo ODST* trade. I thought that one of the coolest despite the fact that they didn't really show much like game play. I still thought that they were like really cool and I was like you

[1] All names are pseudonyms.

> know, excited for the game. So I think it does, it can work really well and mostly these trailers actually made it seem pretty good. (Taylor, focus group participant)

Some participants enjoyed game trailers that evoked a feeling one might have when playing the game, and that was enough to make it successful. Rather than showing game play, live action footage could instead represent the emotions of the digital game effectively.

Others lamented the lack of more direct game play in the trailers. One specifically rejected the more promotional nature of many of these trailers and wanted representations of game situations rather than a more stylistic or abstract portrayal:

> It's kind of sad that we watched like four trailers and saw maybe eight seconds of game play combined. It's like it's supposed to be about the game and there's almost nothing about the game. It's just like about the franchise trying to get hyped. (Alex)

For this focus group participant and many others, a game could only be judged on the merits of its gameplay. The live action footage was considered inauthentic and outside of the scope of the game.

Others saw this "hype," so to speak, as a way to make the games appealing to a larger audience, by emphasizing the narrative and downplaying the actual game play:

> I kind of like how a lot of them like almost engaged the person, like saying anybody could play them. (Devin)

This comment echoes those given by Alex and Taylor above and speaks to the ultimate audience for each of these game trailers. Some saw the ability of the live action footage to evoke excitement in the game and appeal to larger audiences outside of traditional gamers to be a positive element, while others found this appeal to be insincere "hype" that didn't represent the game.

If there is a mix of live action and game footage in a trailer, it's important to balance this correctly. Many of the participants found these transitions jarring and also made the visual quality of the game appear worse next to the live action footage:

> I think it's better if they either go completely balanced between cinematic and game play or go with either one or the other. Because with the fully cinematic trailers they kind of create sort of a mystery of what the game is. And then they cut to the awkward

> game, like the awkward transition and it kind of threw me off a little bit. (Anish, focus group participant)

Most participants were accepting of a mix of live action and game play in the digital trailers, but it is important for the boundaries between the live action screen and the virtual world through these trailers to be blurred or gradual rather than abrupt. In this way, gamerspace liberates these boundaries. Unlike the magic circle, which defines this metaphysical space with a boundary between the real and virtual, gamerspace is all encompassing and can thereby better explain the liminal space between the game and live action footage, freeing gamers from the constraints of the magic circle. The rest of this piece will explore this concept of gamerspace in more depth, as an alternative that better explains this liminal space.

In considering gamerspace, the focus group participants saw play as represented in the trailers as distinct from play that takes place in the actual game. They therefore saw the trailers as connected to the game but not part of the game itself, existing, therefore, in gamerspace:

> For *Call of Duty*, I think it's more play as well because you can get better and interact with teammates and improve and for *Other M*, it's more of representation. Besides the game play … everything else is more representative of what the setting and story and tone is going to be. (Marshall, focus group participant)

It is interesting to note that while the *Call of Duty* trailer did not include any actual gameplay footage, this participant felt that this trailer emphasized play more than the *Metroid* trailer, which did include game footage. Marshall's comment here draws a distinction between the gameworld and play, and he described trailer content that represented the activity of the game as play; it did not matter whether it was game or live action content. *Call of Duty* accurately represented activities players engage in more than *Metroid*, which focused on the narrative of the central character.

While some participants were able to consider live action footage as part of game activity, and therefore part of gamerspace, others defined activity differently, more in terms of the player's interaction within the game world:

> When I have like a game, usually you're represented as something there in the game so that you can feel more immersed in it. When you're watching a trailer, you're not really in control of anything. (Jacob, focus group participant)

For gamers like Jacob, trailers were related to the games they represented, but they remained distinct from the games and gameplay themselves for the role in which they placed the gamer, as a viewer rather than a gamer. These trailers, then, exists in that liminal space that surrounds digital games.

Discussion

Authenticity

As a whole, the focus group participants evaluated the digital game trailers based on which they found to be most authentic to the game experience. As noted above, these participants defined authenticity differently. To some, an authentic representation of a digital game was based more in the emotion the trailer inspired, while for others, a successful trailer represented the actions of the game well, whether it was through live action footage or through scenes of actual gameplay.

The most highly rated game trailer for all focus groups was the *Need for Speed* trailer. As noted above, this trailer had the most seamless transitions between the live action and game footage, and it also represented the actions of the game in detail. I argue that this trailer most effectively made use of gamerspace. It represented the actions of the game in a way that was immersive by making good use of the live action footage. In watching the trailer, gamers were placed within the experiences and activity of the game. By successfully integrating both types of visuals, it represented both play and evoked the emotional experience of the game. This result suggests that successful trailers place players within the space of the game.

Play

The participants of these focus groups ultimately put trailers on a continuum of play and interactivity, somewhere between actual game play on one end, and film on the other. In

comparing these trailers with Let's Play videos on YouTube[2], for example, the participants reported that watching the Let's Play videos was closer to watching game play than watching game trailers. This case was different for cut scenes. While cut scenes are located within the game, they progress the game narrative and do not involve any player action. Many of the participants noted, though, that while many game trailers look like cut scenes, they often involve some player activity and actual game play. Cut scenes and trailers, two cinematic elements of digital games, have different relationships to play. While many participants saw the type of play present in these game trailers as distinct from the play of the game, they still felt it was a type of play. Digital gamers can distinguish between live action and digital game play, and as noted above, they see these trailers as connected to but distinct from digital game spaces. This is a good illustration of the space I have called gamerspace throughout this paper.

Gamerspace

Digital game trailers are important artifacts within gamerspace. They exist in the discursive space of gamer culture, combining elements of the digital games themselves with live action representations of gameplay. As noted above, the most successful trailers were perceived to be authentic representations by focus group participants, and authenticity did not necessarily refer to actual game footage. I argue that the concept of gamerspace accurately explains this situation. Many participants considered live action footage as representing play and the experience of the game, therefore existing in gamerspace. Even live action footage can be considered to be within the space of the game and representative of gameplay. While the trailer itself may not be interactive, the perceptions of many of the focus group participants demonstrate the ways that the space of the game can be present in other media. Gamerspace, therefore, plays a role in the success of digital game trailers in representing the experience of play.

Conclusion

[2] Let's Play videos are a series of videos on YouTube that provide walkthroughs of different digital games. One player records the experience of playing the game and provides commentary throughout.

Considering digital game trailers through gamerspace allows us to reexamine the influence of digital game trailers and their role in representing play that distinguishes them from film trailers. This research suggests that digital game trailers are important artifacts within gamerspace. For digital game developers and advertisers, this research suggestions new ways to consider the success of digital game trailers. Successful trailers are immersive and authentic, and ones that represent both the gameplay and the gameworld, regardless of whether the game uses actual gameplay or not, are seen as most compelling and successful. The concept of gamerspace, I suggest, is productive in considering how a trailer might be effective. If the gamer considers the trailer to be within the world of the game and representing a type of effective play, that trailer will be compelling for the gamer. Blurring the lines between the real and the virtual, this research suggests, can be especially effective in invoking this feeling.

For gaming researchers, the concept of gamerspace can be effective in considering not only how gamers consider and interpret digital games, but also how they engage with other content connected to digital games, like participatory content and game trailers. This article suggests that the concept of gamerspace works to explain the immersive and hypermediated content surrounding digital games and the ways that gaming culture influences culture at large. Considering digital game trailers through gamerspace allows us to reexamine the influence of trailers and their role in representing play that distinguishes them from film trailers. Situated at the nexus of games, cinema, and gaming culture, game trailers deserve further study.

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