

Research on the Commercial Value and Artistic Value of Video Games

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Abstract: Video games, as a relatively new but increasingly mature art form, gradually have a different value than other art forms as they develop. Video games can only be treated properly if the players are fully aware of their multifaceted nature. So the topic of this paper is the value of video games. This paper will try to solve the problem through multi-angle analysis and the experiential summary method. It can be concluded that the game's value is primarily comprised of its commodity and artistic value. As a commodity, games do make a lot of money for game companies. As art, games are indeed artistic and even have a higher dimension than other art forms.

Keywords: game, value, the ninth art, commodity, art

1. Introduction

With the advancement of computer technology, games, particularly video games, have grown in popularity in recent years. Video game players love it a lot, while some people who don't play games think it is a kind of digital drug because of the people addicted to the games [1]. This condition occurs a lot, especially in China. But there are also people who regard video games as the ninth art. Many video game players prefer to believe that the video games do have a unique value although the number of studies about the value of the games is very small. As a result, this paper will examine the value of games in order to argue that they are valuable things rather than a type of digital drug, and it will assist people in developing a comprehensive attitude towards games. Besides, there are many kinds of games, but this paper only discusses the value of video games. For sake of brevity, the word "game" in this paper only refers to the video games.

2. The Value of the Games as Commodities

2.1. The Monetization Model of Online Games

Pay for time. Players pay to charge their game accounts. How much money players spend depends on how long their playing time is. Players pay to buy their playing time. Most games that earn money this way have two ways for players to pay: pay for seconds or pay for a month.

Many well-known MMO games, such as FF14 and WOW, use this model and support it both ways.

Pay for extra items. Players pay to get extra items in the games. The items may let players be stronger or look better in the game. Most online games run on this model, such as Apex Legends, LOL, and Genshin Impact.

2.2. The Monetization Model of a Single Game

If we regard the monetization model of online games as paying to get a service, the monetization model of single games is more like paying to get merchandise. Unlike online games, single-player games will receive few updates after they are released. For game creators, this also means that they don't need to spend any more money to run the game. What they need to do is do their best during the game.

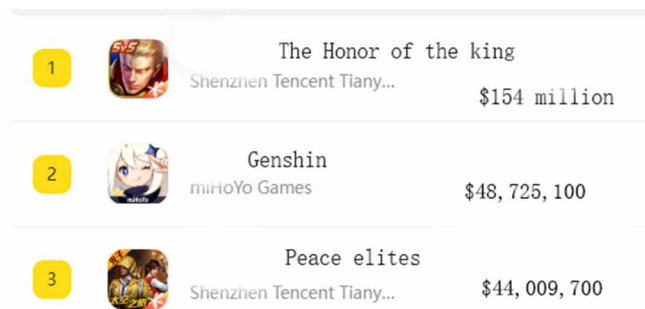


Figure 1: Income of games in China in Nov.2022[2].

As is shown in Figure 1, we have found that games can generate much more income than they cost. There is no doubt that games are excellent products to bring profit for a company. We can think of it as the value of games as commodities.

3. The Value of the Games as Arts

3.1. The Influence of the Reality to the Games

Flow. In psychology, it refers to a state of mind in which a person is engaged in an action, such as the mental state of an artist during her creation. People in this state do not want to be disturbed. This is also known as resistance to interruption. It's the feeling of putting one's mental energy entirely into an action. Flow is accompanied by a heightened sense of excitement and fulfillment. A psychologist called Mihaly Csikszentmihaly defined the flow as the feeling of giving an individual's attention exclusively to an activity[3].

Being in the flow is extremely difficult because you must challenge something that is neither too difficult nor too easy. A difficult challenge will cause you too much frustration, whereas an easy challenge will not provide you with enough sense of accomplishment. It's a pity that the things in our real world are not created by someone for us to be in flow. In fact, the goal of most game designers is to get the players to flow.

Making the players "in the flow" means that they will fully immerse themselves in the virtual world. And this is only one of the examples to say that psychology is becoming more popular in game design.

Learned helplessness. There is an interesting level in the game Hollow Knight that is named the Deepnest. By the time the player gets this far in the game, the player probably already knows a lot about the game. Players understand how to fight, how to heal themselves, and where to avoid danger. But the deep nest in the game is a place that can destroy the experience accumulated by the player before. After clearing all monsters on the map, the player can recover health, since no more monsters will jump out and attack while the player heals himself. But in Deepnest, this rule no longer applies.

Bugs in this game may spawn around the player and attack the player at any time. On top of that, the ground will cave in and there will be traps underneath. Players may encounter cute larvae disguised as monsters in deep nests.

There is a concept in psychology called "learned helplessness".

"Learned helplessness" was proposed by American psychologist Seligman in 1967 in animal studies. He did a classic experiment on dogs. At first, he put the dog in a cage and then shocked it with electricity. The buzzer will sound when there is an electric shock. Repeat this several times, and the dog will believe that as long as the buzzer sounds, it will receive an electric shock. As a result, when the buzzer sounds, the dog will fall to the ground, moaning and shaking before being shocked. This is learned helplessness. Many subsequent experiments showed that this learned helplessness can also occur in humans[4].

Game designers apply this psychological phenomenon to game design. This shows that the design of games will develop with the development of other disciplines such as psychology, which is the influence of real society on game design.

3.2. The Influence of Games to Reality

With the development of technology and many other subjects, we have found that games can help us a lot in many studies, research, and education. Just like the result of the experiment done by Kaufman, it has been proven that games can change humans' ways of understanding [5]. This could be evidence to suggest that the games do have the ability to have a positive influence on our reality. Our real lives and the games can influence each other. What's more, this is also a feature that nearly all the arts have.

3.3. The Value of the Arts

What is the value of the arts? This has been a problem for many years and many artists have given their answers long before.

Alain and John defined the values as love, nature, wealth, and politics in their book *Art as Therapy* [6].

Stolovich believes that the value of the arts is not unique to its own closed world. Art can have many meanings: utilitarian (especially applied art, crafts art design, and architecture) and scientific, political, and ethical) .

There are those who prefer to define the value of art by opposing instrumental rationality and its weapons of mass utility, as measured by performance, measurement, technique, and efficiency. In short, the value of art lies in the confrontation between human creativity and machine.

Art is a language for artists. Artists feel, think, and express by the arts. The arts allow artists to feel, think, and express themselves. The audience appreciates the arts and tries to understand what the artists want to express. The arts can lead people to a higher spiritual realm and then serve an invaluable social function [7].

Here is the opinion of this paper: the value of the arts is the expression and transmission of emotions and thinking by the artists.

3.4. Dimensionality of the Arts and the Uniqueness of the Ninth Art

An essay by Ricciotto Canudo, an Italian poet and film pioneer, published in 1911, titled "*The Birth of the Seventh Art.*" According to Canudo, among the six arts of architecture, music, painting, sculpture, poetry and dance, architecture and music are the main ones. Painting and sculpture are complementary to architecture. Poetry and dance melt into music. The film combines all these arts to form the plastic arts in motion. As the seventh art, film is a comprehensive art that includes quiet art

and moving art, time art and space art, plastic art and rhythm art. The seventh artistic statement is the most accurate affirmation of film.

It was the first time that people attempted to summarise the various types of arts. The definition from Canudo was also accepted by people until today. On this basis, in addition to the seven arts and literature, we also refer to the game as the "ninth art." Just as Canudo said, the film combines all the other arts besides the game. Therefore, this paper prefers to regard the film as a kind of high-dimensional art. It arose as a result of advanced technology and human achievements in other arts. The birth of the film was no doubt a milestone in the history of the human arts, and so is the game. Other types of arts were combined in the film. What the game did was changing the model of appreciating art.

When we appreciate traditional art, we appreciate the content created by the artists. Then we think and give comments. But our comments and thoughts will not have any influence on the content of the art. This is the process of appreciating a traditional art form. However, this path is not suitable for gaming. When we play the game, we have some thoughts, and then we can make different choices to make the result of the game the result we want. When we are playing games, we are players, we are appreciators, and we are also the creators of this game. Our thinking gets reviews. Our choices become senseful. Here is the uniqueness of the ninth art. Players will get the result because of their choices. Players easily get what the designers want to say. The game has a very low barrier to experience and understand. For artists, the game is an easier form of art through which to express their thinking.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the value of games and to suggest that games are valuable things. It can be concluded that the game's value is primarily comprised of its commodity and artistic value. As a commodity, games do make a lot of money for game companies. As art, games are indeed artistic, and even have a higher dimension than other art forms. However, it is a great pity that this article only gives a few examples to illustrate the relationship between games and the real world. It is hoped that future studies can expand the study sample.

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