Playing Video Games: It Is About Time And Money

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INTRODUCTION
Over the past few decades, the popularity of video games has continued to grow, becoming one of the most widespread leisure activities (Coavoux 2019). Not only has the number of gamers increased, but so has the amount of time spent playing. Beyond the entertainment aspect, there are also economic goals in retaining gamers and prolonging their gaming time (Samuelsson et al. 2023). Since the early 2000s, the Chinese government has implemented regulations to limit young people's time spent on video games (Zendle et al. 2023).

What are the game mechanisms that attract players and lead them to spend time playing? How do these mechanisms relate to the characteristics of the game itself, or are these mechanisms designed to meet economic objectives? How do these two logics come together and raise questions about the commodification of video game-based cultural practices?

A video game, as a game, can be characterised by many elements: mechanics, which refer to the procedures and rules of a game; a story that is defined as a set of events that reveal the nature or foundations of the game; an aesthetic that corresponds to the artistic and audiovisual qualities of a game; a technology that is illustrated in the features of the platform on which a game is played such that they constrain the actions and shape the experience of a player (Schell 2008).

From an economic perspective, game as a service (GAAS) differs from game as a product (GAAP). The concept of GAAS refers to online games that aim to generate long-term revenue, beyond the simple acquisition of the game (Wilhelmsson et al. 2022). It contrasts with the traditional GAAP, which refers to a game that is monetised only once, upon initial purchase (Lovell 2018). GAAS is based on business models that can be translated into four main objectives: acquisition of the game (Rasera 2022; Lovell 2013); retention, which consists in getting players to come back (Lovell 2013; Narinen 2014); maintaining the activity to encourage the production of data (Dozo 2020); monetisation, which can be done through microtransactions, sale

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of advertising space integrated into the game and sale of users' personal data to third parties (Bonenfant & Dumont 2024).

Based on an analysis of the game *Fortnite* (Epic Games 2017), this research aims, firstly, to shed light on the mechanisms used by the industry within this game in order to achieve its economic goals. Secondly, it aims to cross-reference this analysis with the analysis of the four game characteristics defined by Schell (2008) in order to show how economic mechanisms permeate each of these characteristics. The analysed data were collected by recording gaming sessions during participant observations (Aarseth 2007) using a method inspired by the "walkthrough method" (Light et al. 2018). The recorded game sessions last a total of ten hours.

BIO

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