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HOW MEDIA FRAMING OF VIDEO GAMES AFFECTS THE PERCEPTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY: THE OPINIONS OF STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB¹

Creating video games is a complex process that can be tracked in stages, requiring compliance with platform-specific requirements, content, visual elements, characters, and the existence of interaction among them. In this context, there is increasing talk about gamification to strengthen user engagement, motivation, and communication. The popularity of video games as a broader social phenomenon sparks divided public opinions, and media reporting has a significant impact on it. Framing a particular topic in a negative or positive tone contributes to the perception of events, individuals, or processes as threats or opportunities, potentially leading to calls for increased regulation. This paper aims to analyze media coverage of video games and to investigate how it affects public opinion and understanding of the game industry, using a combined methodology. Analysis of the content of media coverage on selected foreign and Croatian online portals that deal with technology, as well as Croatian newspaper portals that have special gaming sections, showed a difference in the approach to reporting. Foreign media portals have shown exceptional commitment to collecting information about upcoming games and monitoring economic, industry changes, and player opinions, while domestic ones are focused on innovations within the Croatian gaming scene. The emphasis is on promoting and showcasing local talent and progress in the country's gaming industry. At the same time, the results of the survey showed that the majority of participants are familiar with the gaming

¹ This paper is based on the research conducted by Petra Raškaj as a part of her final thesis at the graduate university study program in Communication Studies. The thesis titled „The Impact of Media Coverage of Video Games on Public Opinion and Understanding of the Gaming Industry“ was made under the mentorship of Tanja Grmuša, PhD, Assistant Professor, and defended at the Faculty of Croatian Studies in September 2023.

industry and actively participate in it. Furthermore, although they follow media reports and reviews about video games, it still does not significantly influence their decision to purchase a video game. Finally, most participants feel that politics and social agendas are not desirable in video games.

Keywords: gaming industry; video games; gaming; media coverage; framing; combined methodology; students

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the impact of media coverage on the public perception of video games. Journalists play a crucial role in reporting on trends, reviewing games, and covering events. With the growing interest in the video game industry, the role of journalists becomes more significant. Their perspectives and assessments can shape the way people think about games, influencing purchasing decisions. Game coverage can impact the direction of the industry, affecting consumer demand and the creative choices of developers. The power of media reporting lies in shaping public opinion, guiding industry trends, and evolving the landscape of video games. Similar research has been conducted on this topic, such as C. J. Ferguson's (2015) study on the relationship between violent video games and aggressive behavior and Brian McKernan's (2013) research on media reporting trends, providing context necessary for understanding this relationship. Other studies, such as those conducted by Gentile and Anderson (2003) and Shaw (2013), have focused on investigating the relationship between media and violence in video games, investigating how such content can affect players. In addition, in the center of interest of the aforementioned authors is game culture in a broader sense, which includes media representation and perception of video games.

On the other hand, research analyzing the practices of using general and specialized media among video game users and members of so-called gamer communities is underrepresented. However, Törhönen et al. 2020 showed in their study how consuming content related to video games positively influences gaming activities. Consumption of video game content mainly occurs through streaming platforms such as Twitch, YouTube Gaming, and Mixer (Sjöblom & Hamari 2017; Cabeza Ramirez et al. 2022) compared to traditional media (Rudolf et al. 2022). The reasons for consumption vary depending on the motivations and needs of video

game players (Macey et al. 2022), but also on the cultural environment (Santos et al. 2021).

The practice of media usage among video game users in Croatia is also relatively unexplored; the topic of video games is generally viewed through a negative lens concerning its impact on children's cognitive development and personality type (Martinčević, Vranić 2019; Blažanović 2021), hence the large number of studies in the field of psychology that problematize the issue of aggression in video games (Ružić 2011; Mužić 2014) and violence in general (Valković 2008), as well as the impact of video games on academic success (Malek, Ninčević, Jurić Vukelić 2018). Regarding the student population, among whom video games are very popular, it is worth highlighting the study conducted by Haramija, Njavro, and Vranešić (2020) on the correlation between the frequency and manner of playing and self-perception of personal success and values. Furthermore, we would also like to mention two studies that have focused on socio-cultural characteristics of gamers in Croatia (Krolo, Zdravković, Puzek 2016), or on the examination of team communication and the formation of interpersonal relationships among video game players (Prevarek, Grmuša 2022), conducted within the gaming community.

By analyzing the influence of media reporting on video games, this paper explores the complex relationship between journalists, developers, and consumers. Understanding the role of media coverage can provide valuable insights into the rapidly growing and evolving video game industry. The aim of this paper was to investigate the impact of media reporting on video games on public opinion and the perception of the gaming industry. Additional objectives include examining the associations triggered by media reporting on the industry, analyzing the influence of journalists' political and social agendas on their reporting, and gathering survey participants' opinions on the portrayal of the gaming industry in the media.

The main hypothesis asserts that media reporting on video games affects public opinion and understanding of the gaming industry. Subsidiary hypotheses include exploring respondents' familiarity with the gaming industry, their active participation in it, preference for reading articles and reviews for gaming information, and the belief that the articles they read do not always influence their final decision to purchase a game. Additionally, respondents are less likely to believe that real-world agendas and politics are relevant in virtual worlds. The first part of the research involved a qualitative analysis of the content of journalistic articles on video games. Foreign portals such as Kotaku and IGN, as well as domestic media (HCL, BUG, Večernji List, Kultura – Igre, 24 sata, Sci/tech- Gaming), were reviewed during May

2023. The analysis covered the context, article sources, and differences in reporting, including possible political and social agendas. The second part of the research comprises a quantitative analysis conducted through an online survey among University of Zagreb students over three months (March – June 2023). The goal was to examine their impressions, familiarity with the gaming industry, purchasing decisions, and attitudes towards social and political agendas in the gaming industry.

2. THE PRODUCTION PROCESS OF CREATING VIDEO GAMES – FROM IDEA TO REALIZATION

In the last decade, the development of technology has enabled the popularity of video games to reach the level of a global phenomenon. With the advancement of technology, playing video games has become accessible to everyone, and the creation process has become an innovative and refined endeavor. To transform a game from a mere idea into a market-ready product, it takes several years of experience in game development. The process can be challenging, but every effort pays off. Every video game begins with an idea, but it's not as simple as it may seem. Generating ideas can involve brainstorming, sketching concepts, creating prototypes, testing, and discarding ideas that seem unfavorable or enhancing those with potential. For an idea to progress to the next stage, it must undergo team discussions among development programmers who shape and filter the idea until only the best concepts remain. The goal of every idea is to ultimately create a game that “flows” and provides a cohesive, streamlined experience for players without sacrificing the gaming experience. During the ideation process, development programmers need to address three crucial questions: How large will the game be? Will players be able to immerse themselves in the game? How complex will the game be? Answers to these questions set the parameters for the subsequent steps in the development process.

One of the key roles is played by conceptual artists in video games, who are designers responsible for creating visual representations of characters, vehicles, environments, and other elements of the game. Their art serves as the foundation for visualizing ideas for other teams, contributing to the game's dimension and personality. Each conceptual artist has their style, adapting to the specifics of different publishers such as Blizzard, EA (Electronic Arts), and Ubisoft. Their tasks include sketching the appearance of characters from various perspectives and creating movements such as walking or fighting. The creative director provides guidance, and once the design is accepted, it becomes a reference for other teams. Conceptual artists

use digital drawing and tools like Adobe Photoshop, SketchBook Pro, Zbrush, and Maya (Concept Art Empire 2023).

The article “What is concept art” explains the difference between illustrators and conceptual artists. An illustrator’s job belongs to “promotional art,” aiming to sell something by evoking emotions, while a conceptual artist expresses an idea in the form of a visual creation. The goal of conceptual drawing is not to be the final product but to serve as an example for other specialists. Each conceptual artist specializes, deciding whether to focus on drawing characters, locations, or objects. Furthermore, drawings are created in digital form using specific software and tools. Voice actors, responsible for giving voices to characters, play a crucial role in creating an immersive gaming experience. Synchronization, once overlooked due to storage limitations, now includes not only voices but also motion capture technology, where actors perform entire scenes. The process involves recording voices, integrating them into the game, and playing them during player interactions. Actors are not limited to one character, sounding or looking, and earnings depend on vocal characteristics, popularity, publisher demands, and the game’s market success (Wirtz 2023).

Furthermore, Rae Machado emphasizes the importance of motion capture technology in video games which records actors’ movements and uses them for character animation, often underestimated despite its crucial role in achieving realistic graphics. Motion capture allows recording performed movements without transferring actors’ physical traits to characters in the game. By placing markers and recording actor movements, animators create a skeleton that serves as the basis for character animation. This technology is used for various purposes, including creating ultra-realistic models and establishing foundations for characters with unique designs (Machado 2021). Werbach and Hunter in the book “For the Win: How Game Thinking Can Revolutionize Your Business” (2012) highlight gamification as the application of game elements in a business context to increase engagement and motivation. Gamification does not create a complete game but uses the motivational power of games to enhance experiences and encourage desired behavior. Key gamification elements include points, badges, leaderboards, challenges, and rewards. The goal of gamification is to stimulate engagement in the workplace or the market (2012: 31-53).

According to Andre Marchand and Thorsten Hennig-Thurau (2013), in the last twenty years, the gaming industry has experienced annual growth ranging between 9% and 15%. On average, it generates five times more revenue than the music and book sales industry, with almost equal earnings to the film industry. Not only is the

gaming industry the largest and fastest-growing, but it also boasts the highest level of innovation from decade to decade. A single product or franchise can be a hybrid, starting as a video game and evolving into a film, which, in turn, leads to merchandise, books, and more. Additionally, there are players who can earn through e-sports, streamed on platforms, television, or in front of live audiences. Players also spend money “within” video games, purchasing game expansions or virtual goods depending on the type of video game.

In these virtual realities, players have the power to manipulate their surroundings. However, games are not just for entertainment; they provide innovative opportunities for educating children, youth, and adults, training employees, and addressing various social needs. The technology used in video games is applicable in other industries and sciences such as molecular biology, marketing, and more. Furthermore, the concept of gamification has emerged. Gamification involves applying elements and principles of video games in non-game contexts to increase engagement and motivation. It does not entail creating complete games but harnessing the inherent motivational force of games to enhance experiences and encourage desired behaviors, such as in the workplace.

Werbach and Hunter (2012) highlight key components of gamification, including points, badges, leaderboards, challenges, and rewards. These elements can be utilized in the gamification process. The intention behind gamification is to strategically leverage feelings of achievement, earned rewards, and constant progress typically experienced in video games to increase motivation in business. The primary goal of gamification is engagement – the same engagement that motivates individuals in games can be applied in the workplace or the marketplace (Werbach, Hunter 2012).

3. MEDIA COVERAGE OF VIDEO GAMES AND DOMINANT „FRAMES“

Framing messages has been a popular topic in the field of social sciences, particularly social psychology, aiming to answer the question of what shapes our perceptions of the events surrounding us. Stakeholders such as family, friends, and peers play a significant role in this process, but the most substantial influence comes from the media (Giles 2003). The concept of message framing was introduced by Tversky and Kahnemann (1981), emphasizing that each message can be framed positively or negatively, in terms of loss or gain, and it is these frames that stimulate the audience to think and act (Entman 2007). Looking at this at an individual level and in the

context of interpersonal communication, it involves relying on previous experiences that help us interpret later experiences (Goffman 1974; Reardon 1998). At the same time, media framing refers to drawing conclusions about events from media reports and connecting them to other themes (Giles). The construction and deconstruction of stories occur based on various forms of media communication, including headlines, subtitles, and photographs (Ibidem, 162, 163),

The concept of framing is one of the theoretical approaches (alongside gatekeeper theory, news value theory, and news-bias theory) that seeks to answer how journalists choose information that becomes news and what frames they use in the process. Scheufele (1999) warns about the multiple uses of the term “framing” in public and scientific discourse, which often leads to confusion about its usage today. “Frame” can be interpreted as an interpretative framework, as cognitive structures in the minds of journalists that facilitate the selection and processing of information. Previous experiences are memorized and used as a framework within which later experiences are interpreted (Kunczik, Zipfel 2006). This process occurs on both the sender’s side of the message and the receiver’s side – on the media side and the audience side – and can be at a (un)conscious level.

The concept of framing was initially focused on studying psychology and cognitive aspects (Anderson & Pichert 1978; Bransford & Johnson 1973) but faced criticism for its unfounded research methodology. Therefore, Giles & Shaw (2009) developed Media Framing Analysis (MFA), which, in several phases (identifying the story, characters, narrative form, language used, presence of generalizations, analysis), seeks to ensure the objectivity of the process. Later, the framing concept shifted focus to the field of political communication (Entman 2010; Aalberg et al. 2010; De Vresse 2012; Carter 2013), where it remains highly popular today.

Brian McKernan analyzes the media coverage of video games in The New York Times over three decades. During the 1980s, video games were portrayed in The New York Times with a narrative that suggested a threat to the intellectual development of players while also being described as a shallow form of cultural elevation. The examination of the impact of video games on children became a central theme in American media and scientific journals. In the early 1990s, the first congressional investigation was conducted, triggered by several school shootings. The causes of these unfortunate events were attributed to the violent content available in video games, specifically the then-popular but violent game Doom. Nevertheless, the popularity of video games continued to grow in the 1990s, thanks to significant technological advancements, affordable prices of personal computers, and the

availability of gaming consoles. The new technology facilitated the development of new games (such as Metal Gear Solid, Final Fantasy VII, and Resident Evil) with cinematic aesthetics and themes unsuitable for minors, resulting in the expansion of the gamer demographic. McKernan (2013) points out that the narrative of violence in the mid-2000s was replaced by a framework of concern for health, especially in the context of the obesity epidemic. In summary, it was observed that over a 30-year period, The New York Times' critiques of video games contained two main elements. The first element predominantly described video games as a social danger, and the second element rarely described the effect of video games on adults, with articles mainly focusing on children. Over the last two decades, newspapers rarely characterized video games as uniquely harmful media. Instead, articles mostly categorize video games as one of several entertainment formats popular among children. A significant change comes in the late 1990s and after 2000 when video games begin to be perceived as an artistic medium with emotional depth, raising their moral value (McKernan 2013).

Framing of video games in mass media has the power to change or guide public opinion. Discussions about gaming culture in mass media are mainly conducted in the context of violence, addiction, or deviant behavior. The authors believe that people's opinions about gamers and video games will change depending on whether specific media frames related to the game industry receive less or more emphasis in the media themselves. Furthermore, the authors conclude that constant emphasis on negative outcomes in the media can lead people to perceive video games as a threat and, therefore, may encourage the approval of even stricter restrictions on the game industry (Kumpel, Haas 2016).

Another example of media framing of the game industry comes from the research of Scott Parrott, Ryan Rogers, Nathan A. Towery, and Samuel D. Hakim (2020) when journalists reported on the World Health Organization's decision to define gaming disorder as a diagnosed mental illness. In interviews, journalists primarily spoke with healthcare professionals and conveyed information about symptoms, consequences, and possible treatments for recovery. Stories indicating controversy surrounding the mentioned decision did not receive the same media space, despite the fact that experts and researchers in them provided opposing opinions regarding gaming disorder. Furthermore, gamers themselves were largely unrepresented in the reporting, and the popularity of video games worldwide was overlooked. The authors emphasize that it is the media's task to convey accurate information related to mental health, but they should also pay attention to giving a voice to people affected by that information.

This prompted us to explore how the video game industry is portrayed in selected foreign and Croatian media, as discussed further in this paper.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Qualitative Methodology

4.1.1. Objectives and Research Questions

The analysis of the content of the articles from selected foreign and Croatian media was conducted to gain an overview of prevailing topics related to gaming and how they depend on the type of media conveying them. The research aimed to determine which topics are predominant in selected domestic and foreign media and which of the 12 analyzed categories is most represented. Data analysis included manual entry into an Excel table and further processing. Using categories, patterns, and trends were identified in how the media influences public opinion and understanding of the gaming industry. In line with the above, the following research questions were formulated:

- What are the predominant topics in the articles of selected domestic and foreign media related to gaming?
- Among the 12 designated categories, which one is most represented in media articles covering the gaming industry?
- How different are the media representations of the gaming industry in domestic and foreign sources?

4.1.2. Method and Sample

For the purpose of the analysis, articles from foreign online portals Kotaku and IGN, articles from selected specialized Croatian gaming media (HCL, BUG), and articles from Croatian news portals with dedicated gaming sections (Večernji List, Kultura – Igre, 24 sata, Sci/tech- Gaming) were reviewed. A total of 511 articles were analyzed in May 2023, utilizing qualitative content analysis. The articles were examined and categorized based on their content into the 12 categories mentioned in the “Interpretation of Research Results” section. This included all articles published in that month. Subsequently, category calculations were performed to provide an overview of the most represented topics in the examined media.

4.1.3. Interpretation of Research Results

The research of selected media portals involved the examination of articles in each medium published in May 2023 according to the following 12 predefined categories:

1. Framing of the gaming industry / Coverage tone / Positive - a)
2. Expert opinions and scientific research - b)
3. Education and positive impact - c)
4. Innovation and creativity - d)
5. Economic impact - e)
6. Representation / portrayal of different roles in the industry - f)
7. Stereotypes and stigmatization - g)
8. Promotion - h)
9. Positive review - i)
10. Negative review - j)
11. General information, facts - k)
12. Framing of the gaming industry / Coverage tone / Negative - l)

Obtained Results:

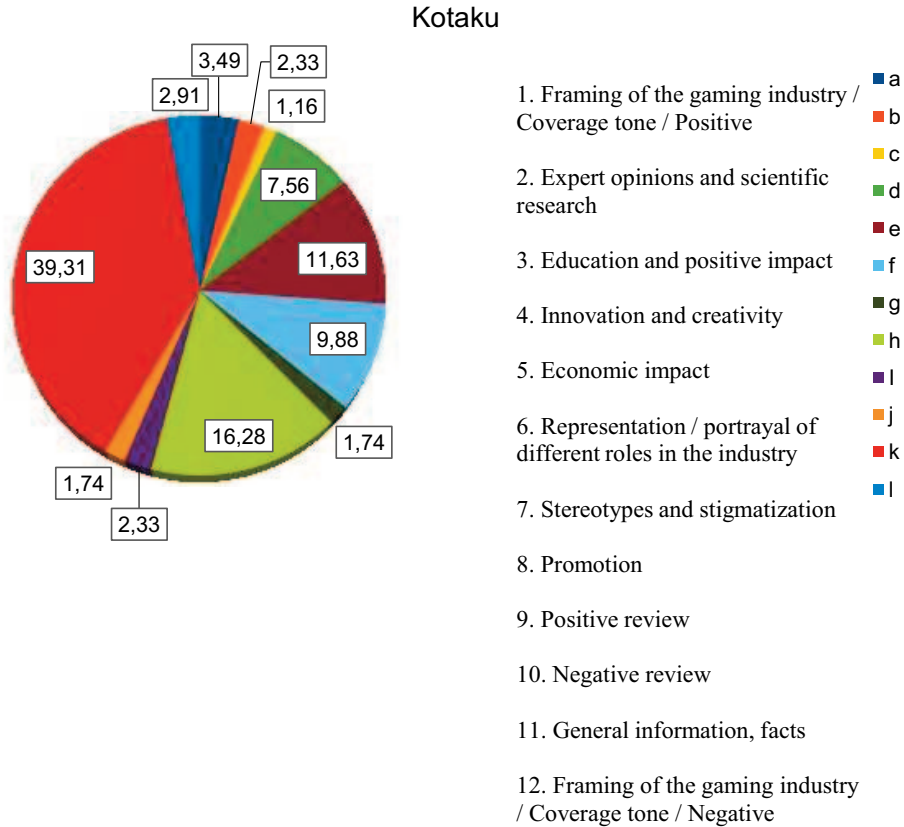


Figure 1. Data for the Kotaku Media
 Source: Author’s Work

For the foreign medium, the online gaming portal Kotaku, the largest media space is occupied by articles in category k) (39.31%), which encompasses general information and updates. Given that Kotaku specializes in gaming and gaming culture, this result is expected. Category k) includes articles related to general updates about games such as patch notes, DLC, new in-game characters, fixes, resolved bugs, and similar. The primary audience is predominantly gamers, and such information is given the highest priority. This category also includes information about announcements relevant to culture beyond gaming. The next share (16.18%) is held by articles in category h), which covers promotions of new video games, news about their release dates, when a new trailer is released, or announcements about them on social media, release date delays, issues, and more. Generally, all information about

a game that has not been released yet but has been announced. The third category is e) (11.56%), economic impact in the gaming industry. Here, there are posts about mergers, sales, or acquisitions of game development companies and changes in the prices of video games. The fourth category, f) (9.58%), representing different roles in the industry, includes all articles related to representing the opinions of fans of certain games, their new achievements, and player opinions. Additionally, statements from CEOs of gaming companies, actors, or other members of game production are represented to a lesser extent. The fifth represented category is d) (7.51%), innovations and creativity, meaning that these articles presented novelties in video games such as new game engines, new gameplay methods, etc.

IGN

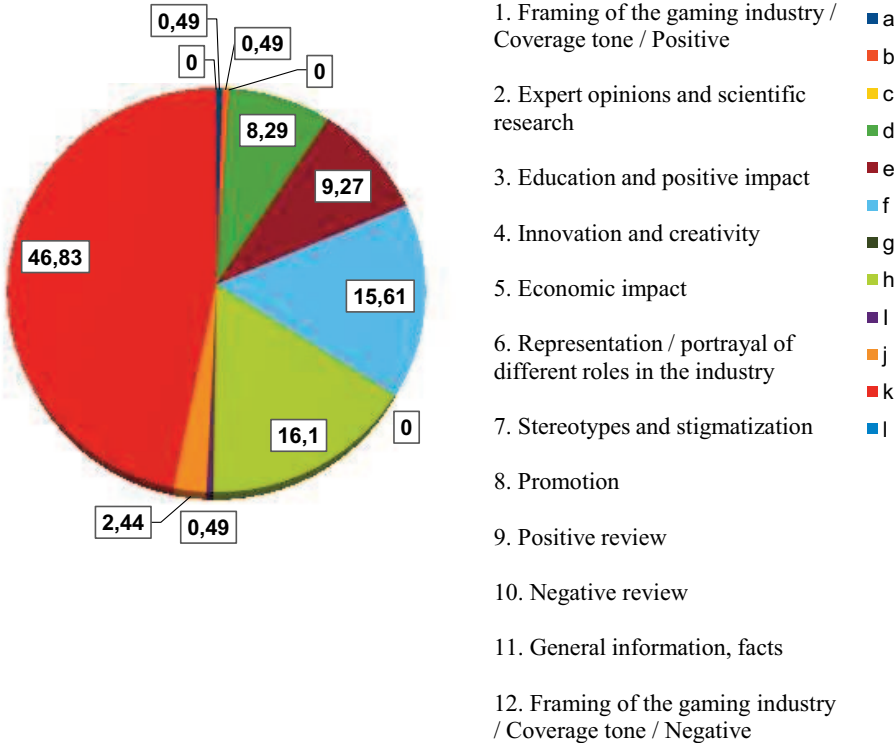


Figure 2. Data for the IGN Media
 Source: Author’s Work

Similarity with the previous medium can be observed in the number of articles in category k), which stands at 46.83% for IGN. IGN is also a specialized online portal for gamers, with almost half of the articles dedicated to minor and major updates or additions to existing video games or game sequels. A similarity exists in articles of category h) (16.1%) as well, with a difference of less than one percent. A slightly larger difference can be noticed in category f) (15.61%), as the representation of people's roles in the gaming industry at IGN is about 6% higher. Data for categories e) (9.27%) and d) (8.29%) are almost identical to the previous chart, with differences ranging from one to two percent.

HCL

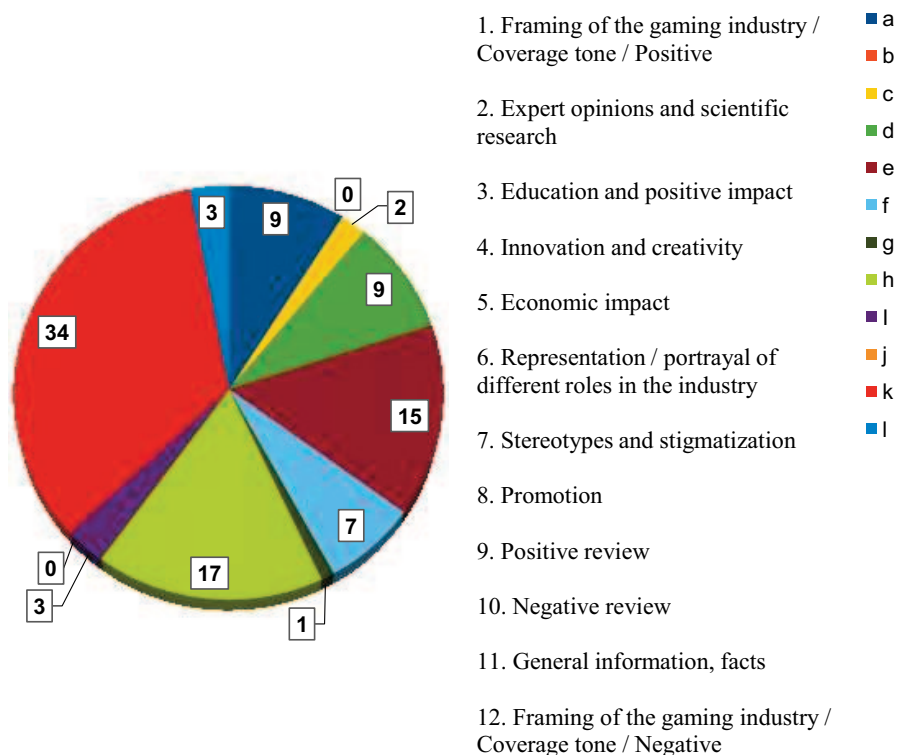


Figure 3. Data for the HCL Media
 Source: Author's Work

The Croatian gaming portal HCL, a domestic specialized portal for video games and the gaming industry, also shows similarity in category k), which here occupies about 20% less than in previous media but remains the highest. Regarding category h), it still ranks second with 17%. Unlike foreign media, category e), economic impact, occupies more media space for this domestic medium, at 15%. Categories d) and a) are significant, accounting for 9%. The ratio of category d) is similar to that of foreign media, but category a), positive framing of the gaming industry, whose percentage in the previous two media accounts for a maximum of 3%, is different here. HCL allocates more media space to positive impacts, articles about game anniversaries, impressive game performances, support to companies in the industry, launching locally produced games, and community events.

BUG

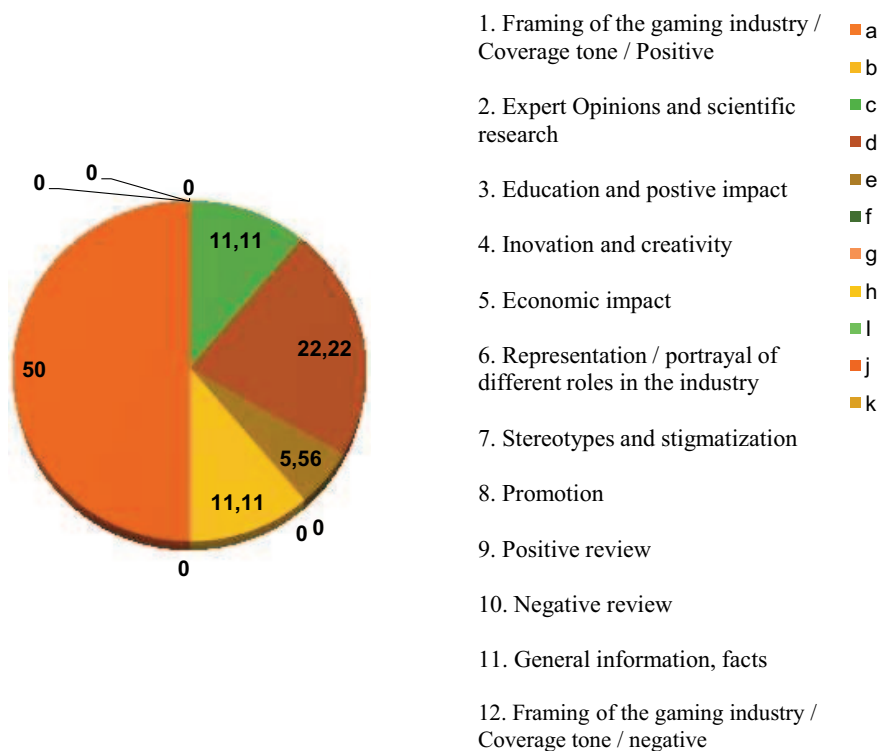


Figure 4. *Data for the BUG Media*
 Source: Author's Work

The online portal Bug has the highest number of articles related to category k) (general information and announcements), which here accounts for the largest share (50%). Interestingly, the next significant category here is e), economic impact, and not h), promotion, as was the case with other media - HCL (Croatian media), IGN, and Kotaku (foreign media).

4.2. Quantitative Methodology

4.2.1. Objectives, Research Questions, and Hypotheses

This survey aimed to explore the habits, impressions, and awareness of respondents regarding the current state of the gaming and video game industry in general, as well as opinions related to media coverage and the media's influence on the public. This research can guide the media in future reporting and topic selection related to gaming. The goal was to discover the participants' habits and general opinions, investigate their profile, find out how they come across media posts related to the gaming industry, what they notice in those posts, how they influence their perception, and how they form their impressions of video games with the help of such media. The main objective was to examine how media coverage of video games shapes public opinion and understanding of the gaming industry and to explore the associations that media coverage fosters regarding the gaming industry and whether it affects sales. The research sought to find out the participants' familiarity with the gaming industry, whether they actively participate in it by playing video games and following online gaming portals and sections, how participants inform themselves about video games, the impact of media posts on their decision to purchase a video game, and to what extent participants believe that video games should reflect real-world political and social issues.

The main hypothesis of this research section is:

- Media coverage of video games influences readers' public opinion and understanding of the gaming industry.

Auxiliary hypotheses:

- Respondents' familiarity with the gaming industry is good, and they actively participate in it.

- Research participants mostly inform themselves about video games by reading articles and reviews.
- Read articles and reviews do not entirely influence the final decision of participants to purchase a specific video game.
- Participants, to a lesser extent, believe that real-world agendas and politics have a place in virtual worlds.

4.2.2. Method and Sample

A total of 104 participants, students of students of different components of the University of Zagreb, took part in the study. This refers to a convenience sample collected through a random sampling method via online channels.

The research was conducted in the form of a Google Forms survey, in which participation was voluntary and anonymous. As stated, students from the University of Zagreb were selected, which has the widest range of different components (in the context of various scientific fields), according to data from the official website of the University where „more than 70,000 students study here, which is 48.5% of all students in the Republic of Croatia“ (<https://www.unizg.hr/studiji-i-studiranje/> March 12, 2024), who are well-connected, ensuring faster and easier distribution of the survey within student groups.

The survey was distributed through social networks and applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. The questions were divided into two groups. The first group consisted of sociodemographic questions related to gender, age, year of study, and field of study. The second group consisted of substantive questions, starting with a question about the participants' general familiarity with the gaming industry. Furthermore, participants were questioned about their impressions, observations, and follow-up on the gaming industry, video games in general, personal opinions, following online portals, columns and articles, media coverage of video games, and its impact on public opinion, use of reviews, and the reflection of political and social issues in video games. The questions included yes/no answers, multiple-choice, and open-ended responses. Of the total 104 collected responses, all were valid. It should be emphasized that the collected sample is non-representative of the total number of students enrolled at the University of Zagreb. However, it still provides insights into certain trends that may be useful for future research on this topic.

4.2.3. Interpretation of Research Results

The survey questionnaire consisted of a total of 23 questions. The questionnaire's completion and sharing took place online and lasted for three months, from March to June 2023, to ensure a higher number of participants. The gender distribution of the participants indicates that there were 46 (44.2%) male participants and slightly more, 58 (55.8%), female participants in the study.

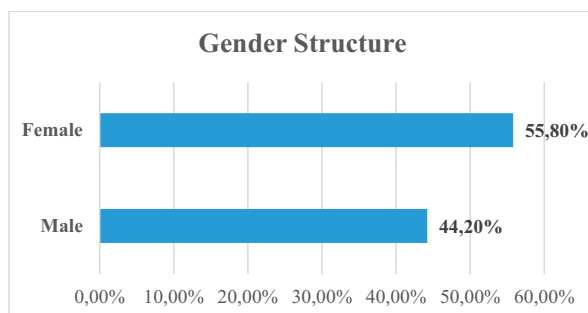


Figure 1. Participants' Gender Structure

Source: Author's Work

The age structure revealed the following: the majority of participants, 67 (64.4%), fall into the age group of 18 to 25 years, 35 (33.7%) participants belong to the age group of 26 to 30 years, one (1%) participant belongs to the age group of 31 to 35 years, and one (1%) falls into the age group of 41 to 45 years. None of the participants belong to the age groups of 36 to 40, 46 to 49, and 50 plus years.

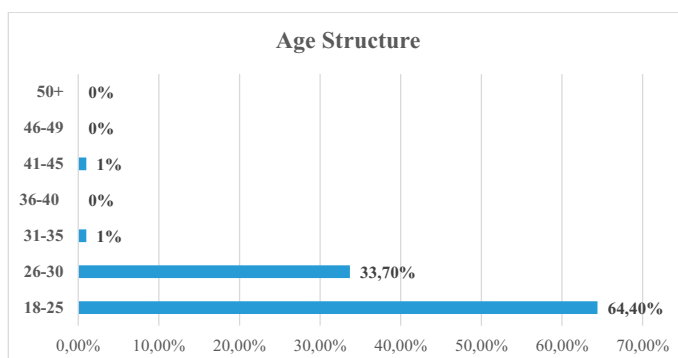


Figure 2. Participants' Age Structure

Source: Author's Work

The largest number of participants, 42 (40.4%), are in their fifth year of study, followed by 28 (26.9%) participants in the fourth year, 20 (19.2%) participants in the third year, nine (8.7%) in the first year, four (3.8%) participants in the sixth year, and one (1%) participant in the second year of study.

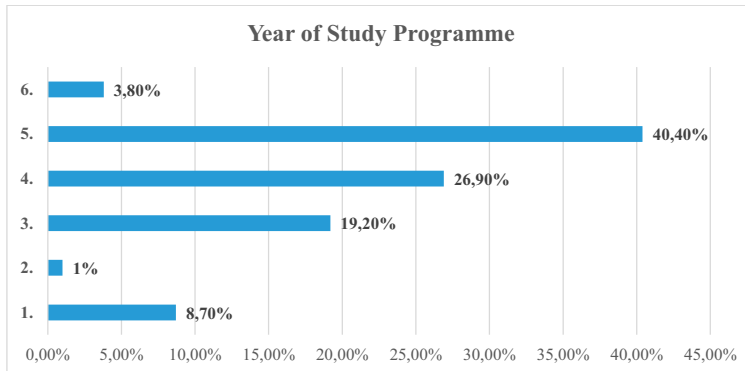


Figure 3. Participants' Year of Study Programme

Source: Author's Work

In response to the question about the field of study, we found that the majority of participants, 55 (52.9%), are studying in the field of social sciences. The second-largest group consists of 19 (18.3%) participants studying in the field of technical sciences, followed by 16 (15.4%) participants in the field of humanities, eight (7.7%) in the artistic field, four (3.8%) in the field of natural sciences, one (1%) in the field of biomedicine and health sciences, and one (1%) in interdisciplinary areas of study.

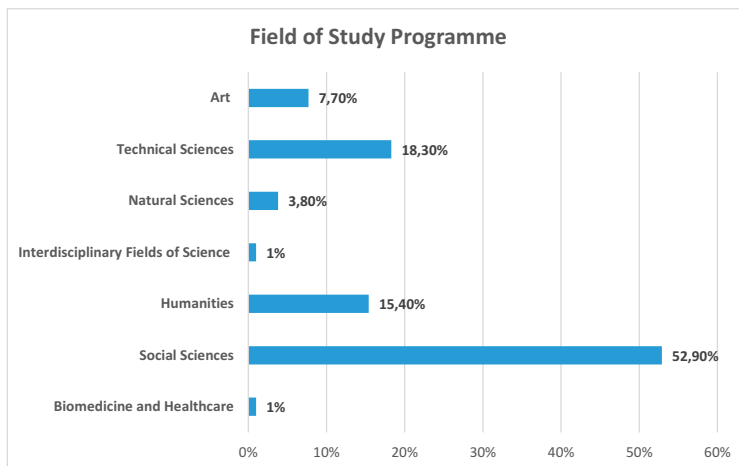


Figure 4. Participants' Field of Study Programme

Source: Author's Work

Due to limited space, we present an overview of the most important results below:

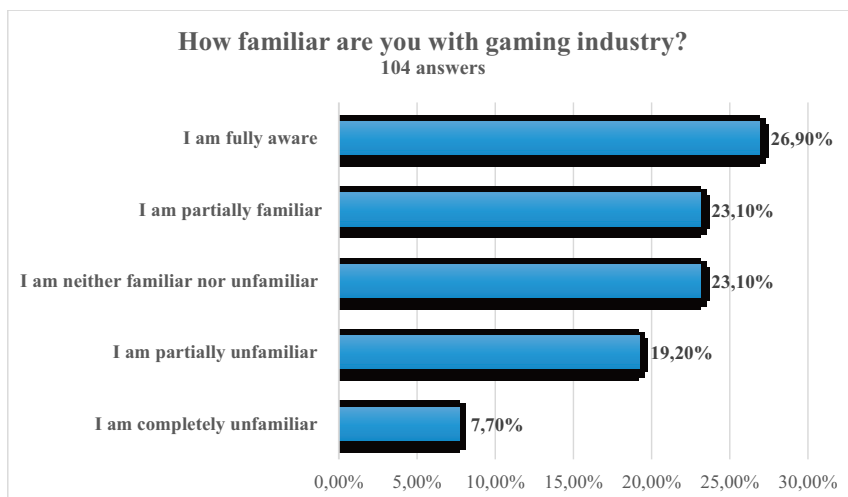


Figure 5. Participants' Familiarity with the Gaming Industry

Source: Author's Work

Out of a total of 104 participants, 28 (26.9%) declared that they are fully familiar with the gaming industry. Furthermore, 24 (23.1%) stated that they are partially

familiar with the industry, while the same number, 24 (23.1%), expressed a neutral stance, considering themselves neither familiar nor unfamiliar. Simultaneously, 20 (19.2%) participants believed that they are partially unfamiliar. Eight participants (7.7%) considered themselves fully familiar with the video game industry.

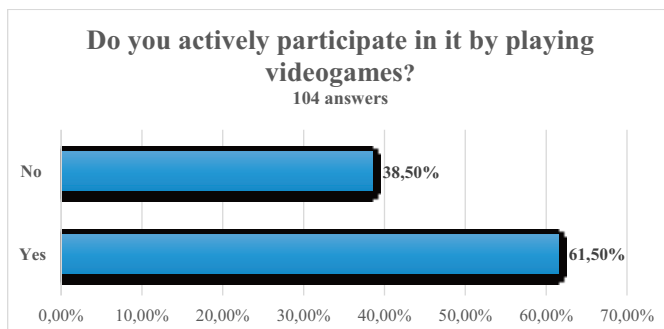


Figure 6. Participants' Engagement in the Gaming Industry through Active Gameplay
Source: Author's Work

Using a yes/no question, participants were asked whether they actively participate in the gaming industry by playing video games. 64 (61.5%) answered affirmatively, indicating active participation, while 40 (38.5%) responded negatively.

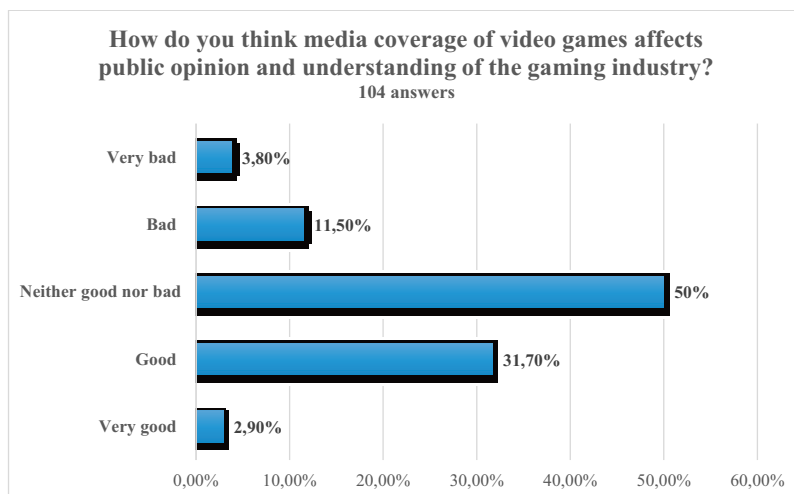


Figure 7. Participants' Opinions on How Media Coverage of Video Games Affects Public Opinion and Understanding of the Gaming Industry
Source: Author's Work

Regarding participants' opinions on how media coverage of video games affects public opinion and understanding of the gaming industry, half of the participants, 52 (50%), maintained a neutral stance, believing that media coverage has neither a positive nor negative effect. 33 (31.7%) thought that media coverage has a positive impact on public opinion, 12 (11.5%) believed it has a negative impact, 4 (3.8%) thought it has a very negative impact, and three (2.9%) believed it has a very positive impact.

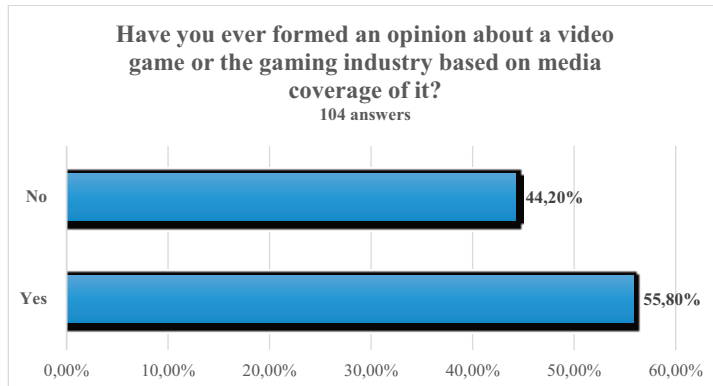


Figure 8. Formation of Opinions on Video Games or the Gaming Industry Based on Media Reporting

Source: Author's Work

Responding to the question of whether participants have ever formed an opinion about a video game or the gaming industry based on media reporting, 58 (55.8%) answered affirmatively, while 46 (44.2%) responded negatively.

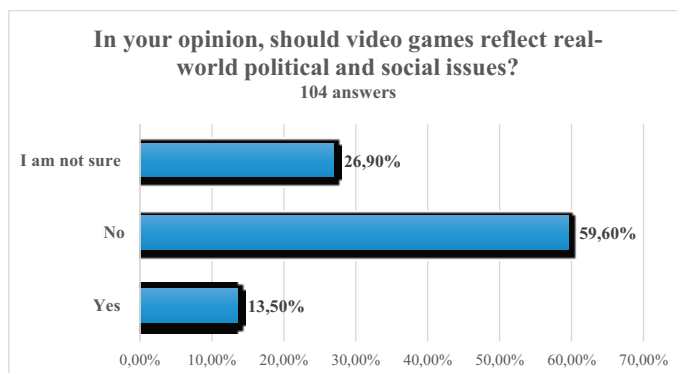


Figure 9. Participants' Opinions on the Reflection of Real Social and Political Issues in Video Games

Source: Author's Work.

This question aimed to find out whether participants think video games should reflect real-world political and social issues. More than half of the participants, 62 (59.6%), believe they should not, 14 (13.5%) believe they should, and 28 (26.9%) are undecided.

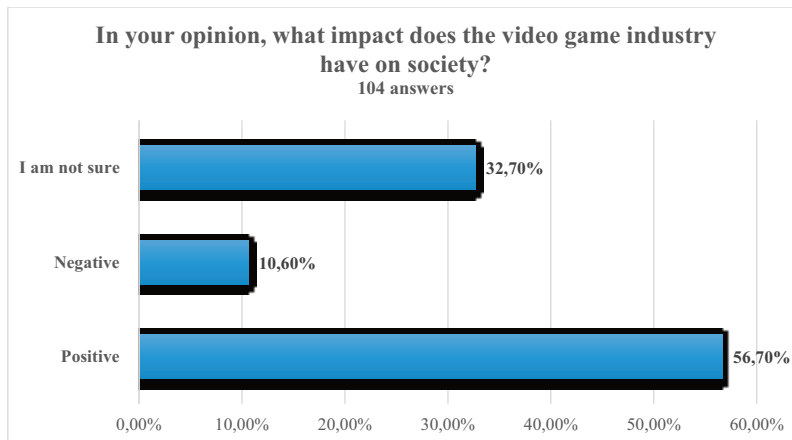


Figure 10. Participants' Opinions on the Impact of the Gaming Industry on Society
Source: Author's Work

Furthermore, participants were asked to express their views on the impact of the video game industry on society. More than half, 59 (56.7%) participants, believe the impact is positive. 34 (32.7%) are unsure, and 11 (10.6%) believe the impact is negative.

5. CONCLUSION

The main hypothesis of this research, that media coverage of video games influences readers' public opinion and understanding of the gaming industry, has been confirmed. Whether it is positive or negative reporting, the prevailing tone shapes the overall public opinion. The auxiliary hypothesis that participants are familiar with the gaming industry and actively engage in it has been confirmed. The hypothesis that participants primarily gather information by reading articles and reviews has been refuted, while the hypothesis that the articles and reviews do not significantly impact participants' final decision to purchase a video game has been confirmed. The

last auxiliary hypothesis, stating that participants consider real agendas and politics to have a lesser place in the virtual worlds of video games, has also been confirmed.

According to the data from the analysis of media articles in various outlets, it was observed that international specialized media publish articles multiple times a day, mostly covering updates or additions to existing games. Portals are also highly dedicated to gathering all available information about upcoming games and economic changes within the industry. A significant portion of the articles includes comments, impressions, and the impact of players themselves, as well as views and announcements from game publishers. Croatian specialized media share similarities with foreign ones but leave a special media space for innovations within Croatia. Croatian news portals publish a small number of articles, and gaming articles are found in different categories, such as culture and sci/tech. Although they give the impression of confusion, they predominantly focus on the educational aspect.

Furthermore, through the analysis of survey results and the research of media articles, several significant conclusions about the perception and impact of the gaming industry on the public can be drawn. The research shows a significant interest and active engagement of participants in the gaming industry. Participants' familiarity with the gaming industry is good, and the majority actively participate in it. Most participants do not follow online gaming portals, but they read reviews and form opinions about video games through the media; however, this has a limited impact on pre-purchase decisions. While media articles and reviews play a role in shaping opinions, they may not be the sole determining factor in purchasing decisions. Participants generally view video games as an escape from reality, believing that social and political agendas have no place in the world of games. Most have a positive attitude toward the impact of the gaming industry on society. The majority of participants believe that the gaming industry has a positive impact on society. However, when explaining their answers, they take a neutral stance, emphasizing that consuming video games is dangerous only when done excessively or irresponsibly. Participants have a neutral stance on the overall impact of media coverage of video games on society, with a slightly greater emphasis on positive aspects. However, detailed responses indicate a belief that the media primarily highlights the negative aspects of the industry, which may contribute to a negative public attitude. This suggests that media portrayal may have a mixed impact on public perception.

In conclusion, the limitations of this research could include the short research period and a limited sample of participants. Media coverage could be tracked over several years to provide a more detailed overview of the most prevalent categories.

This research could be deepened with in-depth interviews with players, media professionals, and industry experts, exploring more qualitative perspectives on the relationship between media coverage and public perception. These interviews could also offer potential reasons behind the neutral stance on media impact found in the survey. Further research on this topic could encompass alternative media sources such as blogs, forums, or social networks to gain a broader understanding of the perception of games among different communities. Simultaneously, monitoring the impact on public policy would provide an overview of how media coverage of video games can influence the formulation of public policies or regulations in the gaming industry.

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KAKO MEDIJSKO UOKVIRIVANJE VIDEOIGARA UTJEČENA PERCEPCIJU I RAZUMIJEVANJE INDUSTRIJE VIDEOIGARA: MIŠLJENJA STUDENATA SVEUČILIŠTA U ZAGREBU

Sažetak:

Kreiranje videoigara složen je proces koji se može pratiti u fazama, a traži ispunjavanje zahtjeva vezanih za platformu na kojoj će videoigra biti dostupna, sadržaj, vizualne elemente, likove, kao i postojanje interakcije među njima. U tom kontekstu sve se više govori o gamifikaciji s ciljem jačanja angažmana, motivacije i komunikacije korisnika. Popularnost videoigara kao šireg društvenog fenomena izaziva podijeljena mišljenja javnosti, a velik utjecaj na to ima i medijsko izvještavanje. Naime, uokvirivanje pojedine teme u negativnom ili pozitivnom tonu doprinosi i percepciji događaja, osobe ili procesa kao prijatnije ili prilike, a to može rezultirati i zahtjevima za jačanjem regulacije. Cilj ovog rada bio je analizirati medijsko izvještavanje o video igrama, te istražiti kako ono utječe na javno mnijenje i razumijevanje industrije igara, pri čemu je korištena kombinirana metodologija. Analiza sadržaja medijskog izvještavanja na uzorku od 511 članaka odabranih stranih i hrvatskih *online* portala koji se bave tehnologijom i koji imaju posebne gaming rubrike pokazala je razliku u pristupu izvještavanju. Strani medijski portali pokazali su izuzetnu predanost prikupljanju informacija o nadolazećim igrama i praćenju ekonomskih promjena unutar industrije, te mišljenjima igrača, dok su hrvatski portali uglavnom fokusirani na inovacije unutar hrvatske gaming scene. Naglasak je na promicanju i predstavljanju domaćeg talenta i napretka u industriji igara u zemlji. Istodobno, rezultati istraživanja metodom ankete na studentskoj populaciji pokazali su kako je većina sudionika upoznata s gaming industrijom te u njoj aktivno sudjeluju. Nadalje, iako prate medijske izvještaje i recenzije o videoigrama, to ipak ne utječe značajno na njihovu odluku o kupnji videoigre. Konačno, većina sudionika smatra kako politika i društvene agende nisu poželjne u videoigramima.

Ključne riječi: industrija igara; videoigre; *gaming*; medijsko izvještavanje; framing; kombinirana metodologija; studenti

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