

Video games in pop- culture.



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Video games in pop-culture. Video games and computer games (from here on both categories will be simply referred to as video games for simplicity) have entered the domain of pop culture fairly recently.

Although the first video game was developed in 1958 by William Higginbotham, their popularity didn't occur until the seventies with the appearance of Pac-man and Frogger in the arcades (Computer and Video Games). If the younger generation of video game consumers would take a look at what was out there when the video game boom begun they wouldn't be able to understand what was so attractive (and addictive? about Pac-man and Frogger? The truth is, video games from over three decades ago share the same basic principles with the games we have out there right now. Let's face it, we like video games because they provide us with interactive entertainment. In other words, we're genuinely entertained by colorful objects that move on the TV/computer screen when we press certain buttons. I suggest that it is the overwhelming gratification that we experience from actually having absolute and unconditional control over something in our lives.

Another suggestion that I have is that video games share the same elements or even directly imitate traditional games such as tag, ping-pong, chess, hopscotch etc. ; video games allow us to engage in these games easily, without any stigma or significant effort on our parts. Video games are fun, inexpensive, can become a social activity allowing friends to play along, and sometimes they're even mentally stimulating if not challenging. They've been a real hit every since they came out and today the video game industry has grown significantly.

However, let's examine the circle of people that are involved in production and design of video games. As long ago as video games first became popular their manufacturers turned them into sellable products. It seems a bit ridiculous that a video game can cost as much as \$50 (for a good video game), however, this amount seems almost justified if we consider all the effort put into the creation of a good video game. There are perhaps more steps involved in the creation of video games than in a production of a music album. First of all, behind every great game there's a great idea, which most often have been proven to be interesting to human brain in real life (tag, chess, checkers, etc. .

However, this idea has to be turned into machine language, so then it could be displayed on the TV/computer screen in the digital format. Second, there's a wealth of robust and "well-polished" computer software behind every good video game. Good video games are well-implemented and, therefore, run with no problems – example of good computer design. Bad games are poorly "written", therefore, crash often and require frequent resets (turning the video game console/computer off and back on). Third, there's the testing stage, where beta-testers (pro gamers, hired by manufacturers) test the games for "bugs", "glitches", and "crashes" (various code problems). If the game passes the tests with few problems it gets released and advertised.

Highly anticipated games are advertised long before their release by means of internet teaser videos, information from the developers and screenshots taken during the development/testing phase. Games that are expected to make it big are even advertised on television. But why do we listen to these

ads and buy video games, one might ask, don't we have more important things to occupy our free with? This question brings to the discussion of the social world involvement in the video game industry. Indeed, we, as consumers, both passive and active, create the context and content for video games. A lot of games, as I've already mentioned earlier in this essay revolve around activities we enjoy in real life such as analog games, sports, social interactions, operating various devices, working a job, solving problems, managing finances, dancing but most importantly fantasizing.

Most people given the possibility would love to engage in a variety of activities that are outside their usual mundane existence. While the living out these activities might be a bit complicated for a variety of reasons starting from time and ending with money, their virtual representation are readily available in a digital format. There are literally tons of video games out there that simulate all sorts of sports, their popularity is especially high among Americans who idealize a fit, toned and healthy body image and an active lifestyle. Video games also burrow heavily from other forms of popular entertainment such as movies, cartoons, books, music, television game shows, commix etc.

These genres sometimes attempt to do the same and burrow content from video games only to fail miserably every single time (Bloodrayne, Doom, Dungeons and Dragons). Perhaps, the reason why this happens is because video games in addition to mind blowing special effects and often great story lines and excellent voice-over/soundtrack also offer interactivity (active participation of the player). Refined of participation element video game-to-movie adaptations are like about as entertaining as a video game with no

controller to manipulate the characters and the outcomes. This gives evidence that shows that although video games represent a humongous industry and have a great diversity of products, they are nothing without the social world. Whether we're simulating a football game, controlling an army of monsters or flying on a magic carpet we're doing nothing else but living out our fantasies which are based on something we've (a) actually participated in, (b) would like to participate in or (c) simply heard of, read about or saw on pictures/video. However, there are of course more complex situations when games come very close to offer the players a virtual reality filled with possibilities limited only by the context of the game.

There are games that offer entire virtual islands with their own flora and fauna for players to explore. In a sense, this puts the idea of content of video games being dictated by reality under question and opens a debate on whether video games will ultimately become substitutes for reality. As consumers it is up to us to answer this question for ourselves. Before we explore our options, however, let's take a look around and see who the consumers of video games are. Video games have gained massive popularity due to their dramatically increasing variety. Decades ago when video games were just starting to develop this domain of the market was aimed primarily at high-school age boys.

This was primarily due to the character of older video games, which centered on shooting, fighting and other activities typical (although not exclusive) to males. Now, as games are becoming more and more diverse women have been steadily joining this entertainment industry branch and now constitute 26% of the entire gaming world (Ulmer). Adult males (18+) are currently the

<https://assignbuster.com/video-games-in-pop-culture/>

world's biggest video game consumers (38%), younger boys (ages 6-17) now only represent 21% of the total consumers. The mean age of video game consumers has risen to 29 (Ulmer), which means that this sector of the entertainment market is now dominated by college students and young working professionals, as opposed to high school boys. Other data from presented by James Ulmer of hollywoodreporter.

om reveals that video games is a multi-billion dollar industry which keeps growing larger each year. It has shifted its consumer base by expanding towards a more mature audience and towards women as well. A direction of such character, based on the data, did not only help this industry acquire new customers but also dramatically increased this industry's annual profits worldwide. Returning to the consumers, as we've observed, video games today are no longer an exclusively younger male entertainment; by expanding the market to both sexes and raising the target age average video game industry has now become inseparable from pop-culture. Movies, books, music and other segments of pop-culture inevitably influence content and context of video games; in fact video games are so closely tied to the rest of the media these days that one can find these products bundled together in one item at stores like Virgin, Borders, Best Buy and others. However, video games is multi-faced phenomenon; it's as much a part of world's pop-culture as it is an art form and a simulator of reality.

It is only a matter of time before people realize and experience a fuller range of applications of video games. These discoveries are, however, in minds and hands of researchers and developers, we are but passive observers of their

innovations and active participants of their popular products. Only time will show. Works Cited “ Computer and Video Games”. 8 Mar. 2006.

Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 7 Mar. 2006.

wikipedia. org/wiki/Video_game> Ulmer, James. “ Broadband rules in rapidly expanding global video game market”. TheHollywoodReporter. com.

27 Sep. 2004. VNU eMedia, Inc. 7 Mar.

2006.