

Report of Findings

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Major Findings

As mentioned in my research, research on the topic of video games is highly underrepresented in India. This is mainly due to the fact the video games are seen as something meant for children to indulge in and therefore is not taken seriously as a hobby, an art form, or even as an avenue for academic research. This is the main contributing factor for the absence of any sort of discourse concerning video games in our popular cultural zeitgeist. Due to the lack of discourse within both the academia and popular culture regarding video games, I was forced to look at 4 national English language dailies to gauge the various issues regarding video games which are prevalent in the mainstream culture of the country.

The coverage of video games in Indian newspapers revolve around 5 broad themes:

- Video game violence
- Addiction
- Industry and its prospects.
- Controversies
- Health effects (both positive and negative)

I conducted this survey of newspaper coverage for the duration of 3 years (2017-19) and found 111 articles in total. This number serves to prove the miniscule coverage of video games within the mainstream cultural consciousness of India. There were a few niche enthusiast publications in India dealing with video games such as Digit, and Skoar, but these are now either mostly defunct or in decline. To access video game news, the Indian gamer has to rely on either foreign news outlets or social media sites such as YouTube, Reddit, and Twitter.

Now that we have covered the media discourse surrounding video games in India, let us now look at it through the lens of identity, and culture.

The identity of the gamer is one which performative in nature, i.e. that this particular identity is articulated through the act of play itself. Juul (2010) defines gamers as “... *individuals who engage in the consumption and production of video games, including playing, designing, modding, streaming, and participating in gaming communities, often as a core component of their identity and social interactions.*” This heavy emphasis on performance is also reflected in the ethos of gaming culture which glorifies merit, efficiency, and competition.

The academic engagement with video gaming as well as the discourse surrounding it has been greatly affected by an event which is now known as ‘GamerGate’. This particular series of events have forever changed the discourse surrounding gaming culture and its depiction in other forms of media. The sequence of events which started in 2014 and ended in late 2015 has left ripples in the world of gaming and media in general, which still resonate in any discussions regarding video games criticism and culture to this day. It also brought in a political element to the discourse surrounding gaming which had not been there before. The term gamer has since then, and still continues to be a stigmatized identity which has now been spuriously linked to right wing politics and various flavours of intolerances such racism, sexism, and homophobia.

This sort of discourse has created such an environment that an unbiased discussion about gamers and gaming culture has become nigh impossible. The only bright side to this is that these discourses are highly localized to western countries and thus have not reached Indian shores in any significant way yet. So, we may still be able to salvage the discourse surrounding gaming (at least domestically) which seems to be until now largely untainted by the various biases which exist abroad.

Video games as a medium is one which is on the rise in India and it is only through careful stewardship that we can hope to keep the mistakes made by the west from repeating itself in our country both in popular culture and in academia.

References:

Juul, J. (2010). *A Casual Revolution: Reinventing Video Games and Their Players*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.