The critical gamer

How gamers participate on IGN's platform

Lisa de Graaf (5646642)
Liberal Arts and Sciences – New Media and Digital Culture
Chiel Kattenbelt
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Abstract

The discussion about the positions of game journalists in the gaming community has been a much debated topic in recent years. Many researchers like David Nieborg and Maxwell Foxman have attempted to outline the importance of game journalists and the platform they use in their researches. Nieborgs researches concluded that many game journalists are not aware of their own position in the hierarchy of authority in mainstream media. Yet, there has not been conducted much research on the other key participant of these platforms: the gamer audience. What drives these members to participate on online fora and communities and how do they relate themselves to the game journalist? This translates to the main research question: "how do members facilitate a participatory culture by provoking critical discussions?" A by digital ethnography inspired research on IGN's gaming reviews has been conducted in order to find an answer to these questions. The comments on the reviews of *Pokémon: Let's Go* and *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate* have been analysed and coded over the span of two weeks. This means that approximately 600 comments on *Pokémon: Let's Go* and 2700 comments on *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate* have been analysed. The comments were selected with the concepts of Bourdieu's cultural capital, Jenkins participation and membership distinction in mind. The concept of affordances served to select the most interesting comments according to the audience. The analyses of these comments led to a couple of interesting patterns. These particular reviews namely attract retrogamers, uncivil behaviour and elitist fans. The comment sections on the reviews are also a place to tap collective intelligence. In addition, members mostly posted overtly negative comments, comments were rarely positive of nature. These findings help construct an image of a critical gamer, one who only comments to add to their feelings of authority or to dismiss other members who display false fannish behaviour. This research does not encompass the millions of people that do not comment on the reviews, but who do read them. It tests the concept of participation and what it entails.

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Introduction

IGN is a commercial website which mainly focuses on video games and other forms of entertainment. On the site you can find reviews, walkthroughs and video game news. The main section about video games is divided in subsections for each major gaming platform such as PC, Playstation, Xbox and Nintendo. It is safe to say that IGN with their 11 million YouTube subscribers, 7 million Twitter followers and an average of 177 million visitors on their website per month is one of the, if not biggest, gaming networks.[1] The majority of IGN's audience visits the IGN website for their video game reviews which are known to have been scandalous and notorious in the past. The game review section of the IGN US & Canada site will be the primary focus for this research since this site has the most traffic.

Writing reviews about games has been a common practice for the last thirty years, starting in the late 1980's when gaming magazines managed to define their own niche.[2] Game journalism has been an especially booming industry in the last couple of years. Many gamers are interested in reading about the gaming community. Therefore, game journalists are generally seen as gatekeepers in the gaming community, since the majority of the game journalists only review games and consoles which companies send to them before they go on the market for the public to buy. Many game journalists have been bashed in the past because of writing inconsistencies and lack of critical journalism skills.[3] Lack of qualitative journalism is usually a cause for discussion amongst the game critics and the readers. This causes some sort of hierarchy between not only the reader and the writer, but also between the commenters themselves.

The discussions that arise between members because of game reviews are particularly interesting to me. This research will focus on how IGN's review section forms a portal for gamers to find each other and communicate with each other. At first glance, it seems this site is a one way street, but I believe there is more to it. Therefore the main research question is: "How do members facilitate a participatory culture by provoking critical discussions on IGN's review section?" In order to answer this question I have formulated a couple of sub-questions. Firstly, I will analyse what the affordances are by asking "How do the affordances of IGN's comment section encourage or restrict participation?" Secondly, I will analyse a couple reviews more in depth by asking "How is the importance of embodied cultural capital displayed in IGN

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[1] "IGN World", IGN, accessed October 4, 2018, http://world.ign.com/

[2] David B. Nieborg and Tanja Sihvonen. "The New Gatekeepers? On the Occupational Ideology of Game Journalism" *Breaking New Ground: Innovation in Games, Play, Practice and Theory*. (London: DiGRA, 2009): 1

[3] Nieborg and Sihvonen, "The New Gatekeepers? On the Occupational Ideology of Game Journalism", 2-3

reviews?" Lastly, the focus will lie on the comment section to analyse how the portal affects the members of IGN. The question is "How does membership distinction arise in the comment section of IGN's reviews?"

This research was conducted via digital ethnography inspired research and close reading of certain reviews and comments. This method allows me to dive deep into the comment section and analyse how members communicate. The research was conducted by observing the site's review section for two weeks to gather data. Additionally, I did not actively participate on the site. Furthermore, it should be stated that the research was done as a fan as researcher. This perspective allows for substantive understanding of the conversations and the cultural references. A fan can analyse and code the discussions accordingly.

Academic relevance

Game journalism

This research will situate itself in the game journalists as gatekeepers debate. Some research has been done about game journalism, in particular by assistant professor media studies David Nieborg. His research partly focuses on game journalism; how it became mainstream, what is good and bad about game journalism and the role the game journalists play in the gamer community.[4] Nieborg also conducted exploratory research in collaboration with Foxman to analyse how game journalists came to be and how they created the conception of gamer identity. In addition, those findings on gamer identity were used to analyse the game journalists self-perception of their profession. This research was inspired by the increasing tension between the game journalists role as gatekeeper of information and the combative reader audience. Nieborg concludes in his research that the journalists are not fully aware of their own identity and practices. Most journalists have a hard time understanding their position in the hierarchy of authority in mainstream news media.[5]

This research will attempt to add to this discussion by offering a different perspective. Part of this perspective is provided through the research method which is digital ethnography as opposed to Nieborg's literature study. This method allows me to thoroughly analyse the discourse surrounding game journalism. Nieborg also surveys mainstream game "journalism"

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[4] Nieborg and Sihvohen, "The new gatekeepers: The occupational ideology of game journalism"*,* 1-9; David B. Nieborg and Maxwell Foxman. "The Mainstreaming of US Games Journalism*" Proceedings of 1st International Joint Conference of DiGRA and FDG*. (Dundee: DiGRA, 2016): 1-2

[5] Maxwell Foxman and David B. Nieborg. "Between a rock and a hard place: games coverage and its network of ambivalences" *Journal of Games Criticism* 3, no. 1 (2016): 36-38

instead of critical pieces and audience's interaction with those pieces. This research builds upon Nieborg's findings of game journalists having a hard time understanding their position in the gamer hierarchy. This is done by focussing on what the IGN members participation consists of and how it reflects on the position of the reviewer. Interestingly, some IGN journalists tend to show up in the comment section of their reviews as well, so they seem to want to be a part of the community.

Gaming as part of normal life

The practice of gaming in each form has become more and more a part of ordinary life. The stigma around gaming has changed a lot during recent years. For example, gaming is now part of most ordinary households, and it is not just a hobby for geeky boys anymore. Families are learning how to integrate play into their everyday lives. They develop new cultural and technical practices with the presence of video games, screens, sounds and visuals around them. These results came from research by Jessica Enevold that focussed on the interactivity between families and play.[6] The role of games and play in our society is seemingly undeniable, seeing as families learn to incorporate these playful technologies into their daily lives. The subculture of gamers seems to be ever-growing, and it no longer exists out of stereotypical white, young males. Therefore, it is useful to put more focus on researching the most prominent gaming news outlets to find out how most of their audience chooses to interact on the platform. I stated the impact of game journalists in the previous section. This section illustrates that gaming is now becoming part of ordinary life. This research attempts to delve deeper into the minds of the ordinary commenters on IGN, as to see what they consider normal behaviour of gamers in online communities.

Theoretical framework

There are three familiar concepts which form the basis for this research. Additionally, I introduce a new term. The concepts and their relevance to this research will be explained in the following section.

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[6] Jessica Enevold, "Domesticating Play, Designing Everyday Life: The Practice and Performance of Family Gender, and Gaming." *Proceedings of DiGRA Nordic 2012 Conference: Local and Global – Games in Culture and Society*. (DiGRA, 2012): 10-11

Participation according to Jenkins

Henry Jenkins has made name for himself within the media discourse. He has made multiple publications surrounding the concepts of *participation* and *participatory culture*. His idea about *participation* is the following: "participating is fans adapting the content" and "participation is asserting your own rights".[7] Essentially, Jenkin says that fans should be allowed to voice their opinions and adapt the original content of what they are a fan of. It is not just fans consuming the product, they add to it. Keywords here are expression and engagement. *Participatory culture* is what Jenkins considers "a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for sharing one's creations, and a form of informal mentorship where what is known by the most experienced is passed on to the novices." Game journalists, which have authority in their field, share their knowledge about games with their readers. Game journalists are different from their readers because of their knowledge, writing skills, playing skills and their access to the inner game industry.[8] Members in a participatory culture believe their contributions matter, such as their comments, and there is some form of social connection (i.e. identifying as a gamer).[9] There are multiple forms of participatory culture, but this research only uses the form *affiliations* since the other forms do not apply. *Affiliations* is a participatory culture centred around (in)formal memberships in online communities, such as IGN, across multiple forms of media.

This also happens on IGN, members use their knowledge about a particular game to add to or adapt the review. For example, one user wrote this in the comment section of the *Pokémon: Let's Go Pikachu and Eevee* review: "People's ignorance about this game is astounding. Time and time again it's been said and shown that this is not a main Pokémon game. This is a spin off and remake of Pokémon Yellow." This remark is something the game journalist neglected to cover. Members feel the need to explicitly state this in the comment section, since it started a lot of discussion in the comments whether this *Pokémon* game is a core game or not. Clearly, this user has been reading the comments and felt that he/she needed to add to the conversation since it would contribute to greater knowledge. In addition, it becomes apparent that cultural capital is needed in these discussions, as it is hard to participate if you do not know what people are talking about. To conclude, the concepts *participatory culture* and *participation* are essential for this research as it used in the main question to figure out how members on IGN

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[7] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide.* (New York: New York University Press, 2006*)*, 175-311

[8] Foxman, Nieborg, "Between a rock and a hard place: games coverage and its network of ambivalences"*,* 12

[9] Henry Jenkins et al., *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*. (Chicago: John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, 2009), 3

create a participatory culture via their critical contributions. IGN's comment section is more critical and direct, where Jenkins usually depicts participatory culture as a more easy-going culture.

The affordances that lead to participation

There are many different definitions of affordances. This research will use the descriptions of affordances in the way that Bucher and Helmond describe them in their research. This is the idea of technological affordances, that "technology affords social practice", which was coined by William Gaver. Gaver stated that this concept is useful for user-centred analyses of technology, which is what I am doing here. Technological affordances can be both perceptible and hidden, sometimes users know what to do just by looking at it, and other times the affordance is revealed after some experimentation. Technological affordances can exist to afford social interaction.[10] This is the case for IGN's comment section. Most affordances that exist within the comment section are perceptible and create social interaction. This becomes evident through the options to 'like' people's comment and to respond to other comments which can create a chain of reactions. Users can also share comments they like via a link or report them if they are against the community guidelines. One more hidden affordance is the ability to sort the comments; from most liked to most reacted to and of course from newest to oldest and vice versa. Another less apparent affordance is the ability to ignore certain users, effectively cancelling out certain social activity. This can be done by clicking the username and then pressing 'ignore'.

Bucher and Helmond also describe the difference between high-level and low-level affordances. High-level affordances are generally more abstract than low-level affordances which mainly focus on features as clicking, sharing or liking. The low-level affordances are basically "the furniture of the digital landscape." A low-level affordance focuses more on the technical features of the user-interface.[11] So, the affordances of IGN's comment section are considered low-level affordances, since they are more user based. In accordance with the main research question, the affordances will help to explain how members provoke participation on IGN. Specifically, this understanding of low-level technological affordances will help to formulate a concluding answer on how the affordances restrict or encourage participation.

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[10] Taine Bucher and Anne Helmond. "The Affordances of Social Media Platforms." In *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media*, by Jean Burgess, Thomas Poell and Alice Marwick, (New York: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2017): 6-7
[11] Bucher and Helmond, "The Affordances of Social Media Platforms", 8-13

Furthermore, some specific affordances such as the 'like'-button may indicate members who have displayed good embodied cultural capital.

Cultural capital as equal to good taste

Another key concept is *cultural capital* which was coined by Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu claims that through cultural capital we can determine what somebody's position is in a given social hierarchy. Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital was inspired by Marxist ideology. But, cultural capital differs from the Marxist idea of social hierarchy, since the Marxist social hierarchy is based on economic capital. Cultural capital cannot be obtained through economic means. Rather, it is obtained through what Bourdieu calls the field. The field is a system of social positions structured by power relations and characterised by a struggle for dominance.[12] Cultural capital is the idea that social advantages can come from cultural knowledge and that social conflicts can arise because of specific cultural tastes. Furthermore, it also means that people with a lot of cultural capital can determine what "good" and "bad" cultural taste is within their field. So, a person with a lot of cultural capital generally receives respect from their peers.[13]

      Cultural capital is divided into three different forms, these forms are: *embodied* (i.e.

Figure 1: example of knowledge of embodied cultural capital in a discussion

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[12] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed." In *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Rendal Johnson (Colombia: Columbia University Press, 1993)*,* 40-41

[13] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital." In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, by J. G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986)*,* 47

culture linked to the body such as literacy and cultural knowledge), *objectified* (i.e. cultural goods such as cd-collections and monuments) and *institutionalised capital* (i.e. certificates and diploma's).[14] This research will use the concept of embodied capital since this is achieved by pouring time and effort in a particular cultural good. In this case that means games; particular knowledge about games is bound to a person and cannot be transferred to another person. Embodied capital is useful in this research since members can recognize good and bad cultural taste when in discussion. For example, the comment section of the review of *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* has multiple ongoing discussions. One of them sees two members discussing about what makes a good Zelda game (depicted in figure 1 above). One of them says: "Some people really like the weapon breaking mechanic. Some people didn't like the dungeons." The other person answers with: "I can see how weapons breaking is a preference, but in Zelda games, dungeons were a part of what made a Zelda game a Zelda game." This is true, dungeons have been a reoccurring thing in all Zelda games of the past 30 years, except for the one game that is being reviewed on IGN. This displays a difference in embodied capital.

This idea of cultural capital is represented in the sub-question: "How is the importance of embodied cultural capital displayed in IGN reviews?" This sub-question is of relevance since most members are expected to have some knowledge about the games that are being discussed on the site. Most journalists and members use terms that are bound to certain game genres and franchises. These are terms as JRPG (Japanese role-playing game), EXP (experience) and MMO (massive multiplayer online). Furthermore, members tend to use other games than the one being reviewed during critical discussion to illustrate their point. Cultural capital is essential to be able to actively participate and contribute to the community.
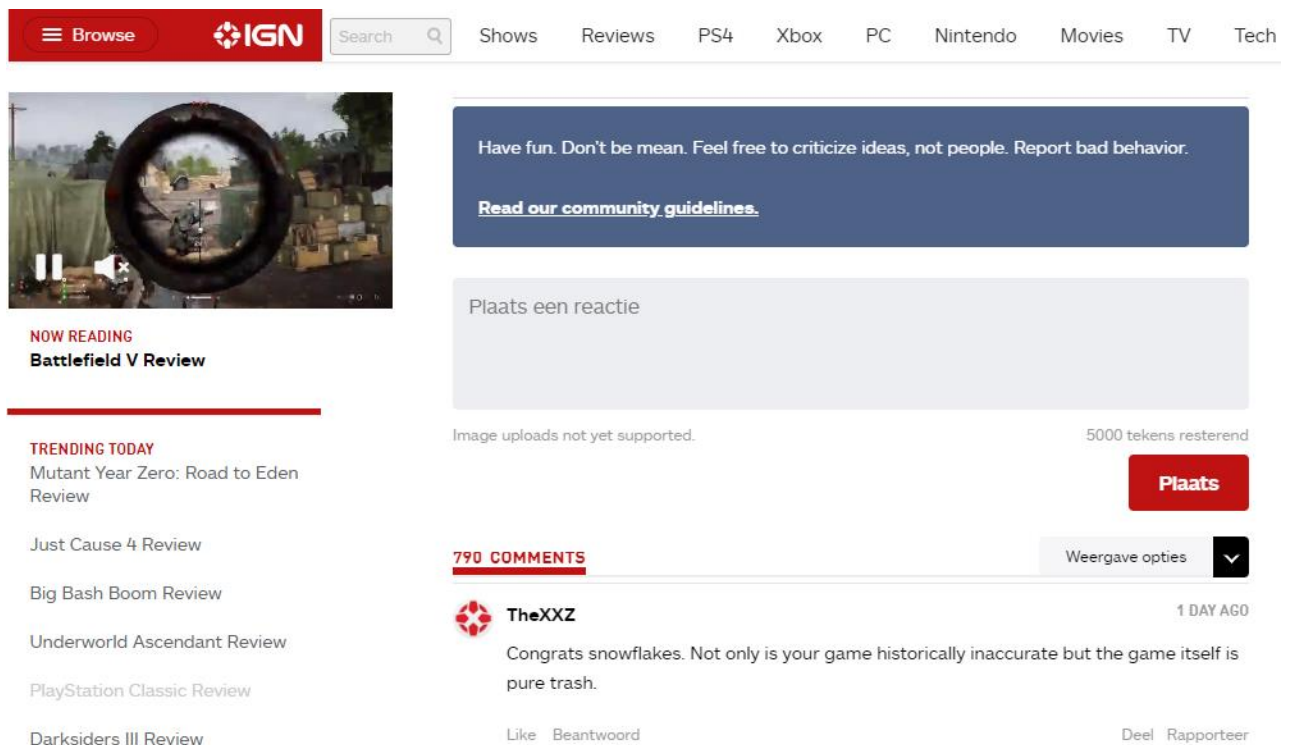
Membership distinction

Membership distinction is a straightforward concept. Basically, it entails that members can dissociate themselves from other members in a community because they may feel that they have more knowledge or better taste than the other person. For example, some people might not want to participate in a discussion anymore because they feel like they are not contributing in a meaningful way. It can also mean that members feel there is a form of hierarchy based on specific knowledge on a topic. Members with more cultural capital will be higher in the hierarchy. Those type of members tend to dismiss what members with less cultural capital have

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[14] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital", 47-58

to say. This can lead to discussions surrounding something subjective as taste. One member can reject another because they have a difference in tastes.

This thesis will research if and how membership distinction arises in the IGN comment section. It is important to keep in mind that IGN's staff and moderators have set up community guidelines for posting comments. These guidelines state that people have to act nice, like they would if they were in a public space. IGN encourages open discussion, but any mean or hateful behaviour is off limits. Furthermore, the IGN moderators do not approve of "console wars", which means claiming that one console is absolutely better than another. Discussions like these tend to lead into personal insults and generally do not add anything constructive to a discussion. So, it seems that IGN insists on keeping the comment section peaceful by enforcing rules, but this does not necessarily mean that people will follow the rules. This may also lead to a distinction between members. Figure 2 is an example of a member ignoring community guidelines. There is a warning displayed above the comment writing section, which once again insists that members should be nice in the comments. Yet, as figure 2 clearly shows, some members do not take heed from those words.

Figure 2: example of a hateful comment

Method

Academic lurking

There are many ways to conduct research on a particular site, but I have chosen for a by digital ethnography inspired research. This method was chosen for this research because it was the most effective way to analyse user behaviour. For example, during my research I did not have extensive knowledge on data analysis. Therefore, I did not make use of application programming interfaces as to keep my data clean. Furthermore, I believe that a discourse analysis would not be comprehensive enough to analyse user behaviour, as it does not focus on studying a large group of people but more so on the use and meaning of language in regards to a particular topic. This method was also chosen since I was not going to actively participate on the site, I was merely 'lurking' the reviews and comment sections for academic purposes. This method ensures that I would not try to draw out certain responses from the participants, rather I let the participants comment on what they want to discuss. Therefore, I only used data which is already available. The members are not aware of the researchers' presence and consequently are uninfluenced when writing their comments. This ensures that the selected data is untainted. Actively deciding which data are relevant for the research is a widely accepted method. This method is what Christine Hine calls *unobtrusive methods*. The gathering of the data itself she calls *unstructured observation* since the researcher is periodically checking in the community for data.[15] In this case, I consider relevant data to be comments related to my chosen concepts for this research. Therefore, I read all the comments with my theoretical framework in mind.

Furthermore, it is important to consider privacy when doing ethnographic research on a large group of people. Most members use made up usernames on the site, most of which do not resemble their real names at all. The members know that they are not posting to an obscure forum hidden on the web. Instead, they post on IGN, a large and popular site. Therefore it is safe to say that users are fully aware of the public nature of the site. The IGN US & Canada site has 122 million monthly visitors, so I would not consider gathering data on what people are saying on the website as intrusive.

Coding as a fan

There will be two reviews which form the centre of this analysis. These are the reviews of *Pokémon: Let's Go Pikachu and Eevee* and *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate* since these games

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[15] Christine Hine, "The Internet in Ethnographies of the Everyday." *In Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, Embodied and Everyday* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 159-161

came out recently and had a lot of comments during the first few hours of their upload. It is important to keep in mind that the 'comment sorting' function does not work well if the review has over approximately 1100 comments and if the review is not recent. This is something I noticed during my research on different reviews. The comment sorting function is essential for the analysis, which means that the chosen reviews had to be recent. Therefore, this was one of the aspects that determined which game reviews were analysed. Another aspect that determined what game reviews would be analysed, was that the researcher had to be somewhat familiar with the franchise in order to understand the comments. This is where the idea of a fan as researcher comes in. A fan thoroughly understands the referred cultural capital in the comments. Therefore, a fan is able to formulate relevant findings and conclusions on the collected data. The chosen reviews and comments were analysed via the same method that Jonathan Gray used in his research of antifandoms. This means that relevant data was observed and coded on notable patterns, activity and productivity. This analysis focused on textual output and not necessarily on who posted it.[16] The data itself was gathered between 2 December and 10 December of 2018. Coding the data took approximately a week.

Analysis

The analysis of the two reviews and their comments started by gathering comments that were related to my research. This means that the concepts of cultural capital, participation and membership distinction were represented in those comments or could be applied to the analysis of those comments. Additionally, there had to be noticeable interaction between commenters and the comment had to be an attempt at meaningful contribution, otherwise it would not be considered participation. This means that comments containing only a few words or comments that had no interaction were left out of this analysis. The interesting comments get highlighted due to the low-level affordances which users eagerly use. Comments with high interaction were filtered through the affordance of the comment sorting function and selected for analysis. Those comments were coded using the chosen theoretical framework and were grouped accordingly. Afterwards the selected comments were analysed on interesting and reoccurring patterns which are listed in the following section. These patterns attempt to represent the foremost reasons for participation on IGN.

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[16] Jonathan Gray, "Antifandom and the Moral Text: Televisions Without Pity and Textual Dislike." *American Behavioral Scientist* 48, no. 7 (March 2005): 847

Pokémon: Let's Go Pikachu and Eevee

Pokémon: Let's Go Pikachu and *Pokémon: Let's Go Eevee* were released for the Nintendo Switch mid-November 2018. The game is an enhanced remake of the original *Pokémon Yellow* that was released in 1998 for the Game Boy (Color). Both the original version and the remake were made by developer Gamefreak. The remake largely features typical Pokémon mechanics like the games that have been released in the past (i.e. *Pokémon Sun and Moon, Pokémon X and Y)*. These are mechanics like the RPG-style battle-system, capturing Pokémon and beating Pokémon gyms. But, the remake differs from the original because the remake is targeted towards a younger audience and first-time Pokémon players. As a result, the game's difficulty has been decreased significantly and a couple of major *Pokémon* staples such as wild encounter battles have been removed from the gameplay.[17]

  Pokémon: Let's Go Pikachu/Eevee may be targeted towards a younger and newer audience, but its nostalgia factor also attracts many old school players and long-time fans of the franchise. The differences of the remake are not always well-received by long-time *Pokémon* fans. This becomes apparent in the analysis of the review on *Pokémon: Let's Go Pikachu/Eevee*. Miranda Sanchez gave the game a rating of 8,3 out of 10, which is a fairly good rating.[18] As of writing this, the review clocks in on 616 comments.[19] Interestingly, this amount of comments does not reflect the number of users who visit the site on a monthly basis, but it seems to be what constitutes a fair amount of comments on IGN's site. Naturally, there are people who agree with her and people that are ready to discuss with anyone in the comments who does so. There are some noticeable patterns to be found in the comment section on this particular review, these patterns generated a lot of response In this section, those patterns are analysed individually to find out what drives members to participate in this comment section.

Heated discussions: how does this work?

Some comments can lead to heated discussions, but how can this happen? This is especially true for this comment section, since the review is about a remake of a beloved Pokémon game and because it is the first highly anticipated Pokémon game for the Nintendo Switch. Big companies are often looking for the games which are worth revisiting, the ones that the true

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[17] "10 big changes from Pokémon Yellow to Pokémon: Let's Go", Alex Osborn, accessed December 2, 2018, https://www.ign.com/articles/2018/11/19/10-big-changes-from-pokemonyellow-to-pokemon-lets-go

[18] "Pokemon Let's Go Pikachu and Eevee Review", Miranda Sanchez, accessed November 13, 2018, https://www.ign.com/articles/2018/11/12/pokemon-lets-go-pikachu-and-eeveereview?read

[19] At the time of writing this it is 11 December 2018. I have read all the comments up to this point.

fans have been waiting for. The Pokémon franchise is over 20 years old, which means the franchise has some long-time fans. Those fans have mostly been around since the retro gaming era. Consequently, those games formed the basis and according to long-time fans that basis is what all games that follow should be emulating. Gamers that played *Pokémon Yellow* when it first released could now be gamers well over 30 years old. Celia Pearce found in her research that those gamers still value gaming and see it as a significant part of their life. To design games for them, means incorporating the power of memory and nostalgia. Additionally, referencing classic games and stories is a strong attractor.[20] Long-time fans of the franchise could also be called retrogamers. According to David Heineman, retrogamers have constructed their own culture and identity around retrogaming which focusses on nostalgia and public collective memory. Retrogamers feel like they are the authority when it comes to defining which games are classic and which games are absolutely not. But, as retrogaming got more popular in the last decade and more consumer oriented (as seen by Nintendo releasing *SNES Classic* and Sony releasing *Playstation Classic*), the retrogamers lost their cultural authority to the gaming industry. Retrogaming became mainstream. Demonstrating collective cultural capital and criticism is an effort of the retrogamers to redefine themselves as an cultural authority on retrogaming.[21]

This is what happened in the comment section of the review on *Pokémon: Let's Go Pikachu and Eevee*. By making a game that incorporates collective memory and nostalgia (i.e. a remake of a classic), Nintendo effectively reels in retrogamers. As a result, avid retrogamers read reviews on sites as IGN and bash the reviewer and the company for "not listening to what the fans want." This display of an identity of a retrogamer resonates with other retrogamers on the IGN platform, who also feel compelled to respond to the debate. This can be seen in figure 3 and 4. There retrogamer identity becomes evident through these quotes: "If you're someone that's has been with the franchise for the past 20 years[…]" and "I hate that they aren't appealing any of these games to the fans that have played since red and blue."

These people share a collective identity, that of being a retrogamer and they feel like their contributions to the debate matter. The latter is signified through the likes these members are getting on their comments. Not a lot of comments on IGN get likes, with the most likes in this comment section being 48 likes (which is a comment of a retrogamer who dislikes the game

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[20] Celia Pearce, "The truth about Baby Boomer gamers: A study of over-forty computer game players" *Games and Culture* 3, no. 2 (2008): 145

[21] David S. Heineman, "Public memory and gamer identity: retrogaming as nostalgia" *Journal of Games Criticism* 1, no. 1 (2014): 1-24

as well), so it could be stated that these comments are getting support from the IGN community. Furthermore, the comments display the importance of cultural capital, since the members have to know what the old games were like to be able to participate. From this shared embodied capital we get the sense there is a shared consensus, indicating what the "good" Pokémon conventions are. These retrogamers can also draw out interaction, creating critical and sometimes hostile discussions using those conventions.

An example is demonstrated in figure 5. Behaviour like this is usually not accepted by the IGN community guidelines since it contains hostile undertones. This particular commenter "abHS4L88" can be found multiple times in IGN's comment sections harassing people for their embodied cultural capital. This commenter is very dismissive of others and therefore shows signs of membership distinction.

sl12   2 WEEKS AGO *(GEWIJZIGD)*

I am Japanese. I registered just to leave comment on this post.

This review is a joke. The author doesn't know this is being treated as a main installment. She clearly has no clue what Pokemon games have been like and hasn't done her research.

"New mechanics" you said? Fans in Japan are sad over the fact that there are no rating battles and no significant new features. Every gen, there's something new. 2nd gen-eggs. 3rd gen-nature... you name it. Every time a new game launches, you are excited to find out what awaits ahead. And THIS, you start the game and continue your journey thinking "hmmm I wonder what else they took away in order to appeal to the casual players who haven't played any Pokemon games except for RGB&Pikachu". If you're someone who has been with the franchise for the past 20 years, you'd only feel this has many things removed gameplay-wise, instead of focusing on the "new mechanics".

Don't get me wrong - if this is a spin off like Pokepark and Fushigi no Dungeon (don't know their English names), it would be great. Graphics are nice and the BGM really brings back memories. Sadly, this is marketed as a main game (as seen on official website). This is the part that worries us.

From a mainline game angle, it's worrying to have power 90 & accuracy 100 moves with buff. It's worrying to have given up on the core fans and appeal only to GO users. Why? Because this is now part of the mainline and everything that happens here have a chance of making its way into the 8th gen. This is a very legitimate concern and Miranda

Figure 3: The criticism of a Japanese retrogamer

silentwolf123   3 WEEKS AGO

I hate that they aren't appealing any of these games to their fans that have played since red and blue. Instead they make the game incredibly easy and boring for kids 10 and under.

Like 6   Beantwoord   Deel   Rapporteer

BumpyTreeLog   3 WEEKS AGO

Yup. I heard Pokemon Yellow remake on console and was instantly sold. Then heard, but with everything stripped out and replaced with Pokemon Go's just throw a pokeball and hope for the best mechanics and lost interest.

Like 8   Beantwoord   Deel   Rapporteer

Gideon513   3 WEEKS AGO

Yeah, everyone knows you gotta hold down B button to increase catch chance. Heard it from a friend on the playground. Reliable source.

Like 13   Beantwoord   Deel   Rapporteer

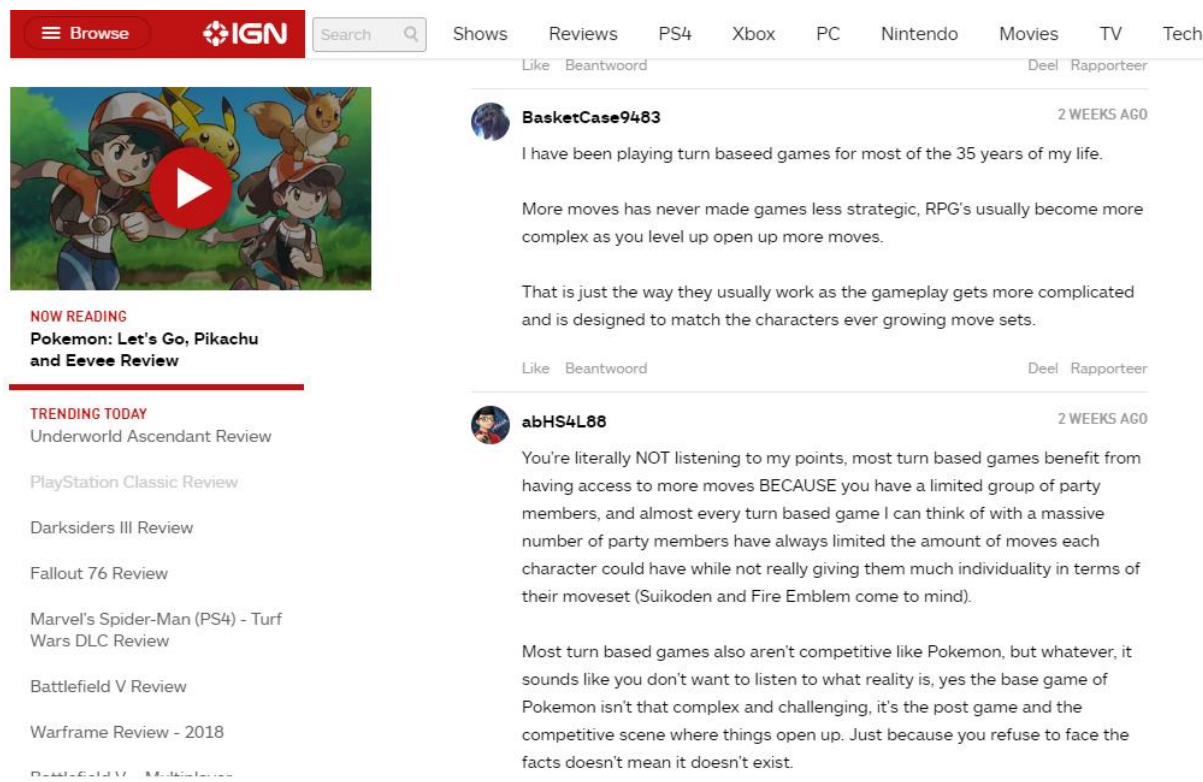**BumpyTreeLog**   3 WEEKS AGO

Ah the memories. I mean no battling tho. Start encounter, throw a pokeball.. I hate that system.

Like 1   Beantwoord   Deel   Rapporteer

Figure 4: Retrogamers that do not approve of the changes

Figure 5: Example of a heated discussion between a retrogamer who supports the remake and a retrogamer who does not

Collective intelligence: seeking the help of others

Some members comment on the review to seek out the cultural capital of others. This usually happens because a critical question arises that the review did not (fully) answer. One person cannot know everything, but each person knows something, and so the combined intelligence can be tapped by the whole community. Henry Jenkins adapted the idea of collective intelligence and applied it to online communities. It is the ability to pool knowledge and work together towards a common goal. This puts the focus in online communities on teamwork and collaboration, where each person can build upon another**.**[22] Collective intelligence also occurs on IGN's platform, where members ask each other questions about the reviewed games. If the journalist of the review cannot satisfy or convince a certain member, then the members confide in each other and work towards a more knowledgeable, comprehensive answer or informative text. Figure 6 and 7 illustrate how members use the communities collective intelligence to get their questions answered. Members use their embodied capital to help each other. The affordances do not necessarily play a role in this, members have to come across certain comments themselves and they will answer them if they can. Consequently, having specific cultural capital can lead to participation and collaboration.

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[22] Jenkins et al., "Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century", 40

I am glad to see battling is still in the game, but is there the same level of strategy needed? Is there any sense of risk and reward when catching wild Pokémon? Are there consequences to trying to catch too many? Do you have to weaken them or use items to increase your chances? (Beyond master balls and stuff).

Like   Beantwoord   Deel   Rapporteer

Anri02   2 WEEKS AGO *(GEWIJZIGD)*

It seems until you get to post game, as long you maintain a type advantage, you won't have any problems. The risk for catching Pokemon is losing pokeballs, the reward is getting candies that you can use to improve stats. The only real consequences to catching too many is using up Pokeballs and spaces in your PC. You do not weaken them to catch them, and there might be a berry you can use to increase your chances slightly.

Like   Beantwoord   Deel   Rapporteer

CursedShoes   2 WEEKS AGO *(GEWIJZIGD)*

To be honest, I never had a hard time just raising one Pokemon and flying through the story in any other Pokemon game's main quest. I always heard stuff like you have to have a well-balanced party and this and that, but I could always just tank with my starter with little problem (sometimes bringing in a secondary if no moves are effective).

Post-game and online are different stories, but I'm not too sure why anyone says this game in particular makes the main story too easy when you can literally just do the same thing in any other Pokemon game.

Figure 7: example of members highlighting different parts of a question

KingMarvel   2 WEEKS AGO

I've never been into turn based games, but I did enjoy the Pokemon cartoons so maybe this is a game I can play without too much micromanagement required. Hmm.

My sister plays Pokemon Go. Am I able to link the Switch and her phone to trade Pokemon?

Like   Beantwoord   Deel   Rapporteer

Anri02   2 WEEKS AGO

Should be able to

Like   Beantwoord   Deel   Rapporteer

GuardianRavenKing   2 WEEKS AGO

Yes, you can trade between Go & Let's Go. Not sure how the linking system works or if it's specific to someone's account or not.
It's really odd the review didn't mention the integration or usage of Go with this game.

Like   Beantwoord   Deel   Rapporteer

JKB06   2 WEEKS AGO

It's not live yet, thus they can't really comment on it.

Like   Beantwoord   Deel   Rapporteer

Figure 6: these members each know something and can therefore fully answer the question

Figure 6 sees multiple members go in on the different questions asked by a member but they each highlight various aspects of those questions. One member discusses a more balanced tactic while the other offers a straight forward tactic. Their combined cultural capital leads to the common goal of answering the question. In that way, the members of the IGN community know more about a particular object combined than on their own. At times, the journalist does not write a comprehensive review. In that case, members of the community can make meaningful contributions by adding information to the review. Figure 7 shows members talking about the online feature. It is one of the key aspects of the game, yet it was not discussed in the review. Multiple members pool their knowledge on the online feature to come to a more satisfying answer. Figure 7 also perfectly illustrates the meaning of collective intelligence: nobody knows everything, but they each know something. Collective intelligence is also knowing that it is okay to turn to a larger community which has the right expertise if you do not know the answer.[23] So, it seems that the IGN platform can be used to obtain knowledge directly from the community and not just from the journalists, although it is essential to check the information on reliability since it is not coming from an authority. Collective intelligence highlights the importance of embodied capital, because without it meaningful participation and processing of information cannot happen.

Super Smash Bros. Ultimate

The fifth instalment in the *Smash Bros.* series *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate* was released for the Nintendo Switch on December 7th 2018. The *Smash Bros.* series is a series of fighting/button mashing games that feature Nintendo's most iconic characters from all their popular franchises. The game is widely considered a classic, since it is released on every major Nintendo console and has received generally good ratings from popular gaming sites. This instalment was highly anticipated because it features all the fighters who have appeared in past games and more, adding to a total of 74 playable characters who can duke it out on 108 stages. It is definitely the biggest instalment yet and therefore the fans have set their expectations quite high. IGN's reviewer rated the game a 9,4 out of 10.[24] The review had approximately 2700 comments after approximately a week since the release. This review also has some notable patterns. After a

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[23] Jenkins et al., "Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century", 38-41

[24] "Super Smash Bros. Ultimate review", Tom Marks, accessed December 7, 2018, https://www.ign.com/articles/2018/12/06/super-smash-bros-ultimate-review

couple days the review mostly saw members disagreeing with the journalist, some via constructive criticism and others by being more direct. The review also causes discussions about console wars. In this section I will analyse what drives these members to comment on this particular review.

Active disagreement with the journalist

One noticeable pattern was members actively disagreeing with what the reviewer wrote. In a participatory culture there is some form of informal mentorship and fans can express themselves because of the very low barrier to participate. Members can, of course, disagree with the reviewer and add constructive feedback or use their cultural capital to make for a more comprehensive review. Looking at the comments, some members on IGN recognise their position in relation to the reviewer while others do not seem to recognise IGN as an authority in the gaming community. These power relations seem to form the incentives for members to add to the discussion in the comment section. Amy Binns wrote in her research about abuse on journalists that journalists regularly receive criticism and abuse on their work because people think it is fair game to do so based on the journalists' authoritarian position. Furthermore, Binns suggested that uncivil behaviour on anonymous threads has become the cultural norm. Both of these trends have become a problem that goes hand in hand with the rise of web 2.0 and participatory cultures.[25] What seems to further intensify this trend on IGN in particular, is the fact that most of the audience has extensive cultural capital based on the games which makes them experts themselves.

The comments on the review of *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate* show signs of uncivil behaviour, directed to the reviewer but also towards other members in the community. Most comments that contain uncivil behaviour are critiquing the score that the reviewer gave. Another common theme is discussions that have turned into console wars. It is difficult to find positive threads among the many comments. One positive, respectful discussion was an exchange between two members who both added a meaningful contribution to the review. The exchange between these members can be seen in figure 8. Both remain civil, voice their opinions and bear the authority of the journalist in mind. Both members recognize that they are by no means professionals. The top comment got three likes after an hour and some responses, meaning that there are members who value this response.

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[25] Amy Binns, "Fair Game? Journalists' experiences of online abuse" *Journal of Applied Journalism & Media Studies* 6, no. 2 (2017): 202-203

BasketCase9483   1 HOUR AGO *(GEWIJZIGD)*

I've put nearly 15 hours into World of Light now and definitely dont agree with how the review says it starts to feel samey and grindy after a while. There is so much stuff in there, and so many insane challenges that I am still constantly coming back to it and constantly being surprised by how creative and fun the entire mode is.
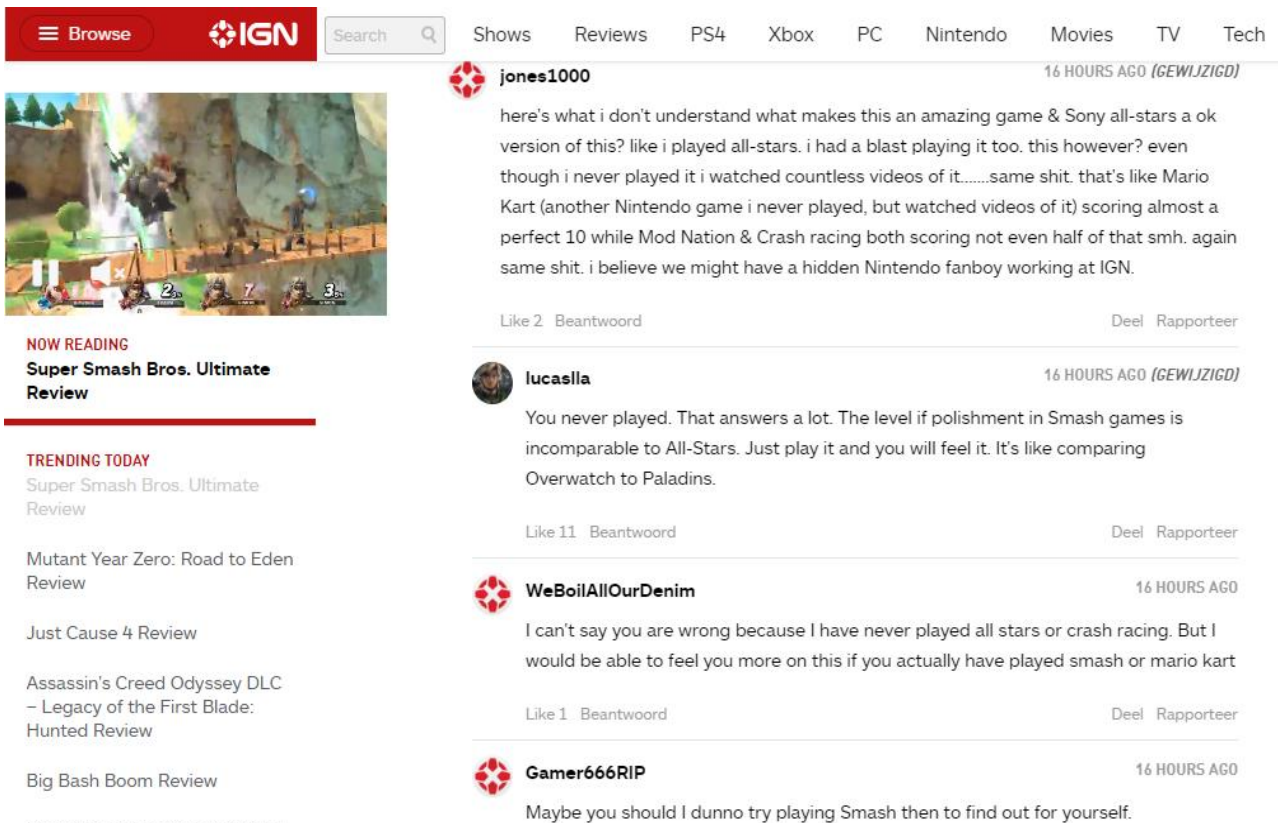
I am by no means a Smash master, so maybe people who are better at the game than me would just steamroll the entire thing and get bored, but for me, on normal difficulty, it is a challenging and rewarding experience.

Like 3 Beantwoord   Deel Rapporteer

Stone-coldmal123   1 HOUR AGO

I'm in the same boat as yourself as this is my first Smash game and I got drawn in with the encyclopedia like treasure trove of Nintendo characters, stages and spirits! The World of Light is a very enjoyable aspect of the game, best played in small, bitesize, chunks. (Tom's requirement to review the game asap led a little to the 'samey' feel he had about the game).
Another worthy addition to my Switch library!

Figure 8: respectful conversation

≡ Browse   ◆IGN   Search 🔍   Shows   Reviews   PS4   Xbox   PC   Nintendo   Movies   TV   Tech

jones1000   16 HOURS AGO *(GEWIJZIGD)*

here's what i don't understand what makes this an amazing game & Sony all-stars a ok version of this? like i played all-stars. i had a blast playing it too. this however? even though i never played it i watched countless videos of it.......same shit. that's like Mario Kart (another Nintendo game i never played, but watched videos of it) scoring almost a perfect 10 while Mod Nation & Crash racing both scoring not even half of that smh. again same shit. i believe we might have a hidden Nintendo fanboy working at IGN.

Like 2 Beantwoord   Deel Rapporteer

NOW READING
Super Smash Bros. Ultimate Review

lucaslla   16 HOURS AGO *(GEWIJZIGD)*

You never played. That answers a lot. The level if polishment in Smash games is incomparable to All-Stars. Just play it and you will feel it. It's like comparing Overwatch to Paladins.

Like 11 Beantwoord   Deel Rapporteer

TRENDING TODAY
Super Smash Bros. Ultimate Review

Mutant Year Zero: Road to Eden Review

WeBoilAllOurDenim   16 HOURS AGO

I can't say you are wrong because I have never played all stars or crash racing. But I would be able to feel you more on this if you actually have played smash or mario kart

Just Cause 4 Review

Assassin's Creed Odyssey DLC – Legacy of the First Blade: Hunted Review

Like 1 Beantwoord   Deel Rapporteer

Gamer666RIP   16 HOURS AGO

Big Bash Boom Review

Maybe you should I dunno try playing Smash then to find out for yourself.

Figure 9: User jones1000 gets discredited for his negative opinion towards the journalist

This form of participation is solely based on what was written in the review and these members displayed their disagreement with the reviewer in a respectful manner. Yet, there were plenty of instances of members acting uncivilly to express their disagreement. These members mostly were upset with the rating the game got, some finding it either too high or not high enough. As Binns stated in her research, members who are anonymous tend to display more uncivil behaviour as it is becoming increasingly more common to web 2.0 culture.[26] Additionally, there is no way of knowing if the member who wrote the comment is male or female, so it is impossible to determine if these traits are more common for one gender than the other.

Uncivil behaviour directed to the reviewer can provoke critical discussion and therefore participation, as is illustrated in figure 9. User 'jones1000' displays his embodied capital in an effort to discredit the reviewer. However, due to his lack of embodied capital (i.e. not playing the game) his opinion gets discredited by his fellow peers instead. This is emphasized by the 11 likes on user 'lucaslla' response on their comment, who uses his own cultural capital as support as well. The other users that respond all display signs of membership distinction, because they voice that they feel as though his opinion does not matter. This instance once again highlights the importance of cultural capital in an online community. Consequently, poorly developed cultural capital can lead to membership distinction. This particular comment was not a one of a kind comment, there were a couple of other comments similar to this one. I made the decision to use figure 9 as an example, as I did not want to be redundant by showing multiple, yet similar comments to make a point.

Disagreement among fans

The previous section explored the ties between the journalist and the reviewer. This section will focus on how the comments portray the relations among the members themselves. Fans not only behave uncivilly towards authority, but they also seem to have the same attitude towards each other. I noticed a striking amount of negative comments during the observation, apparently it is hard to come across positive threads. Members seem to have no problem with being rude towards each other. Usually, participating means adding something meaningful to a thread. The incentive to respond is to correct some mistakes or to distance themselves from 'untrue' fans. This divide between 'common' and 'elitist' fans is not something new. As Matt Hills describes in his research "Fiske's 'textual productivity' and digital fandom: Web 2.0 democratization

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[26] Binns, "Fair Game? Journalists' experiences of online abuse", 202-203

versus fan distinction?" these types of fans can sometimes co-exist while at other times they can compete. These tensions are usually tied to one media fandom, and they stay within that community. It is a result of more self-proclaimed 'experienced' fans claiming what good "fannish" textual productivity is. Additionally, fans tend to elevate textual production that encapsulates their idea of good fan-based cultural capital.[27]

Bearing this information in mind, it becomes clear why some members on IGN behave the way they do. Figure 10 is an example of members competing about contested cultural capital. The interesting part about this discussion is that it is totally unrelated to the original topic, namely the review itself. The fans broadened the topic turning it into a console war, instead of discussing the one Nintendo game that IGN rated. The members who are responding are most likely fans of Nintendo (since they are reading a review of a Nintendo game) and want to distance themselves from untrue fans. The members distinguish themselves from each other based on their cultural capital and they discredit the information they believe to be false. The fans each have an idea of the position of the major consoles in the console war. Meanwhile no particular idea about that is better than the other, as there is no consensus about the console war in the gamer community, but they still use their elitist status to try and come out on top. These type of discussions seem to form a returning pattern on this IGN review.

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[27] Matt Hills, "Fiske's 'textual productivity' and digital fandom: Web 2.0 democratization versus fan distinction?" *Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 10, no. 1 (2013): 147-150

LOL. Doesnt matter how many exclusives they release "a year". As if they are no good on the following year. PS4 and Xbox (sort of) have many and well established exclusives. The switch pretty much has nothing compared to them. Aside from the fact that the switch is still fairly new, its also due to the fact that most of the switches games are geared toward a younger audience. Not only that but look how long they have made people wait to get a proper metroid game. Theres a reason they will always be falling behind the console race.

Like   Beantwoord   Deel   Rapporteer

abHS4L88   12 HOURS AGO

"will always be falling behind the console race" yet they sell way more systems than Microsoft, the Switch can potentially surpass the XBoxOne's lifetime sales by next year so you have a weird idea of what "falling behind" means.

I love your arbitrary/ignorant reasons for downplaying Nintendo do "the fact that most of the Switch's games are geared toward a younger audience" being family friendly does NOT mean it's geared towards a younger audience, it means that younger audiences are taken into account, there's a major difference. Metroid has never been a major seller (Donkey Kong Country Returns alone sold more than the entire Metroid Prime Trilogy) so that doesn't even factor into what you're saying.

Why doesn't the Switch have as many exclusives as the PS4/XBoxOne? Because those consoles have been out nearly 3x as long, plain and simple, being family friendly doesn't even make a game not an amazing exclusive, Super Mario Odyssey is super family friendly yet it's one of the best games of the generation so far.

Whiskey_Fingerz   2 DAYS AGO

Yes, uncharted, god of war, spiderman, crash bandicoot, last of us, shadow of colossus, horizon zero dawn...also halo, gears, forza, cuphead...these games have all been u iversally panned as bad games. I think the bar is lower for nintendo. The new mario, which i totally loved, while awesome somehow got a 10. but that's okay who cares about ratings just olay the games you like.

Like   Beantwoord   Deel   Rapporteer

thelostscribe   2 DAYS AGO *(GEWIJZIGD)*

delhaj7 : I think you are confusing the bar for how many exclusives Nintendo needs to put out a year vs how many AAA games come to their consoles. No one demands Nintendo put out a ton of exclusives, but since their last three consoles either can't handle AAA games that appear on Xbox and PS or the games require severe modification to run on them, i.e. Doom and Wolfenstein. This is not hating on their hardware, it's just a fact.

So, since massive AAA titles can't appear on their system, it's up to Nintendo to fill the void. Can't blame people who own or want to buy the system wanting a wide variety of games to play. I'm sure their are plenty of people who own multiple or all the home consoles currently out, but the reality is, most people own only one or multiples of the same console. Nintendo has wonderful I.P.'s, but to make up for games released by the big three, EA, Ubisoft and Activision, not appearing on their consoles, they need to put out a steady stream of games on their own to keep their console relevant and those sales numbers up.

Figure 10: A discussion about cultural capital unrelated to the original topic

Comparison

The reviews of *Pokémon: Let's Go Pikachu and Eevee* and *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate* each have different outstanding patterns that, in my analysis, form the red wire of their respective comment sections. This is interesting since both games are Nintendo games and so it can be expected that they attract the same kind of fanbase. Both games each have a long-standing but different history, meaning that fans have expectations respective of these games. Both comment sections proved that members need cultural capital to participate in a meaningful way. Furthermore, members tend to distance themselves from each other based on their opinions and tastes. Surprisingly, both comment sections did not leave much room for compromise.

The *Pokémon: Let's Go Pikachu and Eevee* review was characterised by a great representation of retrogamers, who felt authorised to voice their dislikes about the remake. Furthermore, members used the comment section to seek help from each other, tapping the collective intelligence of the community. The *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate* review was more riddled with critical, knowledgeable gamers who at times were uncivil towards the journalist and each other. The comments on both reviews were overtly and often cynical about the games and the community around them, though both reviews received a high score. The *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate* review did receive more comments than the *Pokémon: Let's Go Pikachu and Eevee* review, but they were not more detailed or short-sighted on one review than the other.

Conclusion

This research was conducted in an attempt to add to the game journalist debate and to offer a different perspective to that debate. This research illustrated that the IGN members participate in a direct, knowledgeable and honest fashion. The findings support Nieborg's notion of game journalists being unsure of their position in the hierarchy. IGN provides a platform that enables their members to express their authoritarian feelings and the analysis has shown that members will do so. On top of that, the gamer audience is distinctive in comparison to the general journalistic audience because they embody vast knowledge of the discussed cultural good. Game journalists deal with an audience of which most have thoroughly experienced the game, making them some form of experts as well. In that way, members challenge the journalists authority. Furthermore, the popularity of the platform illustrates that gaming is major part of ordinary life, making this research contribute to the representation of the gamer audience. This

research has been done by analysing what is common behaviour according to the members on IGN. The reviews of *Pokémon: Let's Go Pikachu and Eevee* and *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate* on IGN have been analysed through the by digital ethnography inspired research method. The fan as researcher approach assured that I could understand what was being discussed in the comment section. The comment threads that stood out the most have been thoroughly coded on notable patterns, activity and productivity. The research attempted to find an answer to the question: "How do members facilitate a participatory culture by provoking critical discussions on IGN's review section?" The results demonstrate that members capitalise on the importance of embodied cultural capital, it is necessary to be able to participate in a meaningful way to a discussion. The following patterns demonstrated this.

Firstly, members participate by tapping into the cultural capital of other members, meaning they make use of collective intelligence in order to gain more knowledge. Secondly, self-identified "elite" members participate to immediately punish other members for the use of false cultural capital. This goes hand in hand with the rise of membership distinction on the IGN site. Members mostly dismiss each other based on their cultural knowledge about a certain game and the ability to accurately use that knowledge to compare it to other games. Members also feel the need to come to the defence of the games they like or to correct false fannish textual productivity. This in turn creates the possibility for critical, sometimes harsh discussions, due to members tending to behave uncivilly in order to get their point across. This behaviour can either be directed at the journalist or other members. Additionally, it seems that the incentive to participate is mostly given by what is double downed on in the review or just plainly skipped over. In the participatory culture on IGN, the reviewer is in a position of authority and naturally, members are critical of what an authority proclaims. Furthermore, Bourdieu's cultural capital states that hierarchy arises as a consequence of good or bad "taste".

Lastly, some members participate because they identify as a retrogamer and are attracted to texts about retrogames. This identity strengthens their belief that they are the authority on retro games instead of the reviewer. Furthermore, low-level affordances can make some threads show up more than others, the likes and amount of comments pushes certain threads up and causes others to disappear. Longer threads contain more discussion leading to different aspects that members can go in on. Comments which contain no meaningful contribution to the discussion or the review tend to get no interaction whatsoever. To conclude, members provoke critical discussion on IGN through their identity as retrogamer, by their uncivil or elitist behaviour and through tapping the collective intelligence of the community. This thesis challenged the idea of participation and participatory culture by analysing a platform which has

a unclear hierarchy; a platform that diffuses the line between the novices and the mentor. A hierarchy that differs from that of normal journalism, since most retrogamers and elitist fans are self-identified experts as opposed to a generic audience with only a few experts. Cultural capital and membership distinction form the basis of the hierarchy on IGN and IGN serves as a platform to fulfil the members need to express their expertise and knowledge.

Discussion

This research has a couple of shortcomings due to restrictions on the word count and certain limitations. It should be stated that this conclusion is not applicable to all IGN sites since I only reviewed the American version of the IGN site. For example, one look at the Dutch IGN site reveals that this version of IGN is more critical and direct in tone than the American version. But, the Dutch site has less traffic and fewer comments to analyse, so it covers a much smaller target audience. Though it could be interesting to analyse a website that has a much different tonality.

Furthermore, I only analysed reviews that were about Nintendo games since I went for the fan as researcher approach. The fanbases I analysed are therefore somewhat similar and easier to compare. Arguably, Nintendo reviews attract other gamers to the platform than a Playstation review. Consequently, it would be interesting to research if there is a difference between these console fanbases and the way they communicate. This could be researched in the same manner as this research, but it would also focus on games from a different console.

In conclusion, a follow-up study could reveal different things by analysing more comments and threads. For example, this study could only focus on analysing why certain members are overly negative in the comments. Researching a platform with members who have a more positive attitude could lead to entirely different conclusions. Another potential follow-up study could focus on analysing what exactly constitutes participation as Jenkins describes it. This study revealed that not nearly all visitors of IGN USA leave a comment. Less than 1% of the visitors left a comment on the Super Smash Bros. Ultimate review. A follow-up study could analyse how much interaction the entire IGN platform receives by analysing all sections of the site. This would result in a more complete and modern view of how Jenkins participation translates into statistics on online communities. Additionally, Jenkins participation theory includes the people that *do* participate, but what about the people that visit the platform but leave their thoughts to themselves? How come that some online platforms receive high amounts

of traffic, yet people do not feel the need to let themselves be heard? I suggest that this could also be interesting to analyse in a potential follow-up study.

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List of figures

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