

The Significance of Age, Gender and Culture on Games

Age has an important effect in the games industry as game certificates determine what ages can be exposed to certain content. Games with graphic content like violence, sexual themes and gambling can only be featured in 18+ certificates. So when designing a game you need to consider the age range it's targeting which also ties into how you market the game. Age certificates also allow parents to dictate what their children are being exposed to with some parents being more lenient than others and buying higher rated games for younger people. This is why game boxes have to say the specific things in the game that make it whatever rating it is as some 18 rated games might not be as explicit as others. The highest percentage of people playing games are between ages 18 and 34, which is why a lot of AAA game titles are 18+ certificates and still manage to be very successful. Games targeted to younger audiences are also important as they bring in new generations of gamers. People that play games from a younger age are also more likely to keep playing games as they get older meaning the medium will keep getting bigger and companies can keep making money. With older and younger audiences both playing video games it can bring communities together and have multiplayer party games be played by an entire family. Some lower rated games can get away with things like shooting and killing by there being no blood or very subjective death animations. For example, Fortnite, which is suitable for younger children has guns and themes of killing, however in the defeat animation, the characters seem to digitize which could suggest they aren't dying but being sent away or respawning. The gameplay is also very light hearted and has things like pop culture outfits and dancing emotes, whereas something like Call of Duty which goes for a more realistic and violent play style has to be an 18 rated game. The reasons why games like Minecraft, Fortnite and Rocket League are so popular and have so many players is because they have fun gameplay mechanics while still being family friendly so all age groups can play them.

Gender is also very important in the games industry, not only the different genders that play video games but also how they are represented in them. Even though the percentage of male and female gamers are around the same in the UK, video games seem to be associated with males more than females. This is because of the way gender is represented in a lot of games as well as the way gender is treated differently in gaming communities. While playing games, 68% of females have said that they have been harassed just for being female, which is a shocking percentage. This is why good representations of both male and females in games are so important as they help to bring inclusivity to the communities and make different people feel represented. Their main bad representations are ones that use stereotypes where males are often portrayed as strong and muscled heroes where the females would be weaker with overly sexualised features that need to be saved by the hero. Some bad female representations include games like Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball where the entire premise is over sexualised women playing volleyball as well as Lara Croft from the Tomb Raider games who is one of the best known female protagonists. In earlier Tomb Raider games the design of Lara Croft was heavily criticized for her overly sexualized outfit and features, however across the years the character has been redesigned to be less sexualized. In recent years, there have been more strong female protagonists in mainstream titles but still not as much as males. Some good representations of women include Aloy from Horizon Zero Dawn and Jesse from Control, both are strong characters who have actual character development and aren't overly sexualized at all. Even though there are much better representations in games now, there still isn't nearly as many female protagonists than

males. The largest percentage of games in recent years have multiple choices for your character which does help to create a more equal community, but if there is a distinct protagonist it's still most of the time a white male.

Different cultures have an effect on the Games Industry whether its to do with religion, the history of a country or the countries censorship laws. A country's censorship laws greatly impact the video game industry and market as some studios have to edit the content of their games to conform to a certain government's standards. For example, China's censorship laws ban games that include drugs, sexual themes, blood, organized crime or any defamation of the Chinese government. Games like Battlefield 4 and Command & Conquer Generals were banned for discrediting China's national image and the Chinese army. Football Manager 2005 was banned for recognizing Taiwan and Tibet as independent countries and had to release an edited version. The history of a country can also tie into censorship laws, Germany bans any games that show high impact gory violence or any references to Germany under Nazi rule. Games that are banned include Dead Rising, Wolfenstein and Call of Duty World at War. Religion can also affect censorship laws as in Malaysia, Dante's Inferno was banned for offensive depictions of cruelty, hellish visions, sexuality and content that was against Sharia, which is a religious Islamic Law.