

Background

- This study is a content analysis that examines how horror video games utilize persuasive techniques through the lens of the Elaboration Likelihood Model where we looked for central and peripheral cues in the horror video game SOMA.
- SOMA is a science fiction horror game filled with machines that have many human characteristics and view themselves as human.
- The main themes in the game surround artificial intelligence and questioning the nature of consciousness, and humanity.
- Players who do not engage with the expositional material will have a different experience with the themes than players who do.
- The goal of this study is to demonstrate how horror video games incorporate decision-making into gameplay.
- This study will set the stage for future research in this area and increase our understanding of persuasive techniques in video games.
- Subjectivity in the content analysis of SOMA is a limitation of this study.

Methods

Overview:

A content analysis was conducted across four different video games (Soma, Amenti, Resident Evil 7, Until Dawn). Each video game was analyzed in groups of two. This poster focuses on the results found in the content analysis of Soma. The content analysis was done via coding using Google Sheets.

Design:

The content analysis involved three rounds of coding:

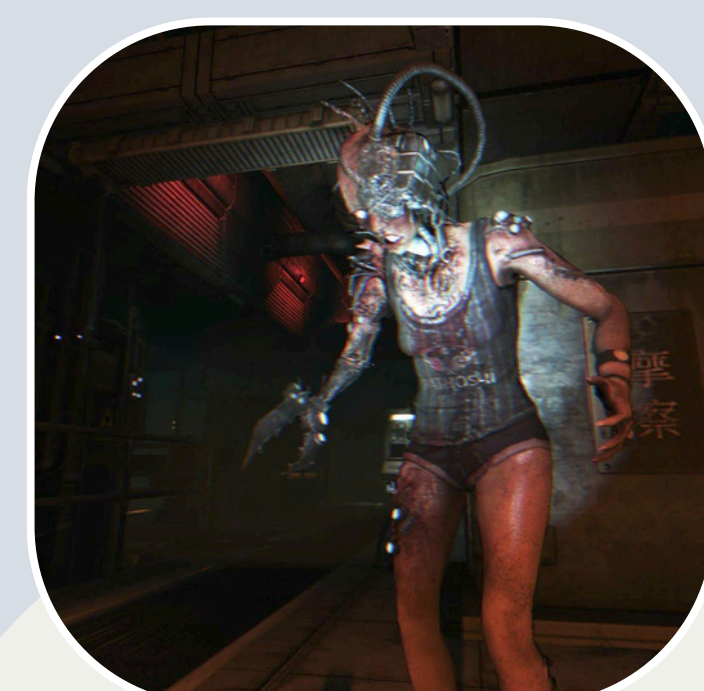
1. First 20 minutes of Resident Evil 7, results were compared, and any discrepancies in data were discussed and resolved.
2. The entirety of Until Dawn's Chapter 4 was coded and again compared between the two coders.
3. The final coding of an hour of Soma was conducted.

The prevalence of central and peripheral processing within the game is determined based on how often elements reflecting each route were found in the game.



Central Processing:

Dialogue, lore, existential horror



Peripheral Processing:

Jump scares, sound, atmospheric horror

Expected Results

Table 1 Central Cues: Types of Lore

In-game Timestamps	Type of Lore
<i>Lore found in "Site Upsilon"</i>	
17:07-17:34	4
18:48-19:20	5
25:08	8
26:26-27:00	4
27:11-27:22	3
27:24-27:29	3
27:34-27:42	3
29:54-30:00	3
30:04-30:41	5
31:36-32:38	5
35:20-35:29	3
35:38-35:47	3
36:15	3
36:50-40:19	5
40:36-41:03	4,5
41:22-41:33	5,6
41:34-42:15	4,5
42:43	3
44:10-44:17	8
44:40-44:50	8
45:39	6
46:20-46:38	3
48:31-48:52	2
48:54-49:18	2
49:22-49:48	2
49:49-50:15	2
50:52-51:09	8
52:27-53:38	5

Table 2 Peripheral Cues: Atmospheric Horror

In-game Timestamps	Atmospheric Horror Found
<i>Atmospheric horror found in "Site Upsilon"</i>	
18:28	2,4
19:24-19:56	2,4
20:23-20:29	2,4
28:02-28:41	2,4
29:54-30:00	2,4
30:04-30:41	2,4
33:46-35:01	2,4
36:50-40:19	2,4
41:22-41:33	2,4
41:34-42:15	2,4
46:54-48:19	2,4
52:27-53:38	2,4

Conclusion

- This study is a replica of a study our research mentor did previously and while the coding for this study has not been completed, we expect to find similar results.
- We expect to find that Soma has both central and peripheral cues throughout the game
- While peripheral cues are constantly present throughout Soma, central cues are relied on more to communicate the game's themes.

Future Directions

- This study paves the way for future research about how persuasive techniques appear in video games.
- With the data from this and similar studies research involving observation of participants playing video games can be conducted.
- Such studies will examine the effectiveness of the persuasive techniques on player experience, decision making, and comprehension themes in video games
- Furthermore, content analysis of horror video games can be generalized to other genres of video games

Coding Process:

A universal code book in which codes were clearly defined was used for all games. The code book used for analysis consists of elements relating to the two types of processing: central and peripheral. Where the peripheral route examines information on a surface level, only looking at explicit details (i.e., jump scares), the central route calls for a deeper analysis of the provided information to discover its implicit details (i.e., lore). They were coded on the Google Sheets using the numbers "1" if present and "0" if not present, followed by a code for the type.

Discussions of Findings

More central or more peripheral route? What is the significance of our findings? - Soma is a highly regarded video game so video game developers may take the results of this research to heighten the quality of future games

References

