

Gifford, B. (2013). *Reviewing the critics: examining popular video game reviews through a comparative content analysis* (Unpublished master's thesis). Cleveland State University, Cleveland OH.

CODING MANUAL FOR EVALUATING THE CRITICS

Unit of data collection: A review--each review is contained within a separate text file.

Instructions:

Filename – Create a text document with which to store the review. Name it

“MED####.txt” for easy retrieval, where “MED” refers to the medium or platform and

“####” refers to the instance of the review gathered. For example, the third review

gathered for the PlayStation Portable would be saved as “PSP003.txt.” Consult the codes

below for file naming.

- Dreamcast – DC
- Game Boy Advance – GBA
- iOS – IOS
- Movie – M
- Nintendo 64 – N64
- Nintendo Game Cube – NGC
- PlayStation – PS
- PlayStation Portable – PSP
- Nintendo Wii – WII
- Xbox 360 - XBX

Title – Enter the title of the work reviewed here

Medium – Enter “1” for video game or “0” for movie

Platform – Enter the same code used in naming the file here.

ConMob – This corresponds to whether a game is on a home console or mobile device.

For a game on a home console (e.g., Dreamcast, Nintendo 64, Nintendo Game Cube,

PlayStation, Nintendo Wii, Xbox 360), enter “Console.” For a game on a mobile device

(e.g., Game Boy Advance, iOS, PlayStation Portable), enter “Mobile.” For a movie, enter “999.”

Generation – This corresponds to the console generation (see “GameFAQs System List”). For fifth-generation platforms (e.g., PlayStation, Nintendo 64), enter “5.” For sixth-generation platforms (e.g., Game Boy Advance, Nintendo Gamecube, Dreamcast), enter “6.” For seventh-generation platforms (e.g., iOS, Nintendo Wii, PlayStation Portable, Xbox 360), enter “7.” For movies, enter “999.”

MScore – The Metascore is the aggregate score assigned to the work by Metacritic based on the reviews it collected. Enter that score here. A review **MUST** have a Metascore to be included in this study.

UScore – This refers to the average score users assigned to the work. Enter that score if it exists (must be rated by at least four users). Enter “999” otherwise.

PScore – This refers to the score the publication gave the work. Metacritic standardizes all publication scores to be out of 100. After choosing a review, enter the standardized publication score for that review according to Metacritic.

RevYear – The year the review was written. Sometimes this is available on Metacritic in the excerpt from the review. Sometimes it is located in the review itself. If neither location has a review year listed, enter “999.”

Rel*Year – This corresponds to a work’s year of release. Copy the existing value from “RevYear” unless that value is missing (i.e., “999”). In cases where it is missing, copy the work’s release year from the summary page on Metacritic.

Publication – Enter the name of the publication where the review is from.

PubType – Publication type. Code “0” for a general audience publication. This includes any newspapers, magazines, or websites that include an audience that primarily does not work in the medium being reviewed. Code “1” for an industry insider which is a publication with a readership primarily comprised of filmmakers/game developers and/or scholars. Code “2” for any independent or other reviews sampled. These are generally publications with one or two authors that do not fit into either of the other two categories.

Author – Enter the name of the author who wrote the review. If unknown, enter “999.”

Gender – Enter the “M” for a male author or “F” for a female author. If there is no picture or the name is ambiguous, try to find a profile or biography page. If gender cannot be 100 percent determined or if the review has no author listed, enter “999.”

URL – Copy the URL the review is located at and enter it here.

Critical thought and style (circle yes or no)

101. Does the review describe how the work compares to other works with similar ambitions and/or themes?

Yes No

102. Does the review mention any previous efforts by the work’s creator(s)?

Yes No

103. Does the review mention at least one individual person responsible for the work (either writer, producer, director or equivalent) by name (e.g., Will Wright, Steven Spielberg)? Note, this excludes actors unless the actor also wrote, directed, or produced.

Yes No

104. Does the review mention at least one development team/group or production/publishing company responsible for the work by name (e.g., Konami, Legendary Pictures)?

Yes No

105. Does the review mention what the work’s creator was attempting to do *and* how well it was done?

Yes No

106. Does the review describe how the work uses *previous* techniques to create a new or novel effect?

Yes No

107. Does the review describe any new or novel techniques used in the work?

Yes No

108. Does the review make any mention of genre?

- Yes No
 109. Does the review discuss the emotions that the work induces in those exposed to it?
 Yes No
 110. Does the review discuss/evaluate the *performance(s)* of any actors and/or voice actors?
 Yes No
 111. Does the review make any mention of gender relationships or gender portrayals?
 Yes No
 112. Does the review mention any political subtext or agenda present within the work?
 Yes No
 113. Does the review make any attempt(s) to tie the work in with the current social and/or political environment?
 Yes No

Types of criticism (circle one)

201. Does the review summarize the plot?
 Yes No
 202. Does the review recommend readers should watch/play the movie or game?
 Yes No Partially (some should watch/play it)
 203. Does the review discourage readers from watching/playing the movie or game?
 Yes No Partially (some should avoid it)
 204. Does the review offer suggestions on how the work could be improved?
 Yes No
 205. Does the review mention specifically how much the movie/game costs to watch or play (in dollars or another currency)?
 Yes No
 206. Does the review make any evaluative statement in regard to the value or price of the movie/game?
 Yes No
IF YES,
 206a. Does the review suggest the value of the movie/game is higher than its asking price (i.e., it is a bargain or good value)?
 Yes No
 206b. Does the review suggest the movie/game is priced too high?
 Yes No
(If 206 is NO, leave "(999)" in both cells 206a and 206b)

Usability heuristics (for GAME reviews ONLY, circle yes or no)

301. The review discusses the consistency of the game's responses to user input. This may include hit detection, physics, consistent character movement, and/or enemy behavior.
 Yes No
 302. The review discusses customizable game settings (e.g, video, audio, difficulty, game speed)

- Yes No
303. The review discusses the functionality of any computer-controlled units/characters (AI)
- Yes No
304. The review discusses how the player actually views the game. This may include fixed or manually controlled camera angles, and/or customizable views (e.g., cockpit, overhead, etc.).
- Yes No
305. The review discusses how a player may skip or is forced to watch non-playable and frequently repeated content.
- Yes No
306. The review discusses the input mapping/controls of the game (i.e., which buttons or keys do what actions). The review may suggest they are intuitive or unintuitive, and may also mention if they are customizable in any way.
- Yes No
307. The review discusses the sensitivity and responsiveness of the game's controls.
- Yes No
308. The review discusses how the game presents status information to the player. This may include player score, health, ammunition and/or locations of objectives, teammates, or enemies.
- Yes No
309. The review discusses the visual representation of the game's interface. This may include menu systems that are too numerous or too complex, or maps that are too cluttered to read. Conversely, it may include very clean interfaces that are easy to interpret.
- Yes No
310. The review discusses any sort of in-game instructions, training, tutorials and/or help available to players.
- Yes No

Sample coding sheet

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