

Statements

1. Persuasive games can affect their players in all the ways other mediated persuasive attempts can, but also work in ways that are unique to games. Games let players make decisions while acting as someone they are not, (temporarily) aligning their goals with those of the characters.
2. People who play persuasive games of their own accord are different from both the intended target audiences of these games and the participants of experimental studies on these games' effects, and this should be taken into consideration for effect studies.
3. Although persuasive games can be designed with nearly infinite variety, their effects need not always be different. In other words, there is more than one way to skin a virtual cat. Designers should preferably apply evidence-based arguments in creative and interesting ways.
4. As this thesis proves, tweaking one small aspect of the way a game is played can have notable consequences for how persuasive it is. Players are susceptible to arguments that are not expressed in words, and readily scrutinize how well a game reflects reality.
5. Persuasive games – and indeed games in general – are about much more than simply having fun. This dissertation proves that even compact, brief experiences can elicit emotions that players value beyond simple hedonic gratifications.
6. All games – even those that we do not call persuasive games – can (theoretically) persuade their players. I propose a new question which is more important and harder to answer: which games *try* to persuade their players?
7. By discussing persuasion in terms such as propaganda, we create a false distance between this type of communication and everyday media consumption (in Western countries). In fact, persuasive influences permeate new media, from online review videos being supported by content publishers to targeted political advertising on social media.
8. While policy makers and the industry harshly judge individuals who subvert current media systems (for instance by downloading movies and shows), they themselves promote the blurring of lines between entertainment and persuasion. Media literacy programs should not be the only response to this: public (policy) debates should focus on creator accountability.
9. Digital games evoke (virtually) embodied cognition. We extend our minds into a simulation of the world, allowing us to interact with it in ways that are not possible in physical life. Through these interactions we get to know not only how this world works, but also how our ideas about it hold up.
10. Perceptions of games need to change. Although the image of the gamer as a violent slouch is being eroded, it has proven harder to shake the notion that games are frivolous timesinks for children. This image is also unintentionally upheld by serious game designers who feel compelled to cover delicious broccoli with cheap chocolate.
11. Bloodborne (FromSoftware, 2015) persuaded me that a Gothic horror game with werewolves and sort-of-vampires is stronger when celestial beings are also included. This proves that sometimes the best experience only really starts 'when the aliens get here'.