Players' Perception in Video Games With Horror Narrative: Analysis of the Audiovisual Features in *Resident Evil.*

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Abstract. The analysis focuses on the perception of players in horror video games, particularly in *Resident Evil* (Biohazard in Japan), recognized for its narrative and challenges. It investigates how audiovisual elements, such as setting and music, influence the experience. The results underline the importance of these elements in generating fear and tension. The player's interaction in the perception of terror is highlighted. In conclusion, the study shows the relevance of audiovisual elements and interaction to create a shocking horror experience in *Resident Evil* and similar games.

Keywords: Horror Video Games, Player Perception, Audiovisual Elements, Player Interaction.

1 Introduction

According to Garcia Hojas [1], the growing interest in the industry has generated debates about what aspects make a video game better, mainly divided between graphical quality and narrative. Examples such as Resident Evil 6, Resident Evil 3 Remake and Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City illustrate how deficiencies in these aspects would impact the scary experience expected by players. On the other hand, Cansino [2] argues that cinema inherits an iconic power emerged with photography, where horror is developed through the off-screen, syntax and montage, highlighting the viewer's emotions as a central element of the horror genre. Gómez Gurpegui [3] mentions that horror video games have faced challenges in competing with a cinema that has perfected its techniques to generate fear through sophisticated montages and visual effects, while the first horror games were limited to rudimentary graphics as seen in "Haunted House".

Technological advances have allowed developers of horror games including Resident Evil to continually improve the quality of graphics and sound. Each new release of the series takes advantage of these advances to offer more realistic and immersive horror

experiences. For instance, the remastering of older games seeks to return to the roots of horror after the tepid reception of titles such as Resident Evil: Re Verse and Resident Evil Resistance, highlighting the crucial importance of the audiovisual elements in the player's experience.

Yet how do gamers experience and perceive video games with horror narratives? This question explores the sensations, emotions and reactions of players when interacting with these games. Resident Evil is known for its effective use of detailed graphics and haunting sound effects to create a terrifying atmosphere, being an ideal illustration for this analysis. Audiovisual elements are crucial for immersing the player in the game world.

This study investigates how audiovisual elements affect player perception in horror video games, focusing on the Resident Evil saga. Using a qualitative approach, the comments of the fandom will be analyzed both nationally and internationally. Categories such as audiovisual and narrative elements, interactivity and game design will be addressed. Objectives include understanding the use of audiovisual elements in Resident Evil, exploring the player's experience with interactivity, and evaluating how setting, sound and music influence the perception and experience of the game.

2   Narrative resources of films in horror-themed videogames

The horror genre, present for centuries in literature and cinema, has evolved in the last decade to gain recognition in video games. These games have captured academic attention for their ability to generate intense emotions and stress. The influence of audiovisual elements has been crucial in the development of horror video games, integrating cinematic techniques and narrative elements.

According to Salas Sabal [4], one of the cinematographic elements that has evolved significantly is photography or scenography, including the use of lights, shadows and landscapes. These details have improved over time and are comparable to the landscapes of films such as "The Lord of the Rings" or the scenes of "The Walking Dead". The evolution of technology has achieved an improvement especially appreciated in all Resident Evil releases, whose presentations have generated amazement and fear in the gaming community. Resident Evil stands out for its exploration of dark and cold corridors, the puzzles that advance the story, and, mainly, for its biological monsters (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Screenshot of *Resident Evil 2 Remake* (2019)

2.1 The video game as a narrative media

The creators of video games are inspired by cinema to recreate the emotions of the viewers when watching horror movies. They adopt the sequential narrative of cinema with cinematic scenes, dialogues and editing to tell complex stories. Through cinematic techniques such as lighting, sound and well-coordinated scares, horror video games seek to immerse the player in a nightmarish atmosphere, creating intense emotions and a sense of constant danger. Niño González [5], stated that "transmedia and crossmedia narrative provides a holistic vision to the user, allowing him to be part of the narrative relationship itself, since, through interaction, the user will be able to advance in the proposed story", providing a complete experience, both technically and practically, in order to explore the saga in other areas.

2.2 Cinematographic elements

Cinema has given a lot to say in recent years, providing unique emotions when watching on the big screen, something that horror films have done by immersing us into the story along with the characters of the film. The cinematographic techniques such as the use of disturbing sounds, gloomy atmospheric lighting, the composition of tense scenes and well-timed frights achieve not only a good scare, but also the desire to appreciate it again. Albarrán Ligero [6], remarks that "the motivation in the succession of the rendering plane is linked to the ludic dimension, which means, to the configurative capacity of the user in relation", something seen in Resident Evil 7 when we are forced

by Jack Baker to devour human flesh in a gloomy and dreary house in search of the character's partner. (See Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Screenshot of *Resident Evil 7 Biohazard* (2017)

The visual narrative gives the viewer the opportunity to become actively involved in the plot and participate in the action, which fosters a deeper emotional connection to the story, allowing for deeper exploration of the worlds and characters.

2.3   Immersion in the game's storyline and its development over time

As the video game industry has progressed, it has increasingly focused on developing techniques to achieve deep immersion. The use of cinematic techniques such as expressive camera shots, atmospheric lighting and striking sound effects builds an immersive experience that stirs emotions and establishes an emotional connection to the game's story. The exploration of environments and decision making immerses the player in a world where every action counts, while enemies lurk around every corner. The evolution of video games has introduced open-ended game environments, non-linear plots and multiple outcomes, thus enhancing the player's immersion and ability to influence the story through their decisions.

3   Players' Perception: Resident Evil

Resident Evil has established itself as a video game series renowned for its survival horror and captivating narratives, as well as for the emotional intensity of its characters in extreme situations. Since its debut in 1996, it has been acclaimed for its ability to immerse players in an unsettling atmosphere of terror and survival, confronting them with constant challenges. Every decision made has significant consequences in a game where the line between life and death is blurred. Resident Evil explores the human

fascination with disaster survival and the quest for immortality through dark experiments. Despite its ups and downs, the saga continues thanks to the fervor of its fans, who eagerly await each new release.

3.1 The player's profile and his relationship with fear

Several players are looking for a game that captivates them to feel that authentic sensation, to feel that adrenaline rush while being watched and chased in the dark. Rodriguez [7] explains that the analysis of the profile of the players (age, frequency of play, leisure activities, computer use, etc.) shows that teenagers are the ones who play video games the most, indicating that they are more likely to interact with any type of video game, especially horror games. Campos Méndez [8] mentions that within the horror genre, the video game presents hidden forces that complicate the player's existence in the environment, a challenge that any adolescent wishes to overcome in order to prove to himself that he is capable of facing any adversity, whether in the game or in real life

3.2 Level design and space construction

When interacting with the game, we access a world with levels that we must overcome, facing enemies to reach the goal. Navarro [9] argues that the design of levels and the configuration of spaces in video games are fundamental to develop immersive and exciting experiences, especially in the horror genre. In such games, space is constructed to provoke a sense of insecurity in the player, with design decisions ranging from lighting to ceiling heights. Altuna Charterina [10] points out that the difficulty level of a video game must be precise: easy enough for the player to get through it without getting frustrated, but difficult enough to represent a challenge. In the Resident Evil remakes, the map has undergone changes compared to the original, presenting new locations to explore without losing the original essence. (See Fig. 3).
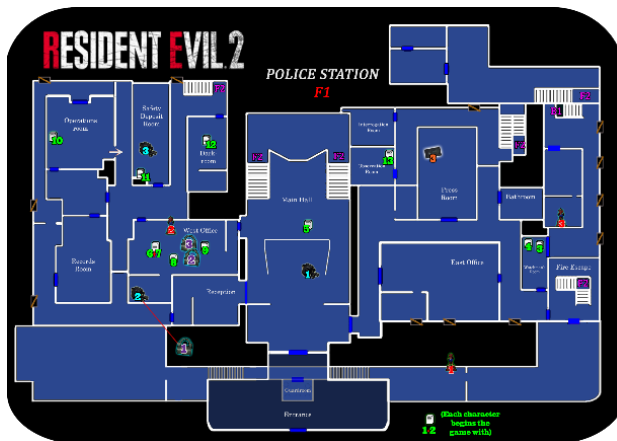

Fig. 3. Screenshot of *Resident Evil 2 Remake* (2019)

There are new places that the player would access, though in order to enter other rooms, it is necessary to find a corresponding key or artifact. Although it sounds simple, it is not, as along the way there will be zombies, biological weapons or infected creatures that the gamer will have to face, a challenge for both players and challenges in the game.

3.3   The importance of sound design and visuals

When interacting with Resident Evil games, we not only explore the corners of a city and some corridors, but we also hear how the music accompanies us in the game. This somber and terrifying music changes as we progress through the story, becoming even more sinister and dark. These sounds immerse the player in the experience of the game, making him feel part of it. But neither can we forget the sounds made by zombies, infected or biological weapons as it helps the player to identify who is the oncoming enemy. (See Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. *Resident Evil Outbreak*. Piano Theme. (2003)

Two types of ambient sounds can be found within the video game, some without sound attenuation that sound at the same volume throughout the level, and others with attenuation that we only hear if we approach the source of the sound. Martínez Carratalá [11], explains that the sounds without attenuation within Unreal are called 2D sounds, since they are not specialized and work as a background song that is constantly active until it ends, or in case the loop option is selected, it will sound indefinitely until we decide to stop it. In the first releases of Resident Evil, it is characteristic that in each room a unique sound is perceived: either calm and quiet or somber and gloomy, depending on the room or the presence of a biological weapon or the destruction of the surroundings.

3.4   The use of the camera and its link to the story or narrative

Camera controls are fundamental to the development and evolution of a video game, playing a crucial role in its narrative and in immersing the player in the experience. Careful selection of camera angles, movements and perspective changes can significantly impact how the game's story is told and how the player becomes immersed in the game. The camera thus becomes a narrative tool that not only engages players, but also creates an immersive atmosphere and enhances the gaming experience, especially in genres such as horror.

In Resident Evil games, the varied use of the camera stands out, which may simulate a security camera or show images of deceased characters, thus contributing to the presentation of personages and villains that influence the plot and the challenges faced by the player.

4   Methodology

A qualitative methodology will be used for this research, aligned with the research questions aimed at enthusiastic players of the Resident Evil saga. This approach is chosen to explore in depth the subjective experiences of young people and adults aged 18 to 35, active in online communities such as Facebook, who share their opinions and experiences about Resident Evil, offering a valuable perspective to study horror games and the franchise in particular.

Qualitative research focuses on understanding phenomena from the participants' point of view, delving into their experiences and opinions about their environment. We will use literature review and in-depth interviews with experienced gamers to explore how they perceive the audiovisual elements in horror video games, especially Resident Evil.

The study will be organized into detailed sections on visual aspects, interactivity, and game design from the player's perspective. Category A will address audiovisual and narrative elements in horror video games, including lighting, sound, graphics, special effects, story, characters and dialogue. Category B will focus on interactivity and game design, covering playability, mechanics, difficulty levels, player control, decision making and game response. (See Fig. 5).
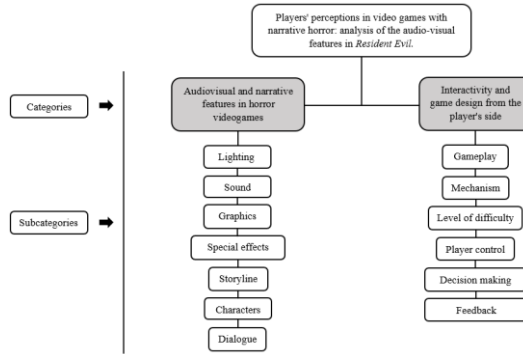
Fig. 5. Graph of categories A and B of player perception in video games with horror narrative: analysis of the audiovisual features in *Resident Evil*. Drawn up by the authors.

5   Results

During this research, the impact of horror video games on players has been deeply explored, focusing especially on the Resident Evil saga. This franchise has left a significant mark on the video game world, attracting a large community of fans who consume all kinds of related products. The study focuses on the audiovisual and narrative elements within horror video games, using an interpretive and qualitative approach to deepen our understanding of the perception and experience of players immersed in the terrifying universe of Resident Evil. Through content analysis of interviews with fans and critics of the saga, we thoroughly investigate how the visual and sound components of the game interact to create an immersive and emotionally intense experience. (See Table 1).

Table 1. List of interviewees

Interviewees	Occupation
Interviewer 1	Peruvian videogame specialist and critic
Interviewer 2	Peruvian fan and videogame critic of the RE saga
Interviewer 3	Peruvian fan of Resident Evil saga
Interviewer 4	Peruvian fan and critic of horror movies and games
Interviewer 5	Peruvian fan of the Resident Evil saga
Interviewer 6	Ecuadorian fan and gamer of RE

Interviewee 1 highlights how the camera position and approaches in Resident Evil 2 Remake deepen the game experience, making the narrative more didactic. For instance, in Leon's campaign, the escape sequence from a giant crocodile uses cinematic angles that heighten tension and immerse the player. He also stresses how cinema influences the position of the camera, as in the sequence of opening a door in Resident Evil (1996), conveying pure terror and creating an atmosphere of tension and suspense. Interviewee 2 confirms the importance of the audiovisual part to create an immersive scenario, highlighting the sound design and the emotional experience of the game. In addition, interviewee 3, points out that graphics and lighting are key to provide realism and

increase anguish, immersing the player. He additionally mentions the importance of music (non-diegetic sound) to enhance the emotions and enrich the terrifying experience of the game.

In the context of this research, interactivity in video games goes beyond simply pressing buttons and seeing responses on the screen; it represents an intimate connection between the player and the game, where the player's decisions directly influence the narrative and development of the game. In Resident Evil, this interactivity takes on a special dimension, where every choice, whether it is facing an enemy or solving a puzzle, impacts the progression of the game and the player's emotions.

Interviewee 4 emphasizes that the Resident Evil saga is designed to surprise players with the enemies they face, turning the game into an emotional odyssey. Gamboa emphasizes the deep connection you feel with the characters as you progress through the levels. Furthermore, the interviewee 5 mentions that the saga promotes story analysis and narrative, where the game design encourages deep exploration as a fundamental tool to progress through the plot. Using characters to investigate objects and discover aids along the way highlights the importance of interactivity and attention to detail. Similarly, interviewee 6 outlines the incorporation of puzzles in Resident Evil as fundamental to progressing through the game. These puzzles require analytical and problem-solving skills, and the need to explore every nook and cranny creates a unique immersion, especially when searching for hidden treasures or notes that deepen the game's story.

6   Discussion and Conclusions

Based on interviews with individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 nationally and internationally, the results are divided into two main categories: A) Analysis of audiovisual and narrative elements in horror video games, and B) Interactivity and game design from the player's perspective.

In category A, the importance of atmosphere is highlighted, such as the iconic door opening in Resident Evil (1996), which generates a genuine sense of terror when facing the unknown. Interviewees emphasize how dim lighting and a dreary atmosphere affect gameplay, and how complete silence heightens unease in anticipation of terrifying events. Sound management during enemy confrontations and the soundtrack are considered crucial to the gameplay experience.

In category B, it is noted that Resident Evil encourages a detailed exploration of environments that fosters an emotional connection with the characters. Those interviewed remarked on the evolution of control since 1996 and how interaction with objects and resource gathering enrich the player's experience. In addition, story progression adds meaning and tension, especially in confrontations with enemies, while the lack of information in the environments contributes to the development of game mechanics.

Over the past decades, video games have evolved significantly in their depiction of fear and terror, from military training tools to forms of entertainment that capture the attention of a wide audience. In this context, games have explored the horror genre in increasingly deep and immersive ways.

Resident Evil stands out in the survival horror genre for its chilling atmosphere, innovative gameplay and iconic characters. Through a careful combination of audiovisual elements, it immerses players in a world of anguish and insecurity, challenging them to face their fears in dark and dangerous environments. The series not only involves combat against zombies and other creepy creatures, but also the meticulous search for and revelation of hidden details, adding an extra dose of intrigue and excitement to the game and keeping the player on constant alert and anticipation.

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