Abstract

The thesis explores paratextuality in the video game culture. This concept coined in 1982 by Gérard Genette in the context of literary publishing has been throughout the last thirty-five years adopted by other fields, including television and film studies, and game studies. However, the recent appropriations of the paratextual framework significantly deviate from its original conceptualization and cause terminological confusion. Still, paratextuality has the potential to provide a unique insight into cultural practices across various cultural industries, including video games. Figuratively described as a threshold, the concept of paratextuality deals with often overlooked elements of media ecosystems, such as promotional materials or instruction manuals. In the thesis, I present a thorough critical review of the current state of paratextual research. Due to its unsatisfactory state, I propose an updated paratextual framework, which builds on the theoretical foundations of textual transcendence. Its more practical dimensions then acknowledge the cultural specificities of the video game cultural industry. In the empirical part of the thesis, I focus on video game trailers and analyze both their formal qualities as well as their audience reception. The findings uncover the ambiguous status of a video game trailer as both a paratextual element and a noteworthy text in its own right. In this regard, they confirm the need for a more nuanced treatment of paratextuality explicated within the theoretical framework.

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