

Video game character design: The role of diversity, equity, and inclusion

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Abstract

This research focuses on how DEI related factors (diversity, equity, inclusion) in the context of video games affect player's preferences, purchase intentions, and engagement. Starting from game characters, the main source video games income, this work examines the effects of character appearance, personality, and nationality. Combining 30 qualitative interviews and a series of experiments (collective N=1940 participants), the results indicate that players generally show a preference for characters with idealised body types and personality, skin tones akin to their own, and origins from countries they have positive associations with. The current findings also indicate that player characteristics, such as international experience, and past video game experiences play a role towards players' attitudes to diversity. The current work provides managerial implications for better player segmentation and also suggests that exposing players to a variety of characters fosters greater engagement.

Subject Areas: *Consumer Behaviour; Entertainment Marketing; Hedonic Products*

Track: Consumer Behaviour