Game Review: PUBG

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# Introduction

PUBG or PlayerUnknown’s Battle Ground is just another entry into the Battle Royale genre. Nevertheless, the game is nothing short of revolutionary. Based on previous mods created by Brendan Greene, more popularly known as “PlayerUnknown”, it is one of the most played video-games of all time. The game brings nothing new to the table, except for its accessibility. With it being available to most of the smartphone using population in the world, the game has received some much-deserved admiration. Although, it has its fair share of backlash as well, which is just as well-earned as admiration. While most people aren’t saying much about the game, those that do have something to say, are saying a lot. The battle-ground genre has been around for a really long time now. However, given the state of the world in the past two decades, the generation indulging in games like PUBG have been born and raised in an era of unrest. With the number of people suffering through mental health issues increasing on a daily basis, the idea of being a lone survivor among 100 individuals can have some deadly implications, especially given the need for gun control in various parts of the world (Batchelor, 2017). Thus, given the number of players it attracts every day, it is vital that a detailed psychosocial survey analysis of a game like PUBG becomes necessary.

# The Battle Royale Genre and PUBG Gameplay

The *Battle Royale* Genre is a type of online, multiplayer video game where players actively communicate with one another in a quest of exploration, survival, and scavenging. The name is derived from a Japanese film called *Battle Royale* released in 2000, which explored a similar theme that the games often feature, with the idea of last man standing emerging victorious. The cyberspace has always been filled with large scale, survival-oriented games. However, by the time the previous decade came to a close, a number of factors made the prospect of this genre attractive. This turned the entire gaming industry on its heels, with Battle Royale Genre emerging as a cultural phenomenon in its own right.

These players go through a grueling ordeal throughout the gameplay, with either of the two outcomes, be killed by another player or be the last man surviving. Such games tend to involve a very large number for players i.e. 99 to 100 commonly, playing in real-time. The players begin the game with the minimal amount of equipment and work towards collecting items that give them an upper-hand during the gameplay. These games usually begin with a large terrain for the players to explore, which is then shrunken down on the basis of time lapsed, as well as the dwindling number of players. This prevents players from staying in their hiding spots throughout the game and winning by default. Additionally, it also prevents the gameplay from being extended too long and makes confrontations between two or more different parties possible. Additionally, the game often features a number of different incentives throughout the gameplay which attract players and make further confrontations more possible.

PUBG essentially follows the same gameplay. It is a player versus player shooting game that starts off once 99 players join the game. It is essentially a deathmatch with the last man standing getting the grand prize of “*Chicken Dinner*” (Carter, 2017). The match can be played in solo mode, in a duo or with a small team of four players. At the beginning of the game, the players are dropped off into one of four island locations. The path taken by the plane varies each time, with the players having to determine the right time to eject and take the parachute to the ground. They can choose a location to land, based on their needs since every location has a very different set of equipment, weapons, and armor available. These items are usually procedurally distributed throughout the game at the beginning of the match, with high-risk zones having the best loot and the greatest number of player confrontations (Carter, 2017). Additionally, players can also collect loot from other players that have just been killed during gameplay. Customary to any battle royale gameplay, the playable area of the game shrinks, with players having to move towards the safe zone or take damage. Additionally, random areas are also bombed during the gameplay, which makes poses a threat to players in the area. However, such an instance is highlighted in red, giving players ample time to flee (Batchelor, 2017). The game attracts millions of players on a regular basis, with each player spending a minimum of 30 minutes during each game play.

# Impact of Growth and Success

PUBG is a cultural phenomenon. It is one of those games that are accessible on just about every gaming platform, which increases the number of means and devices a player can access this game. Additionally, another reason attributed to its success is the fact that it is free of cost. Players have the option to purchase upgrades, but this is something they can choose to do at their own discretion (Melrose, 2018). However, through updates alone, Business Insider has projected that the game brought in about $2 billion US dollar in 2018. This number is expected to go from $2 billion in 2018 to $20 billion in 2019 alone (Wade, 2018).

Secondly, the game begins with every player being in an equally vulnerable state. This eliminates the chances of any player having the upper hand at least in the very beginning of the game. This adds a sense of thrill to the game, which is not only enjoyable by the player alone but makes for an excellent spectator sport (Paumgarten, 2018). Additionally, according to some analysts, PUBG happens to recognize various elements in relation to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. This describes a person’s level of motivation perfectly and even feeds into it, giving players a sense of accomplishment. Additionally, it meets an individual’s psychological needs as well, giving them a sense of belonging and comrade. This not only makes PUBG a competitive game but a social one as well, where a sense of self-actualization is deeply associated with the idea of winning (Melrose, 2018). However, when a similar sense of peace, accomplishment, and comrade isn’t found by players in the real world, things take a turn for the worst.

# Parallels to The Hunger Games and a Touch of Reality

The Hunger Games is a dystopian novel by an American writer called Suzanne Collins. It features a society where adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 are subjected to forced reaping, where a chosen girl and boy is sent off to participate in an annually held contest called the Hunger Games. It is a televised Battle Royale, a fight to the death, with only one lone survivor being crowned the victor.

While that not only sounds eerily familiar, but the idea that inspired the novel is stomach-churning all by itself (Margolis, 2008). Collins, while surfing channels on her television saw alternating images of reality television shows on some channels, which made for a bizarre mix with channels discussing the US invasion of Iraq. In author’s own words, both began to blur together in a very unsettling way in her mind, and the idea of a book where the population was kept mollified by the killing off their own children as gameplay for the entertainment of the Capitol. This was the punishment the districts faced for starting a civil war years ago (Sellers, 2008). These games usually lack context, but they are situated around a similar scenario. Kill, loot, win, this is the mantra of a typical PUBG player. There is nothing wrong with wanting to win. However, employing realistic effects during gameplay may blur the lines between fantasy and reality (Ahn, 2017).

The Battle Royale gameplay is fun, it motivates its players and also gives them a sense of accomplishment and even self-actualization. However, the mere idea of something similar being used as a sport is unsettling. Given the number of people suffering from mental health issues, the inability to thrive in a social environment comprising of their peers, while achieving self-actualization through a game where they kill people for sport, may impact a weak mind in the wrong way. With the need for gun control on the rise, and incidents of mass shoots out happening every day, it is vital that steps be taken which ensure that games are seen as what they are, video games, used for entertainment and nothing more (Ahn, 2017).

# Conclusion

With the unparallel success of games like *PUBG* and *Fortnite*, the Battle Royale genre is not only attracted attention for developers and players alike, but it has also expanded greatly. It has inspired often well-known names in the gaming world to up their *game* as well and introduces similar gaming modes. Some of the most popular games to do so include *Call of Duty*, under the title *Battle Ops 4* and *DoTA 2* and even *Grand Theft Auto Online*. However, the negative implications of these games are undeniable. As mentioned, these games are frequented by impressionable adolescents, most of which do not even fall under the age restriction of the game. Games of such nature tend to bring out violent impulses among players. Additionally, it aggravates the violent tendencies found among individuals that are suffering from mental health issues. Thus, game makers should be mindful of the games they produce and release into the world and use all the means necessary to restrict gameplay to individuals that are able to play the game while maintaining a firm grip on reality. These games were born of tumulus times. However, with proper restrictions and introduction of elements that keep such games from coming to close to reality, game makers can give its users the satisfaction they crave while ensuring that the game doesn’t give a nefarious mind the fuel it needs.

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