

KILLZONE 2'S KILLING SPREE

How Sony and Guerrilla Conquered the Fans' Hearts and Minds

Abstract

This thesis examines the role Sony, Guerrilla and the market press have played in the appropriation of *Killzone 2* by fans, using the concepts paratext and gaming capital as a theoretical framework. By determining which themes *Killzone 2's* paratext consists of and which of these themes fans incorporated into their gaming capital, as well as by performing both a quantitative as well as a qualitative analysis of fan-made, nonmarket reviews, this thesis tries to describe that role. As it appears, Sony, Guerrilla and the market press indeed seem to play, to some extent, a significant role in the appropriation of *Killzone 2* by fans.

Key Words

Killzone 2, paratext, gaming capital, appropriation, video game, fan

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Introduction: The Biggest Entertainment Product in History!

The Dutch game *Killzone 2* (a first-person shooter set in a futuristic environment) is one of Sony's most important releases for the Playstation 3. No wonder they decided to spend more than half of their four-million pound budget on promoting the game (XGN, 2009). Of course, that is just a fraction of the money Sony made available to the Dutch developer Guerrilla: although Sony never made official statements about the available budget, estimates vary from 20 million dollar to a staggering 60 million dollar. Even though these kinds of budgets are not unfamiliar in The United States¹, this was a milestone in the Dutch entertainment industry. Guerrilla used this to its advantage by stating that its budget exceeded that of Paul Verhoeven's film *Zwartboek* (1Up, 2006). The Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant* and other news and gaming websites provided *Killzone 2* with some free publicity by using this statement to proclaim that *Killzone 2* was The Netherlands' 'most expensive entertainment export product' (*De Volkskrant*, 2009, Tweakers.net, 2009).

Not only the amount of money spent on the game and its promotion is impressive, the response of both journalists and fans is equally interesting. Metacritic.com, for example, a website which gathers information and scores from a wide variety of game magazines and sites, reveals an average score of 91 out 100, based on an impressive 94 reviews (Metacritic, 2009). By way of illustration; fourteen different game websites awarded *Killzone 2* with the highest score possible, including big sites such as 1Up and GamePro (ibidem). Needless to say, Sony and Guerrilla are pleased with these results, considering the huge amount of money at stake.

Apart from the economic aspect of gaming, other aspects are also important. 'To dwell on the rising economic importance of the game industry has proven to be something of a barrier to account for the cultural, political and social effects of digital play on players' (Nieborg and Hermes, 2008: 142). So other questions also arise, such as: are the extraordinarily high scores just a coincidence, or is there some kind of correlation between the high scores and the high development and promoting budget? What about the fans? Are they autonomous in all this, or are there forces shaping their expectations? This paper will prove that fans are, to some extent, not autonomous.

¹ Consider this: *Grand Theft Auto IV*'s development costs were estimated at about 100 million dollar (TimesOnline, 2008).

My thesis as well as Martijn van Zwieten's thesis are based on these questions. Van Zwieten will examine the role Guerilla's PR campaign played in the reporting on Killzone 2 by market video game magazines/websites, specifically in the final reviews (Van Zwieten, 2009a). This thesis will focus on the following research question: *examining nonmarket reviews, what role have Sony, Guerrilla and the market game press played in the appropriation of Killzone 2 by fans?* The terms "market" and "nonmarket" will be explained in the next paragraph, as well as the steps that have been taken in this paper in order to answer the research question.

Nonmarket & market reviews, paratext & gaming capital, fans and appropriation

There are a lot of terms and concepts used throughout this paper. To understand the information and arguments in this paper, it is important to explain the most important ones in this paragraph. The terms "nonmarket review" and "market review" will be explained here, as well as the concepts "paratext" and "gaming capital", and the terms "fans" and "appropriation".

Nonmarket and market

First of all, it is vital to explain why I use the terms "nonmarket" and "market" in relationship to reviews. The terms are introduced by Yochai Benkler, professor at Yale Law School. They illustrate an important difference between the two kinds of reviews used throughout this paper. The reviews written by game journalists are defined as "market reviews" when they are written for commercial purposes. That is to say, market reviews are written for magazines and websites which want to make money out of it. It is important to note that the term market review does not refer to the fact that writers are "professional", but to the fact that they are written for a commercial purpose. As it happens, nonmarket reviews can be written by a "professional", so professionalism has nothing to do with the distinction between market and nonmarket.

Nonmarket reviews are thus reviews which are written without commercial intent or dependence. Following this definition of nonmarket reviews, the reviews written by fans that are used in this paper are nonmarket reviews (Benkler, 2003).

In her book *Cheating*, Mia Consalvo, associate professor at Ohio University, introduces two concepts that play a vital role in this paper: "paratext" and "gaming capital". I will briefly outline these concepts here to provide a concise theoretical context in which

these concepts can be understood. I will return more elaborately on them in chapter three (paratext) and four (gaming capital), but since they are also used prior to these chapters, it is useful to provide a short but comprehensive definition here.

Paratext

Consalvo borrows the concept of paratext from Gérard Genette, who used this term in literary theory. In short, the paratext consists of everything surrounding a specific text² (as can be seen in figure 1), whether this text is a novel, a movie, or a game.. This paratext both theoretically frames as well as gives meaning to the expectations and the act of reading, or, in the case *Killzone 2*, the act of playing. Consalvo applied this concept to games, arguing that ‘the peripheral industries surrounding games function as [...] a paratext, [...] work[ing] to shape the gameplay experience in particular ways’ (Consalvo, 2007: 9).

The concept also provides for an efficient theoretical framework to connect all these peripheral materials with the fans. This connection is vital in analyzing how the fans used this paratext in their nonmarket reviews to appropriate *Killzone 2*, as Consalvo acknowledges: ‘it all plays a role in shaping our experiences of gameplay – regardless of the actual game itself’ (ibidem: 8). The connection is also important in analyzing which of the elements in the paratext fans incorporated into their gaming capital.

Gaming Capital

The concept of gaming capital provides a key way to understand how individuals interact with games, information about games and the game industry [and a game’s paratext, JZ], and other game players. The term is useful because it suggests a currency that is by necessity dynamic – changing over time, and across types of players or games (Consalvo, 2007: 4).

In other words, gaming capital is something gamers gain by reading about games a lot, as well as playing and discussing them often. It is also what sets fans apart from those commonly referred to as “casual gamers”: the fans are the ones that possess a lot of gaming capital, contrary to the casual gamers, who play for a short while once every few days and

² The term “text” is used not just to point to a construction of different words, but can also be, for example, a film, a commercial or a game. It is, in other words, a cultural artifact.

do not check the gaming websites every day. As I will prove, gaming capital is a vital concept in understanding the way fans interact with both *Killzone 2* as a game as well as the paratext surrounding *Killzone 2*.

This interaction between gamers' gaming capital and *Killzone 2*'s paratext is essential in this paper. The way I understand it, gamers incorporate certain elements from a game's paratext into their gaming capital, by reading about games, watching videos and trailers and discussing them with their friends. Consalvo also acknowledges this. (ibidem: 184). However, in my opinion Consalvo does not put enough emphasize on the fact that Gamers can also contribute to the paratext by creating fan-made trailers or, for example, writing nonmarket reviews (see figure 1).

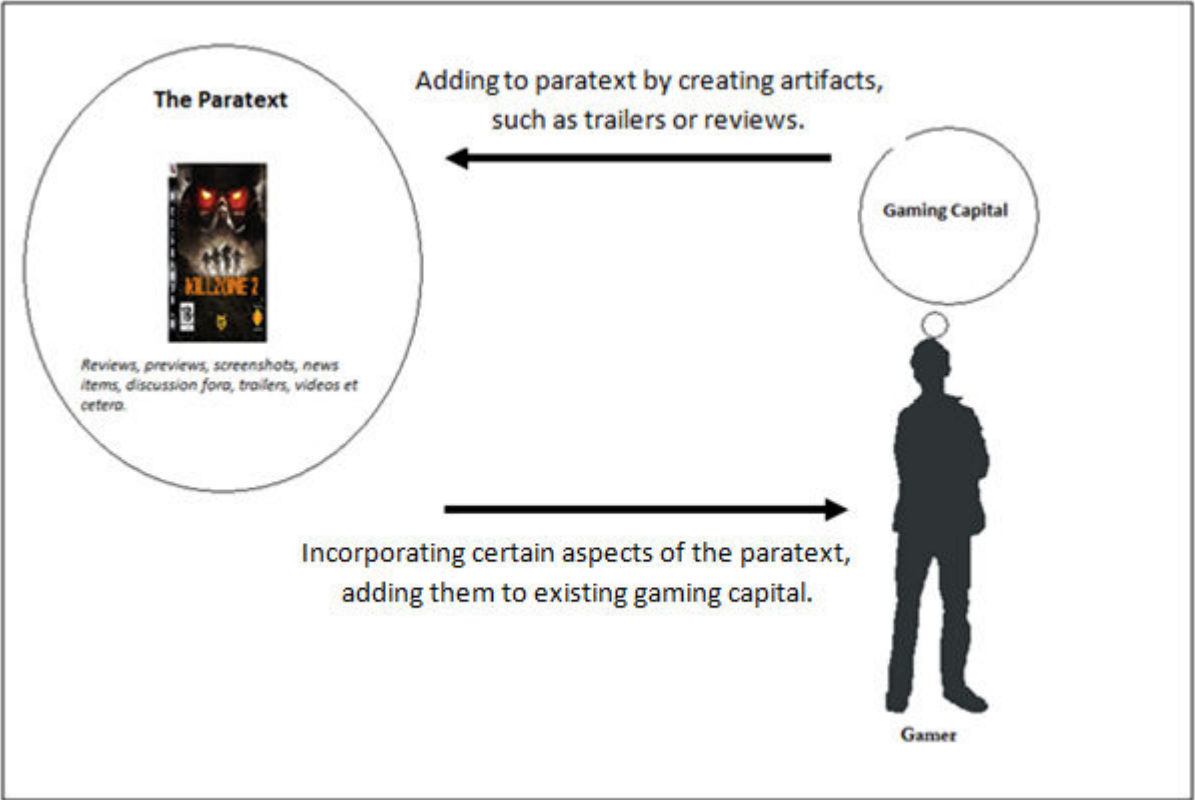


Figure 1: Interaction between a paratext and gaming capital

Fans and appropriation

Two terms have not been defined yet: fans and appropriation. Since these terms are crucial, they must be provided with a clear definition. MIT's Director of the Comparative Media Studies Program (and passionate fan) Henry Jenkins provides more than one definition for the concept of fans, all overlapping one and another in a way. Two of these definitions are

particularly important given the research question of this paper: a) 'early evidence suggests that the most valuable consumers are what the industry calls "loyals," or what we call fans. Loyals are [...] more apt to pay attention to advertising, and more apt to buy products' (Jenkins, 2006: 63) and b) 'fans are the most active segment of the media audience, one that refuses to simply accept what they are given, but rather insists on the right to become full participants' (ibidem: 131).

The first definition Henry Jenkins provides is useful because of its connotation with industry and marketing. This definition of fans provides us with the clarity to understand *why* (in this case) Guerrilla and Sony were so keen on reaching the *Killzone* fans out there. The latter definition is in some sense also an economic one, but is obviously much more influenced by both political economy – a struggle for expression – and cultural studies – the active audience concept. Both definitions also fit perfectly within the hardcore gamer framework: hardcore gamers being the ones that buy the most and also engage actively with the games, as said before. Thus, these two definitions sufficiently describe the various identities fans adopt in this paper: a potential buyer, a loyal, an expert and a cultural participant in the paratext surrounding *Killzone 2*.

Appropriation is a little more complicated to define. The complexity is due to the fact that, as an anecdote in Jenkins' *Convergence Culture* illustrates, the line between 'celebrating' and 'appropriating' is a fine one:

Jim Ward, vice-president of marketing for Lucasfilm [...]: "We've been very clear all along on where we draw the line. We love our fans. We want them to have fun. But if in fact somebody is using our characters to create a story unto itself, that's not in the spirit of what we think fandom is about. Fandom is about celebrating the story the way it is." Lucas wants to be "celebrated" but not appropriated (ibidem: 149).

Is a nonmarket review celebration or appropriation? The latter seems more matching. The fact that they "celebrate" *Killzone 2* in terms of their, to a large extent, positive tone of voice has nothing to do with the fact that a nonmarket review is "a story in itself". Furthermore, if it was a celebration, the term "celebration" itself is far too limited to account for the role marketing has played in the experience of playing the game. A nonmarket review therefore is an appropriation, not just of the game itself, but of several factors, including the paratext. It is also a "story in itself" because it is personal, one of a kind; a unique expression of someone who wants to be a full participant. Finally, the concept of appropriation accounts

for the fact that ‘the real commodity in question [...] is the experience of the game, not the game object itself’ (Bell, 2004: 68). For that reason, “celebration” cannot account for the experience of a game in the way “appropriation” does.

Finally, I want to express a last remark. The research question is essentially part of a much greater discussion, which also plays a fundamental role in Jenkins’ work: the debate about the complex relationship between the top-down media industry and the bottom-up grassroots creativity.

The outline of the chapters

The role Sony and Guerrilla and the market journalists have played in the appropriation of *Killzone 2* by fans can be determined by taking two steps: first, determining the most important themes Sony, Guerrilla and the market journalists added to *Killzone 2*’s paratext (chapter two). Second, analyzing which of those themes fans incorporated into their gaming capital (chapter three). The nonmarket reviews analyzed in this paper will serve as a case-study, providing evidence for the research question whether or not fans actually incorporated certain elements, since the nonmarket reviews are active expressions of their gaming capital. The next paragraph will outline the structure in which these two steps will be dealt with.

Trying to answer the research question, I will firstly show in chapter one how I combined various aspects of three methodological approaches: media theory, political economy and cultural studies, which are common in academic media research. – in a multidimensional methodological approach that provides the right tools to answer the research question³.

Secondly, I will argue in chapter two that Sony and Guerrilla have promoted two important key themes throughout *Killzone 2*’s marketing: graphical splendour and the exclusive relationship with the Playstation 3. After describing how Sony and Guerrilla promoted these key themes over the years, I will briefly explain what role the PR campaign has played in the final market reviews by the game journalists, using Van Zwieten’s thesis. Also, another key theme is added here by market journalists to *Killzone 2*’s paratext: the high quality multiplayer theme.

³ Keep in mind that the combination of these aspects (the multidimensional toolkit) is a methodology. The terms market, nonmarket, fans and appropriation and the concepts of paratext and gaming capital serve as a theoretical framework.

Thirdly, in chapter three I will use the gained knowledge from the previous chapters to analyse a set of five nonmarket reviews, written by fans. These reviews were published on one of the largest Dutch game websites, InsideGamer (InsideGamer, 2009). I will show what role the *Killzone's* paratext have played in the appropriation of the game by fans, by determining which themes they incorporated into their gaming capital using, using their nonmarket reviews. Apart from the theoretical concept of gaming capital, I have also used a more practical approach to gain an insight into the appropriation by fans, combining data gathered from interviews, depth analysis of the nonmarket reviews as well as data visualizations⁴.

Finally, I will conclude this thesis by fully answering the research question, and reflect on the process of writing and researching this thesis.

One last important thing to note is that *Killzone 2* is a “hardcore” game, played by “hardcore gamers”. This is vital to keep in mind because that means that Sony and Guerrilla have specifically targeted this group of gamers, who read game magazines, own one or more consoles, check game websites and have played dozens of games, thus possessing a lot of gaming capital, as I will explain in detail later.

⁴ These visualizations are generated by a tool: a “parser” (Van Zwieter, 2009b) which is used – in this paper – to visualize how often some key words (like “graphics”, for example) appear in the corpus of nonmarket reviews. I will explain this parser in detail in chapter 4.

Chapter One: The Multi-Million Dollar Gaming Hype: How to Make Sense of It?

Over the past few decades, much debate has been going on about how to analyze games. In order to explain some of the methodological choices that were made in this paper, I want to indicate some of the ways games have been analyzed in the past. By showing some of the approaches that have been used to analyze games – even though they will not be fully used in this paper – I also hope to prove how interdisciplinary the study of games can be, and how interwoven the various theoretical perspectives are.

Media theory, political economy and cultural studies

In their book *Digital Play: The Interaction of Technology, Culture, and Marketing*, Stephen Kline et al. argue that media in general and also, more specifically, games are often studied using one of three approaches: media theory, political economy or cultural studies. As I will argue later on in this chapter, all three methodological approaches contain useful aspects, but none of them is in itself sufficient in explaining the role Guerrilla and Sony played in the appropriation of *Killzone 2* by fans. I will shortly outline these three approaches using Kline's book, followed by the idea that this paper will need a more multidimensional approach.

To start off with media theory, Kline et al. argue that this approach 'sees new communication technologies radically restructuring our most basic coordinates of experience' (Kline et al, 2003: 30). Most famous for his quote 'the medium is the message', Marshall McLuhan is media theory's most important advocate. But, as Kline et al. also state, McLuhan and media theory seem to pay too much attention to the technological side of media.

Supposing such an approach would be applied to the research question posed in this paper, media theory would fail in analyzing certain very important aspects of this paper, such as the powerful institutions surrounding the game industry and *Killzone 2*; most importantly – at least in this paper – marketing. Using only media theory as a methodological approach would exclude the complex relation between these marketing strategies surrounding and preceding *Killzone 2's* release and the fans. Furthermore, it would be ill-suited to analyze fan production, in this case the nonmarket reviews written by fans. All things considered, media theory as a methodological approach is not sufficient.

Enter political economy, an approach that does provide a lot of insights into marketing and bridging the gap between producers and consumers. According to Kline et al.: 'the market system gradually developed an increasingly complex selling apparatus that involved retailers and wholesalers, department stores, national branding, marketing, and advertising' (ibidem: 39). Benkler combines a technological approach with a political economic approach, resulting in an interesting concept dealing with a new networked information society. One aspect of this new society is that 'nonmarket production [such as fan reviews, JZ] [...] can play a much more important role than in the physical economy' (Benkler, 2003: 1246-1247). Also, as Aphra Kerr explains: '[Political economy] is also concerned with how institutions and structures relate to individuals and their actions' (Kerr, 2006: 4-5). But, while the political economy approach as described by Kline et al. and used by Benkler does provide sufficient tools to account for both fan production and marketing strategies, it still falls short in terms of the appropriation of *Killzone 2* (and games in general) by fans.

However, both fan production and valuation do play an important role in the final approach Kline et al. describe: the cultural studies approach. The 'active audience' is a key concept within cultural studies, describing the audience as actively engaged with the text and valuing it, albeit it in varying degrees. Cultural studies (and game studies) also provide insight into the "social construction of meaning in video games and to the real pleasures gamers might find in digital play" (Kline et al., 2003 : 45), as well as an elaborative toolkit for analyzing the game itself (Consalvo & Dutton, 2006). Still, considering the *Killzone 2* case, cultural studies does not provide the necessary insight into the relation between the fans (as the most active audience), the journalists (which are part of the game industry) and marketing.⁵

A multi-dimensional methodological approach

All in all, each of these approaches contains key aspects that can be operationalized in this paper. Some of media theory's aspects definitely are useful, for example, considering that part of *Killzone 2* marketing focused on the game's impressive graphics, technological brilliance and its potential to show off the Playstation 3's specific capabilities as a medium

⁵ To clarify: the goal here is not to analyze *Killzone 2* as a game. In fact, the game as an aesthetic artifact is considerably less a point of interest than the paratext.. In other words, fans as an 'active audience' don't engage just with *Killzone 2* as a text, but also (and maybe even more) with its paratext.

(CollegiateTimes, 2009). Furthermore, terms borrowed from political economy can be used, such as nonmarket and market. Finally, cultural studies can be used because of its notion of the active audience, albeit it in another way: in this context the engagement of the audience (or fan) focuses on the paratext rather than the text itself.

Borrowing these aspects from three different methodological approaches and combining them has given me the proper toolkit to, as Kline et al. put it: 'situate interactive gaming at the intersection of dynamic processes in the spheres of technology, culture and marketing' (Kline, 2003: 58). Next to that, I hope to have made clear that analyzing video games is often a difficult and interdisciplinary task, maybe because playing games is in numerous ways a complex, mediated practice. Or as Consalvo writes: 'games aren't designed, marketed, or played in a cultural vacuum' (Consalvo, 2007: 4).

Chapter Two: Bringing It to the Man: The Industry, Paratext & Game Journalism

'This is real gameplay everybody's seeing out there' (G4TV, 2005). These words were spoken by Sony Computer Entertainment America's Jack Tretton in an interview, and with these words he would start off the *Killzone 2* media hype, four years prior to the game's actual release. Tretton spoke in reaction to the infamous first *Killzone 2* trailer, shown to the public at the 2005 Electronic Entertainment Expo. What the attending gamers, journalists and other people saw that day was unlike everything they had ever seen before: the visual splendor depicted in the trailer showed such high levels of detail and such fluid animation, critics immediately had their suspicions whether the trailer was real or fake – fake meaning that it was just a movie, and not directly rendered from a Playstation 3.

The critics were right, as it turned out a couple of days later. Sony Computer Entertainment's President Phil Harrison stated that the trailer was indeed 'running off video' (Gamesindustry.biz, 2005), just as the critics suspected. But even though the trailer was not real and, in fact, at that time could not really have given players any idea about the actual visuals of the game, the first buzz around *Killzone 2* was created. And real or not, it was the very first sign Sony and Guerrilla were on a quest to show off *Killzone 2*'s pristine graphics. Indeed, as said before, it was the first step in the promotion of two major themes: graphical splendor and the exclusive relationship with the Playstation 3. I will get back to those themes later on in this chapter, as well as add another theme, mostly promoted in the market game press: the high quality multiplayer theme. In other words, the goal of this chapter is to take the first step described in chapter one: determining the most important elements Sony, Guerrilla and the market journalists added to *Killzone 2*'s paratext.

But before going deeply into that subject, it is vital to explain some of the basic principles of the game industry itself. Which steps are taken before a game like *Killzone 2* hits the shelves?

Basic principles of the game industry, a cultural industry

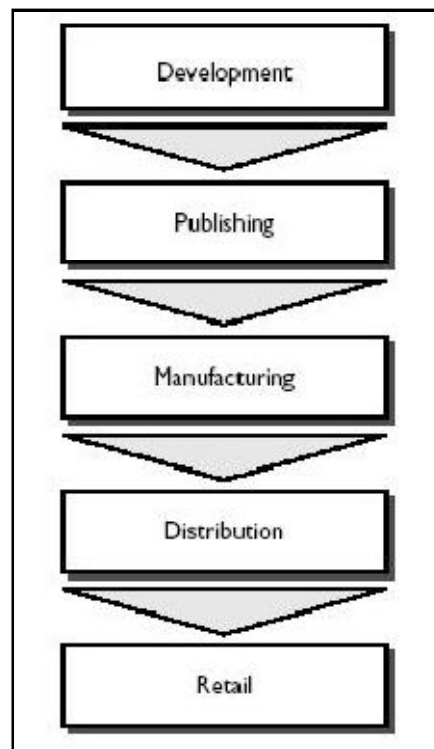


Figure 2: Vertical stages (Williams, 2002)

As figure 2 illustrates, it all starts with the developer: before a game is even announced to the public, the developers come up with an idea, find a publisher (if necessary) and start the developing process. It is important to understand – also in relation to power struggles and marketing – that there are different kinds of developers, usually divided into the three following groups: first party, second party and third party developers. As Dmitri Williams, Assistant Professor at the University of Southern California, explains: ‘ “first party” developers are those internal to a publishing organization. [...] “Second party” developers are those who contract for a publisher to create games for the publisher’s label. [...] Lastly, “third party” developers are unaffiliated outside firms that create games for a platform’ (Williams, 2002: 46-47).

What is interesting in the case of *Killzone 2*'s developer Guerrilla, is that they started off as a third party developer, until publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Europe saw *Killzone 2*'s potential and decided to buy them, essentially turning them into a first party developer, or what is also known as an in-house developer (IGN, 2005). One of the major differences is the shift in interests: as Williams noted, third party developers are unaffiliated, meaning there are far less conflicting interests than in the case of an in-house developer such as Guerrilla was during the development of *Killzone 2*. In other words, Guerrilla was

financially dependent of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe, which in turn could lead to less freedom in developing *Killzone 2*.

To move on with the life cycle of a game in development: after the game has been developed, the game's publisher is responsible for the launch and, in most cases (*Killzone 2* being one of them), distribution of the game to the retailers, who then sell the final game to the gamers. Given the fact that Sony Computer Entertainment Europe was at the same time financier, publisher and distributor, it may be obvious that possible failure of the game would have been disastrous.

As Aphra Kerr acknowledges in her book *The Business and Culture of Digital Games*, the games industry has a lot in common with the cultural industries⁶. According to Kerr, there are four similarities between the games industry and the cultural industry: first,

Only a small number of cultural products make a profit. [...] It is estimated that only 3 percent of digital games make a profit. [...] [Second,] within the cultural industries, the relative costs of production are very high when compared to the relative reproduction costs. [...] [Third,] Throughout the cultural industries there is a strong tendency to integrate vertically and horizontally in order to control costs and ensure access. [...] Finally, to define a cultural product as a public good is to point to the fact that it is not destroyed during use and can be reused by others who may not have to pay for it [Kerr, 2006: 45-47].

So, as Kerr argues, because the game industry shares so much similarities with the cultural industries, it can also be seen as a cultural industry itself, including sectors as advertising and marketing (Hesmondhalgh, 2002). By conceptualizing the game industry as a cultural industry, it is no longer an isolated industry - with little to no cultural, economic and political context -, but can be compared with, as well as thought of and analyzed as a cultural industry, much like the film industry. Also, by defining the game industry as a cultural industry, the multi-dimensional approach I use in this paper is much better applicable, since the cultural industries have been heavily researched on the basis media theory (McLuhan, 1964), political economy (Benkler, 2003) as well as cultural studies perspectives (Hesmondhalgh, 2002), unlike the game industry as an isolated industry.

⁶ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer originally came up with the term cultural industries, comparing popular culture with a factory that produces masses of standardized cultural artifacts (Horkheimer, 1976).

Promoting the two key themes

While Williams writes about the importance for a game to become ‘the holy grail for publishers [...] that can be sequelled or spun off into related hits’ (Williams, 2002: 48), he does not pay much attention to the necessity of marketing in his analysis of the game industry, claiming that the marketing is only done by the publisher after a game’s development is complete (ibidem: 47). Aphra Kerr does put emphasis on the need to market a game extensively: ‘publishing and marketing are critical functions in the overall value chain. [...] In all sectors scale is becoming increasingly important’ (Kerr, 2003: 7). Kline et al. seem to agree as well that marketing is crucial: ‘Firms without cross-selling and cross-promotional potential are at a serious disadvantage in competing in the global marketplace’ (Kline et al., 2003: 237). As I will demonstrate in this chapter, marketing and scale indeed play an important part, and appear to run parallel to all processes illustrated in figure two.

Before starting the actual analysis of Sony’s marketing campaign, I first want to outline the corpus I have used to create an overview of the marketing campaign. Since *Killzone 2*’s marketing was all over the web, magazines and TV it is useless to take small pieces of information from a large number of sites. Therefore, a thorough analysis of a few sources is preferable since it creates a more cohesive lineage of Sony’s campaign. So, I’ve chosen to use InsideGamer’s⁷ *Killzone 2* archive, IGN’s *Killzone 2* archive, the famous “Bullet” television spot (GamersDigest, 2009)⁸, and a fascinating and revealing interview – published after the game’s release – about the marketing campaign with Sony Computer Entertainment America’s Scott Steinberg (GameDaily, 2009). Using these sources as a corpus, my intention is not to cite every single article dedicated to *Killzone 2*. Rather, I want to highlight some key moments in the marketing campaign, to illustrate the two key themes Sony and Guerrilla systematically promoted: the graphical splendor and *Killzone*’s exclusive relationship with the Playstation 3.

Returning to 2005, a few weeks after the uproar about the suspicious trailer shown at the Electronic Entertainment Expo 2005, Guerrilla officially came clean and admitted the trailer was indeed fake; it was in fact entirely made using computer animation, which meant the trailer could not shed any light on both *Killzone 2* as well as the Playstation 3’s

⁷ The Dutch gaming website also used for the nonmarket reviews.

⁸ The television spot consists of a bullet flying in slow motion, passing all kinds of soldiers before ending up in some unlucky soldier’s eye. It can be seen online here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wk3SOI9l2kY>

capabilities (InsideGamer, 2005). Since this was quite a scandal – essentially lying to the public – Sony and Guerrilla seemed to have decided at that time to lie low for a while, considering the only notable press release in 2006: ‘a couple of fun facts’ (IGN, 2006), concerning the game’s graphics engine, multiplayer and artificial intelligence.

But sure enough, in 2007 – still two years prior to the game’s release – Sony’s marketing campaign machine was really put in motion. *Killzone 2* made its appearance at two major events: first at the Game Developers Conference, held in March 2007, where Sony Computer Entertainment’s President Phil Harrison, showed off the first ever in-game footage ‘as an example of our technology’ (IGN, 2007). He also announced a major *Killzone 2* appearance at the Electronic Entertainment Expo, held in July 2007.

Sony kept true to its word and released a new in-game trailer at Electronic Entertainment Expo 2007, essentially showing the notorious 2005 trailer, with the only fundamental difference that the 2007 version consisted of real, in-game footage (InsideGamer, 2007). This was a key moment in the marketing campaign, and IGN helped firing up the hype by naming *Killzone 2* Best Game of the Show: ‘Air transports. Shooting. Explosions. [...] Dear God, thank you for this first-person shooter. Smooth lighting, bullets whizzing past our heads – it’s too much to bear!’ (IGN, 2007).

By then it was also becoming obvious that one of Sony’s key themes was the graphical splendor *Killzone 2* had to offer. Scott Steinberg acknowledged that this was indeed Sony’s intention from the first moment: ‘If nothing else, *Killzone 2* has set itself up from the beginning as a marvelous display of the PS3’s graphical technology’ (GameDaily, 2009). The impressive graphics were Sony’s trump in differentiating *Killzone 2* from all other shooters, which is essential in marketing a product, as both Aphra Kerr and David B. Nieborg emphasize: ‘the game industry needs “freshness”’ (Nieborg and Hermes, 2008: 141) and ‘in order to differentiate their products publishers are spending more and more on marketing’ (Kerr, 2003: 8). The “Bullet” television commercial, which premiered February 2009, is also nothing more than a showcase for the game’s powerful graphical engine, since the entire commercial is rendered using the *Killzone 2* graphical engine. The commercial took some time to develop, but according to Kline et al. it comes as no surprise that Sony and Guerrilla were willing to put this much effort in it: ‘for the interactive entertainment industry, it is television advertising that provides direct contact with core consumers’ (Kline et al., 223).

As the amount of output by Sony’s marketing machine steadily increased over the course of 2008 (to illustrate: IGN dedicated 42 articles to *Killzone 2* in 2008 compared to 19 in 2007 (IGN, 2007-08)), another key theme began to surface (while still focusing on the

graphics as well): *Killzone 2*'s exclusive relationship with the Playstation 3. Again, Steinberg acknowledges the importance of *Killzone 2* for the Playstation 3 more than once:

We feel that *Killzone 2* is a tremendous exclusive. It will [...] push 360 owners to try out the PS3. [...] Since the fate of *Killzone 2* has been inexplicably linked to PS3, we wanted to show that it raised the bar for next-gen gaming. [...] The glorious amount of fidelity is superior to any other platform; it's a true showcase of the PS3's graphical superiority. [...] It's an exclamation point that demonstrates the distance between the PS3 and other systems. The game is 40 Gigs and could not be done on anything else (GameDaily, 2009).

As can be seen, Steinberg heavily promotes the exclusive capabilities of the *Playstation 3*. It is fascinating to see how Sony combined promoting the graphical splendor with the exclusiveness of the Playstation 3, explicitly saying this is the only machine capable of handling a title such as *Killzone 2*, trying to lure potential Xbox 360 buyers into the Playstation realm. Key moments in the marketing campaign promoting *Killzone 2*'s and the Playstation 3's exclusiveness were a) the statement by Guerrilla that *Killzone 2* levels were a massive two gigabytes each – and therefore only playable on a Playstation 3 – (InsideGamer, 2007), b) Guerrilla giving free beta codes away using Playstation Network (InsideGamer, 2008) and c) the announcement of a unique looking bundle package containing a Playstation 3, *Killzone 2*, a large hard disk and an extra controller (InsideGamer, 2009).

To summarize: I tried to demonstrate how Sony and Guerrilla promoted two themes, graphical splendor and exclusiveness, to differentiate both *Killzone 2* and the Playstation 3, by revealing specific information at specific moments between the game's announcement in 2005 and the game's release in 2009. In this paragraph, the focus has been on Sony and Guerilla and not much has been said about the position of the press in the promotional campaign. What role did the journalists play in mediating between the industry and the gamers? As will be shown, they've actually promoted another key theme: the multiplayer.

Enthusiastic press as mediators of value

'If you ask me, the biggest news from the videogame world in 2007 wasn't about a game or a game maker -- it had to do with a certain game reviewer, and an opinion that got him fired from his job' (Kennedy, 2008). This game reviewer was Jeff Gerstmann, and his critical

opinion about the game *Kane & Lynch: Dead Men*, published by noted game company *Eidos Interactive* (best known for creating Lara Croft), supposedly got him fired from his job at one of the biggest game websites on the internet, GameSpot.

Although much controversy still surrounds this affair, it illustrates the paradox of game journalism: ‘positioned between production and consumption, game journalists mediate “appropriate” game knowledge as well as commodity value’ (Foster, 2006, cited in Carlson, 2009). As professional journalists, they are expected to mediate knowledge and value independently and objectively, but, as the Gerstmann-example illustrates, this does not always seem to be the case. This may be because in order to provide the gamers with the latest game knowledge as well as valuing the games as “experts”, journalists have to work closely with the game industry – for they can provide them with “inside information” – and, in most cases, they are financially dependent on advertisements, PR-agencies and publishers.

An interesting example of this double role is a documentary about *Killzone 2*, made by the well-known Dutch game television show *GameKings* (Van der Ven, 2009).⁹ Although this is supposed to be journalism, the whole video is essentially a big marketing stunt, again extensively promoting the graphics, the exclusive capabilities of the Playstation 3 – by showing in extreme detail how Guerrilla used all kinds of processors only the Playstation 3 possesses –, and by showing how sophisticated the game’s multiplayer features are supposed to be. It even reveals the fact that Sony urged Guerrilla to create a title that was both a “benchmark”¹⁰ title for the Playstation 3 as well as a system seller.

Another example is a “multiplayer event” hosted by InsideGamer and Guerrilla (InsideGamer, 2009). This event is also a marketing stunt, designed to promote the high quality multiplayer theme. A few fans were allowed early access to *Killzone 2*’s multiplayer and demonstrated – together with InsideGamer and Guerrilla employees – some normal multiplayer maps as well as some fun activities. InsideGamer posted clips of these sessions as well as reactions by players on its website. Because both GameKings and InsideGamer promoted (aided by Guerrilla) the high quality multiplayer, this also added as a theme to *Killzone 2*’s paratext.

⁹ The full version with English subtitles can be seen at <http://www.gamekings.tv/index/videos/minidocu-the-company-behind-killzone-2-full-version-subbed/>.

¹⁰ A benchmark title is a title that shows off the most impressive capabilities of a certain console.

So, it is clear the game journalists fulfill a paradoxical role as mediators of value and information, positioned somewhere between production, marketing and consumption.¹¹ But what role has the PR paratext actually played in shaping the paratext around *Killzone 2* by market journalists? This is one of the core questions Van Zwieten tries to answer in his Bachelor thesis. As it turns out to be, key concepts and words do not seem to be blatantly copied by journalists in their final market review, but a lot of attention is paid to certain themes (Van Zwieten, 2009).

A concept Van Zwieten borrows to explain this process of repeating themes is 'churnalism', created by noted journalist Nick Davies in his book *Flat Earth News*: 'This is churnalism. [...] This is journalists who are no longer out gathering news but who are reduced instead to passive processors of whatever material comes their way, churning out stories, whether real event or PR artifice, important or trivial, true or false' (Davies, 2008: 59). I would like to add to this a concept that is one of the causes of churnalism as well as one of its consequences, thus creating a negative cycle that's quite hard to break. This concept is called shared reality, or the 'need to validate their [journalists'] professional decisions' (Donsbach, 2004: 142). Although Donsbach applies this concept to traditional news journalism, it can easily be applied to game journalism as well; there seems to be a strong tendency among game journalists to copy both news items as well as using other market reviews and grades - especially the ones published by the larger game websites - as a guideline or an "inspiration" while writing reviews, thereby creating a shared reality surrounding a game.¹²

A short summary

In the last few paragraphs, I described the most important themes of Sony and Guerrilla's marketing campaign - graphical splendor and the exclusive relationship with the Playstation 3 - and the role the game press played as mediators of value and information in their final reviews, also promoting a third theme, the multiplayer. This means the first step (described

¹¹ In an interview Martijn van Zwieten and myself conducted with Henk Boersen, senior consultant at Linden & Barbosa, the Sony's Dutch PR-agency, Henk acknowledged they had no direct contact at all with gamers. Indeed, they specifically targeted the press, relying on them to convey the message to the gamers (Boersen, 2009).

¹² Well known game journalist Chris Buffa also acknowledges this tendency in game journalism in an article posted at game website GameDaily, titled How To Fix Videogame Journalism (Buffa, 2006).

in detail in the introduction) in answering the research question has been taken: the most important themes in *Killzone 2's* paratext are graphical splendor, the exclusive relationship with the Playstation 3 and the high quality multiplayer. In chapter three I will turn to step two in answering the research question: analyzing which of those themes fans incorporated into their gaming capital.

Chapter Three: Nonmarket Reviews by the Fans

'Killzone 2's graphics are a miracle' (Aco, 2009). This phrase originally appears in one of the nonmarket member reviews I analyzed. It illustrates the fact, as will be worked out later on in this chapter, that all the analyzed reviews were lyrical about *Killzone 2's* graphics. No exceptions. But what is as equally interesting as this unanimous appraisal, is the question whether or not other aspects of the game that were *not* heavily promoted by either Sony and Guerrilla or the game journalists – and thus were not as apparent in *Killzone 2's* paratext – also play a significant role in the analyzed nonmarket reviews. It will be shown later in this chapter that this indeed appears to be the case, to some extent. Before I will turn to the final analysis, I will explain how the different data regarding the nonmarket reviews were gathered and examined

Analyzing and contextualizing nonmarket reviews

Before anything else is said, I want to make clear that the nonmarket reviews are in no way whatsoever analyzed in terms of “good review” or “bad review”, whether or not the fan who wrote the review did a “good” or “bad” job, nor whether *Killzone 2* actually is a good game or not. Even though it may be an interesting question, it is of little interest in relationship to this paper's research question. What is important is what role *Killzone 2's* described paratext has played in the *appropriation* of *Killzone 2* by fans. The nonmarket reviews used in this paper are a good case study to analyze how gamers both use *Killzone 2's* described paratext and their gaming capital to appropriate *Killzone 2*, regardless of the quality of the game or the quality of their reviews.

To understand the role Sony and Guerilla have played in the appropriation of the game by fans, it was, first of all, important to define the game's paratext. As became clear in the previous chapters, the most important elements in *Killzone 2's* paratext, consisted of three themes. Sony and Guerilla promoted two themes: graphical splendour and an exclusive relationship with the Playstation 3. Next to these themes the market press added another: the multiplayer. So, the following step is to analyze if these themes have made their way into the fans' gaming capital and the nonmarket reviews used in this paper.

First I will explain how I analyzed the data in order to find out whether the key themes of *Killzone 2's* paratext showed up in the nonmarket reviews. To do this, as explained in the first chapter, both a quantitative as well as a qualitative approach was used.

The quantitative analysis was done using a textual analyzer (which I will call a “parser”), developed by Dennis van Zwieten (Van Zwieten, 2009b), which divides texts into phrases that can be analyzed for certain keywords. These keywords can then be grouped together, so that a text can quickly be searched for certain themes by using different keywords that all relate to the different themes one wants to analyze. The result is a simple but clear overview that visualizes¹³ whether or not certain themes are present in a text and if so, if their presence is significant enough to draw conclusions.

Each review in this visualization is represented by a column of grey and colored blocks (see figure 2). The blocks each represent a sentence in the review, a grey block represents a neutral sentence (which means no keyword is present in that sentence), and a colored block represents a themed sentence. Each color represents a certain theme. To illustrate: a red block represents a sentence in which a keyword is present that belongs to the theme “graphical splendor”. The names of the fans can be found above each column, followed by the grade the fans awarded *Killzone 2* with.

Since the reviews analyzed in this paper are written in Dutch, it was of little use to use specific key words that were also used in reviews, previews or news items written in English. However, this is not a problem, since I am not interested in whether or not fans literally copied certain key words or phrases from reviews or previews but whether the general themes in the described paratext played a role in the appropriation by fans. In other words, even though the fans chose different words, they refer to the same theme.

Next, the qualitative analysis was done using a more thorough analysis of the nonmarket reviews to provide a context for the visualizations generated by the parser. Next to this deeper analysis a questionnaire was sent out to the nonmarket reviews’ writers with some detailed questions as to why and how they wrote their reviews, as well as if and how they followed the publications surrounding *Killzone 2*, or, in other words, the paratext.

¹³ Why visualize? I used graphical representations of data in this paper, to create a clear and understandable image of the presence of certain themes in the nonmarket reviews, in a way I could have never achieved using only words. As Yuri Engelhardt, assisting professor at the University of Amsterdam and specialized in information visualization, also acknowledges, ‘graphical representations can be regarded as expressions of visual languages’ (Engelhardt, 2002: 165) and thus provide a universally understandable image of complex data.

In search of the themes: the analysis

It should not come as a surprise that all of the fans who filled in the questionnaire are active gamers with a lot of gaming capital, also called hardcore gamers or fans. They all follow the news on multiple websites and magazines and have followed the news surrounding *Killzone 2* for a few years at the least, some even since the unveiling at the Electronic Entertainment Expo 2005 (Aco; Zhero; Owner, 2009). It is thus clear that they must be – albeit it unconsciously – aware of the paratext surrounding *Killzone 2*. It is likely they are not aware of concepts like gaming capital and paratext, but by following the news, reading previews and reviews and watching trailers and commercials, they do seem to have added to their existing gaming capital at least part of *Killzone 2*'s paratext.

Thus it seems clear that some parts of *Killzone 2*'s paratext is present in the fans' gaming capital, and could thus have shaped and structured both their expectations and gameplay experiences. *Killzone 2* fan Aco: 'before I buy a game, I'm interested in gameplay trailers, background information and reviews as well' (Aco, 2009). Zhero, another *Killzone 2* fan, even acknowledges, without knowing it, precisely the role a paratext can play according to Consalvo: 'it's like you already know the game by reading about it and watching images and movies' (Zhero, 2009).

But is there evidence to be found in their nonmarket reviews supporting this statement? Using the parser, the first step that has been taken was to analyze the presence of the three key themes in *Killzone 2*'s paratext: graphical splendor, the exclusive relationship with the Playstation 3 and the high quality multiplayer. Figure 3 illustrates the results of this first step, which indeed seem to support the statement.

The three key themes

So, just how significant is the presence of the key themes of *Killzone 2*'s paratext in the analyzed nonmarket reviews? As figure 3 shows, the first thing that stands out, is the abundant presence of red blocks, meaning a lot of phrases contain a keyword that relates to the graphical splendor theme. To be precise, 39 phrases in the analyzed reviews (on average almost eight per review) contain key words that are related to the graphical splendor theme.

A closer look at the reviews reveals that all these phrases are positive about the graphics, to say the least, and therefore fit perfectly within the graphical splendor theme. Without any exception they praise the graphics, using words like 'phenomenal' (Alogos,

2009), 'masterly' (Aco, 2009) or 'revolutionary' (Zhero, 2009). Even if they do not use the same specific key words, they share the same impression of the graphics.

Now what about the second theme, the exclusive relationship with the Playstation 3? Only nine phrases contain key words related to this theme, significantly less than the graphical splendor theme. One review does not even contain any phrases relating to this theme. Judging just by this result, it seems that this theme has not played a very significant role in the appropriation by fans. This could prove disappointing to Sony, considering the fact the Playstation 3 is currently being outsold by both Microsoft's Xbox 360 as well as Nintendo's Wii (Nexgenwars, 2009).

Qualitative analyses of these phrases reveals that out of these nine phrases, only two of them really fit in the exclusive relationship theme. For example, Aco argues in his review that 'you won't find anything like this on any console in terms of graphics' (Aco, 2009). A phrase in Zhero's review is even more striking: 'Ever since the E3 [Electronic Entertainment Expo, JZ] trailer appeared on the net we were all eager to play Killzone 2. This would be *the* first-person shooter convincing people to buy the Playstation 3' (Zhero, 2009). Even though in this phrase Zhero clearly shows that he incorporated the theme into his gaming capital, his review never states people actually *should* buy a Playstation 3, nor do any of the other reviews. Thus it indeed seems that this theme is not incorporated by gamers the way Sony hoped it would be.

Finally, let us take a look at the multiplayer theme. 29 phrases appeared to contain key words relating to the multiplayer theme, which comes down to almost six per review on average. Zhero's review stands out because it contains ten phrases related to this theme, almost two times the average number of phrases. It is also the only review to contain more phrases devoted to multiplayer than to graphical splendor, respectively ten to six.

Interesting in relation to multiplayer is the possibility to combine different "badges" (which represent soldier classes such as "Assault" or "Medic"), which was extensively promoted in the GameKings documentary (Van der Ven, 2009). Out of the five reviews, three specifically praised this feature (Solum; Owner; Zhero, 2009). One review touched upon the feature, but stated that while it was an interesting feature, it is not very addictive because it does not take long enough to reach the highest possible level (Alogos, 2009).

Overall, 77 phrases contain key words that are related to one of the three main themes I identified in this thesis as being the most profound themes in *Killzone 2's* paratext. In total, the reviews analyzed in this paper contained 396 phrases, which means that almost 20% of the analyzed reviews consist of phrases containing key words that are related to one of the

main themes. It is important to keep in mind that the exclusiveness theme only occupies 2,7%. I will get back to this later.

Even though these numbers are interesting, they are quite meaningless without a useful context. For instance, even though it is clear that the three key themes found their way from *Killzone 2's* paratext into the fans' gaming capital and from there into the reviews, are they significantly more present than other aspects of the game, like sound? As we will see in the next paragraph, this indeed seems to be the case.

The other themes

Games consist of more aspects than just the graphics, multiplayer and how well it uses the technical capabilities of a console. Other aspects such as storyline, characters, originality, sound and controls are also considered important to the overall gameplay experience. To illustrate, the Dutch gaming website GameZ uses an complex grading system, awarding grades to five different categories: game design (in *Killzone 2's* case: this means the storyline and characters), replay value, graphics, sound and controls (GameZ, 2009). The grades awarded to these categories have to be defended in the review (also see Zuurmond, 2009).

In other words, the fact that almost twenty percent of the reviews was dedicated to either the graphical splendor, the exclusive relationship with the Playstation 3 or the multiplayer, should not be considered strange if more or less the same amount of text was dedicated to other aspects. But, as said before, this does not seem to be the case.

First of all the aspect of sound was analyzed in relation to the three key themes. As figure 4 shows, only seven phrases contain key words related to sound. Two reviews do not even mention it at all, even though, as Zhero acknowledges, the music was recorded in the world famous Abbey Road studio (The Beatles recorded their albums there) and the soundtrack is compatible with 7.1 surround sound systems (Van der Ven, 2009). All in all, even when sound was mentioned, only one or two phrases were dedicated to it, using neutral key words. Only Alogos defined the soundtrack as being 'epic' (Alogos, 2009).

Secondly, the reviews were analyzed in search for key words related to "originality". As figure 5 shows, just six phrases contain key words related to this theme. Again, three reviews do not mention it, even though this is a much heard - but not promoted - critique about *Killzone 2*. This is what infamous game magazine EDGE had to say regarding originality: 'If you can't think for yourself after so many millions of dollars have been spent, surely it's common courtesy to make your clichés interesting' (EDGE, 2009).

Thirdly, the reviews were analyzed in search for key words related to the controls of the game. An important aspect of a game, one would suppose, but still, only 13 phrases contain key words related to the controls of the game, or how “well” the game plays, as figure 6 shows. Finally, the reviews were analyzed in search for key words related to the storyline and characters. As figure 7 shows, this is the only theme that comes somewhat close to the graphical splendor and multiplayer themes: 19 phrases contained key words relating to either the storyline and/or the characters. Again, keep in mind that both the controls as well as the storyline and characters are more present than the exclusiveness theme, even though they are not nearly as heavily promoted.

Overall, the four “other” themes together consist of 45 phrases, compared to 77 phrases dedicated to the three key themes, which were, unlike the “other” themes, heavily promoted and thus important themes in *Killzone 2's* paratext.

Something struck me when reading the answers to the questionnaires. When the respondents were asked about the process of writing their review, most of their answers described something like this: first completing the game, then going back for a second time to look at certain aspects more in detail. But when they described *what* aspects they were investigating more in detail, two mentioned the graphics, while only one mentioned the controls and the storyline. None of them mentioned sound or originality. ‘When write a review, you study things like graphics and artificial intelligence much closer’ (Zhero, 2009). ‘You take a critical look at the graphics, to make sure if it’s really that sharp’ (Aco, 2009). Keeping in mind the results of the analysis (as put together in table 1), it seems appropriate not to label such statements as a coincidence, but as a result of incorporating the graphical splendor theme from *Killzone 2's* paratext into their own gaming capital.

Table 1: Number and percentage of phrases related to certain themes

Promoted Key Themes	Phrases	Percentage
Graphical Splendor	39	9,85
Exclusive Relationship	9	2,72
Multiplayer	29	7,32
Total	77	19,4
Other Themes		
Sound	7	1,77
Originality	6	1,52
Controls	13	3,29
Storyline & Characters	19	4,8
Total	45	11,38

Final thoughts on the results

As the results of this analysis show, one can state that two of the key themes received significantly more attention in comparison with other, less promoted aspects of the game, even though these aspects are generally considered to be important to games. Both the quantitative as the qualitative analysis show not only that significantly more phrases are dedicated to these two key themes, but also that the fans seem to be more aware of these key themes and thus inclined to pay less attention to other themes, both during the playing experience as writing their review.

The only exception is the exclusive relationship with the Playstation 3 theme which, although heavily promoted by Sony, Guerrilla and the GameKings documentary, did not receive nearly as much attention as the graphical splendor theme, the multiplayer theme or even the storyline and characters. Is there an explanation for this result? While further research seems to be required, one possible explanation could be that these *Killzone 2* fans already possessed a Playstation 3, thus having to pay less attention to the exclusive relationship theme, simply because by possessing the Playstation 3, they are already aware of its capabilities. Following this line of thought, the reason why there were so little phrases related to this theme could be because the fans did not incorporate it in their gaming capital, at least not to the same extent as the other two key themes.

Even though the results of the analysis show that *Killzone 2's* paratext has played a role in the appropriation by the fans, the fans do not seem to be aware of it, seeing themselves as neutral and autonomous: when asked whether or not they think the market reviews by journalists or the marketing campaign by Sony and Guerrilla have played a role in writing their reviews (and thus appropriating the game), they all said no. Also, when asked if these things have played a role in their gaming experience, only one of them admitted it might have: 'If a game isn't marketed before the release, the gaming experience might be different' (Aco, 2009). The others rejected such a statement.

Thus, the second (and final) step in answering the research question has been taken. The themes that were incorporated by fans into their gaming capital are the graphical splendor theme and the high quality multiplayer theme. I will combine to results of the two steps into the final answer to the research question in the conclusion, as well as reflecting on the thesis as a whole.

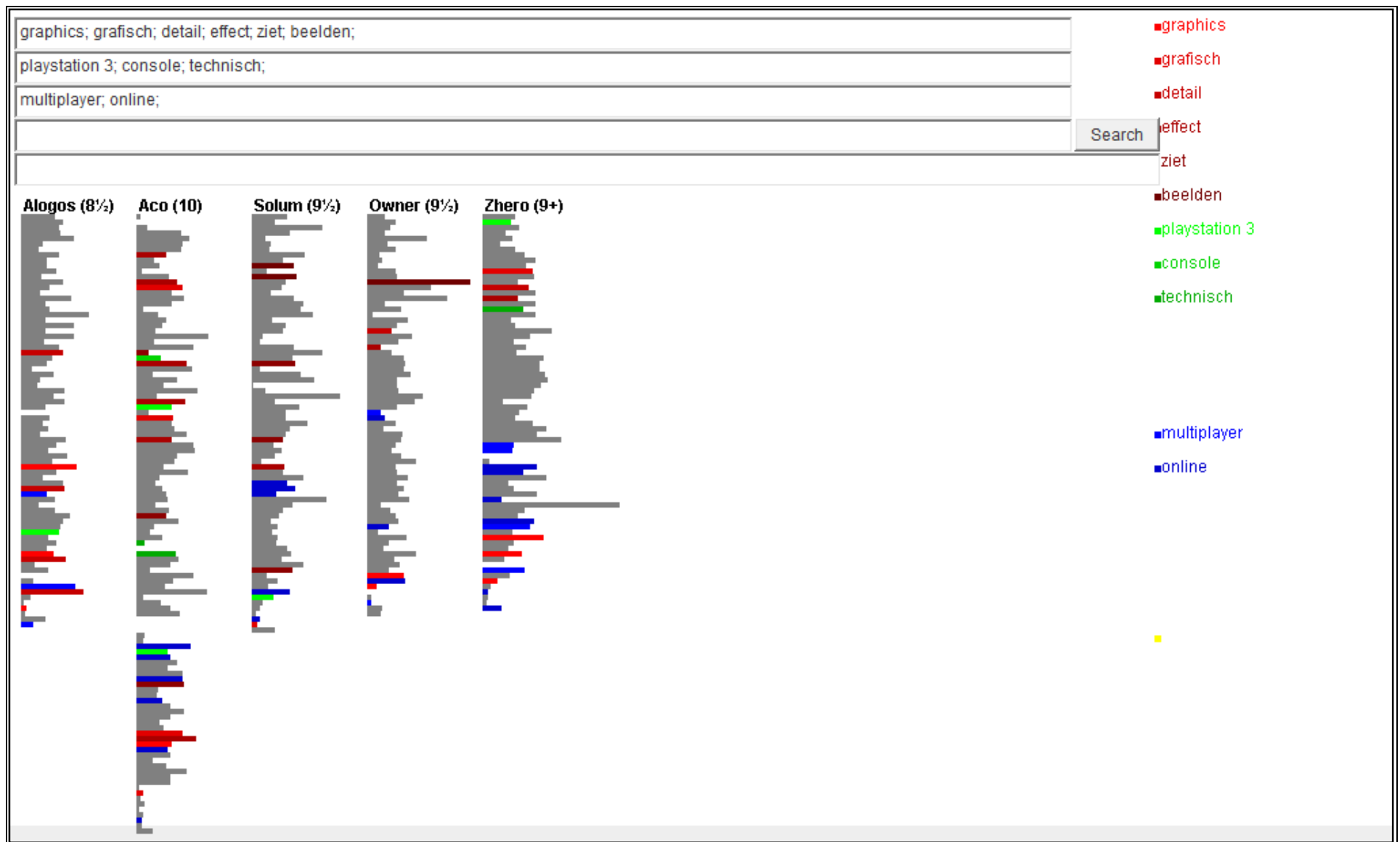


Figure 3: Graphical Splendor (red), Exclusive Relationship (green), Multiplayer (blue)

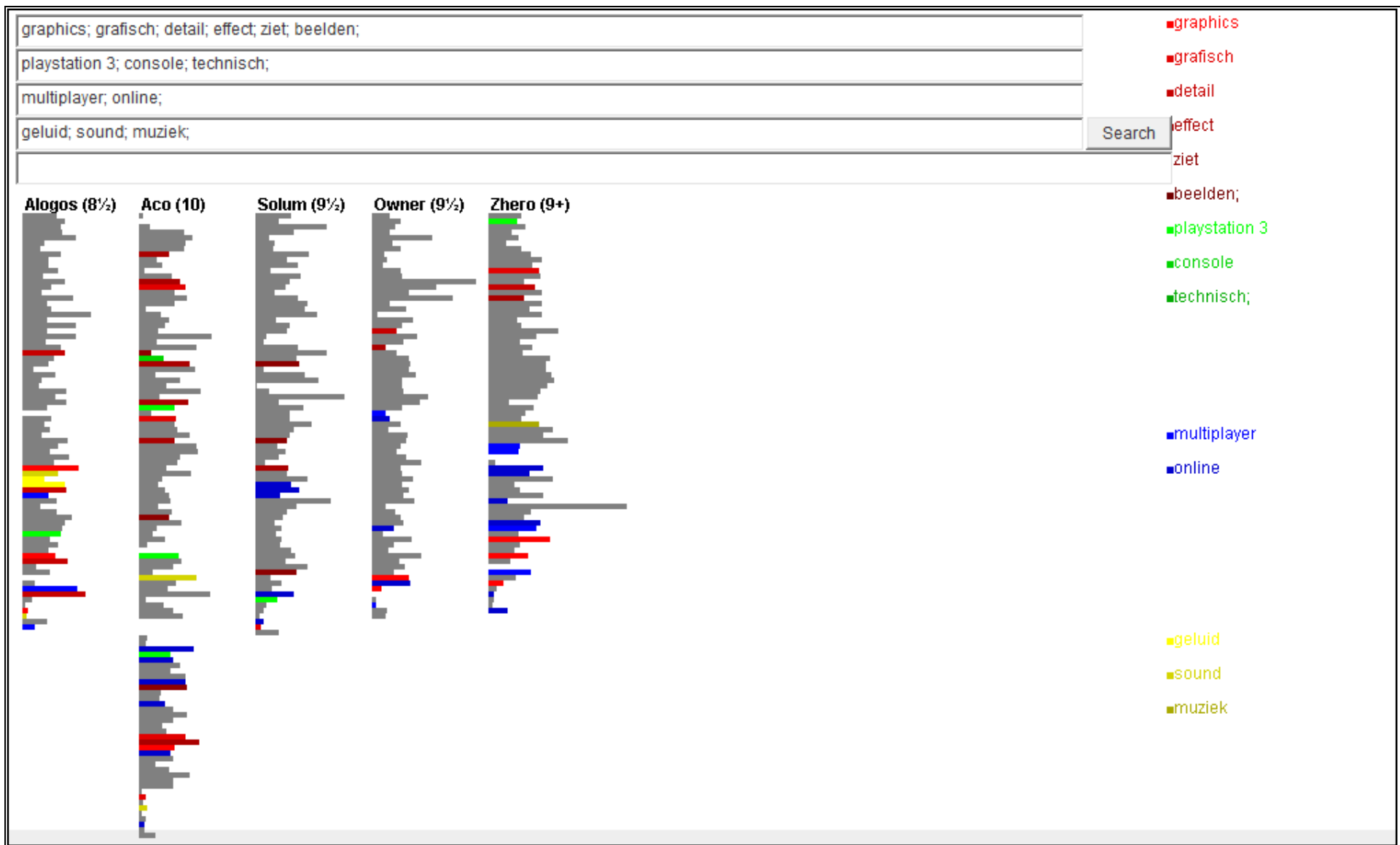


Figure 4: Graphical Splendor (red), Exclusive Relationship (green), Multiplayer (blue), Sound (yellow)

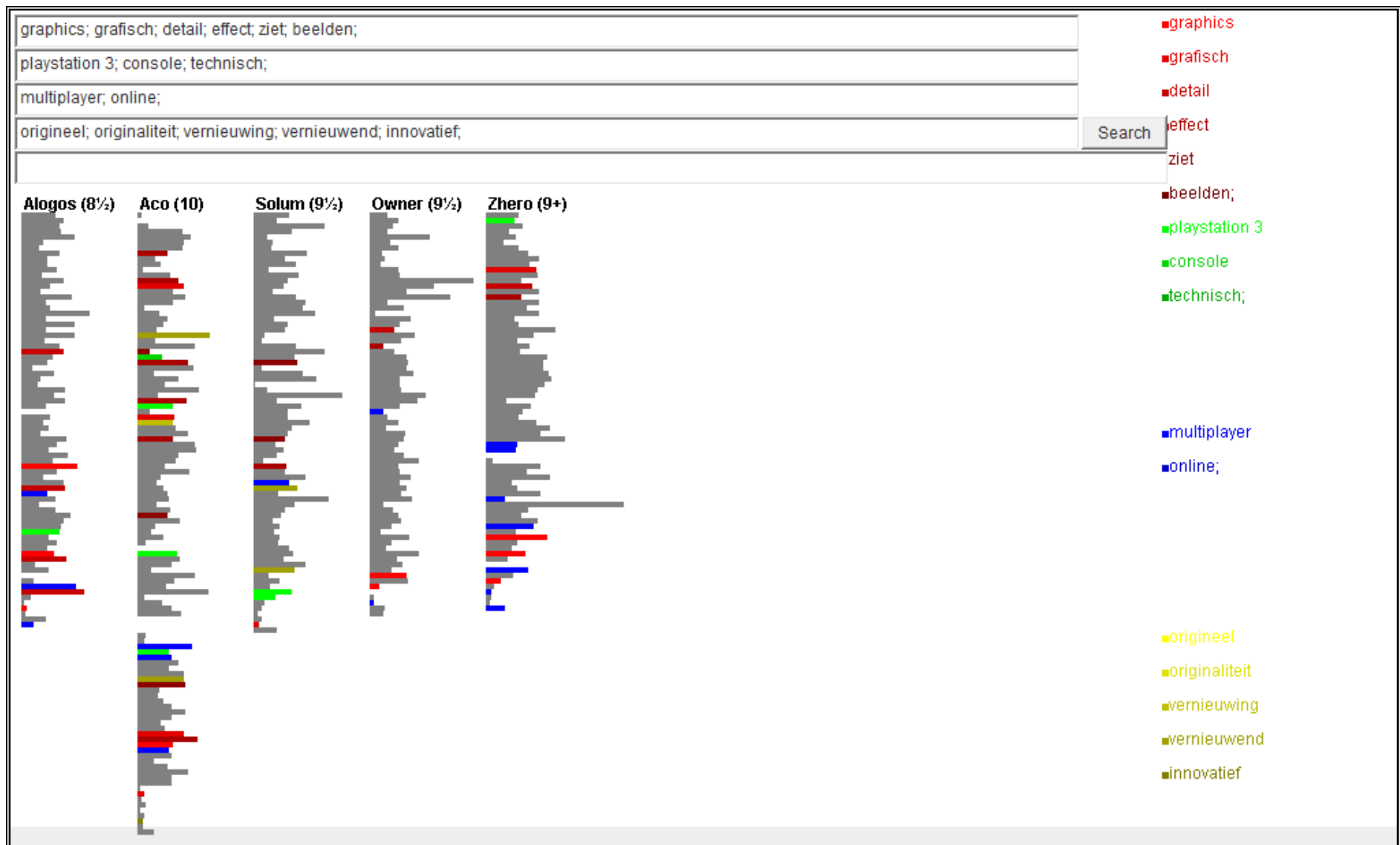


Figure 5: Graphical Splendor (red), Exclusive Relationship (green), Multiplayer (blue), Originality (yellow)

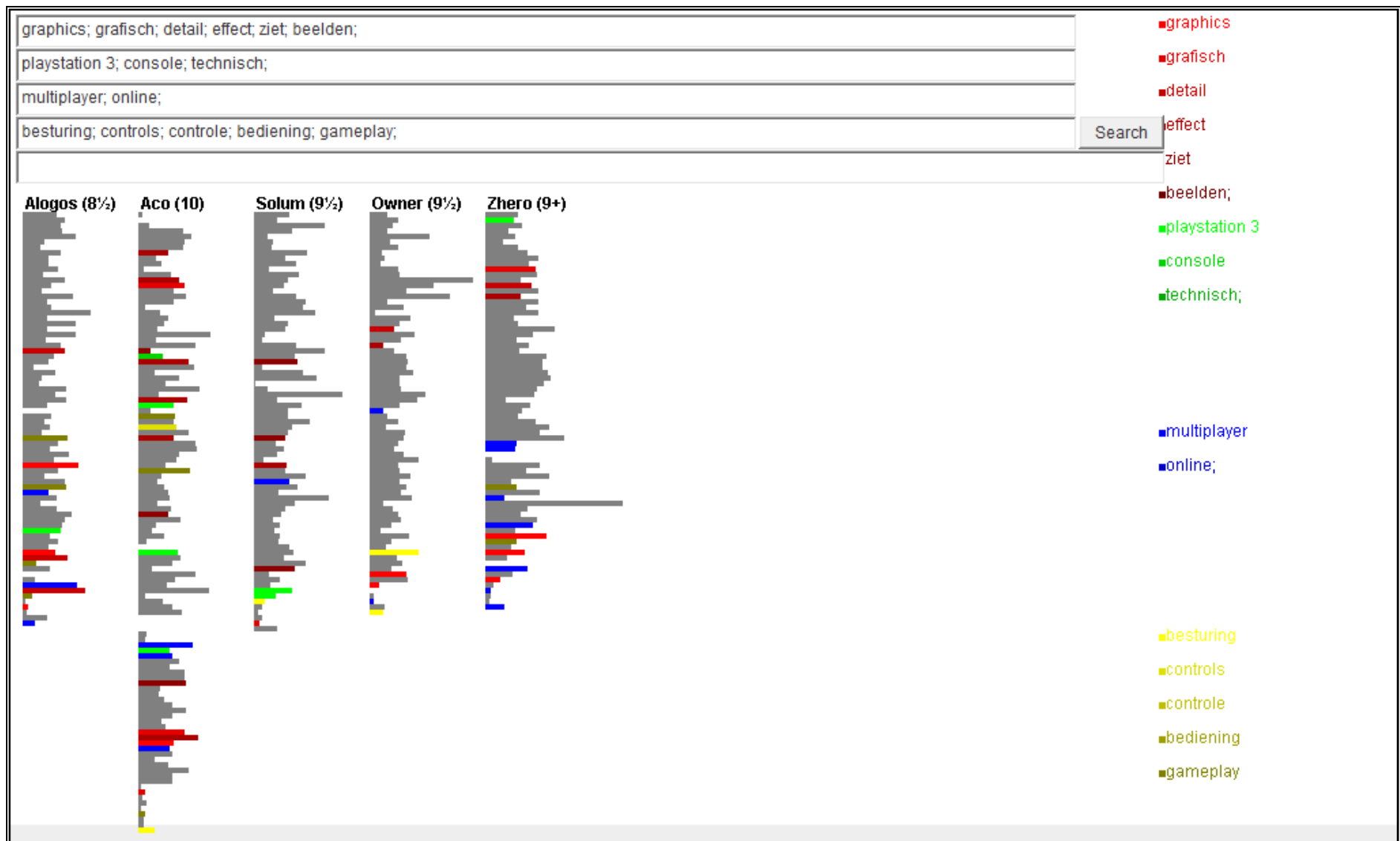


Figure 6: Graphical Splendor (red), Exclusive Relationship (green), Multiplayer (blue), Controls (yellow)

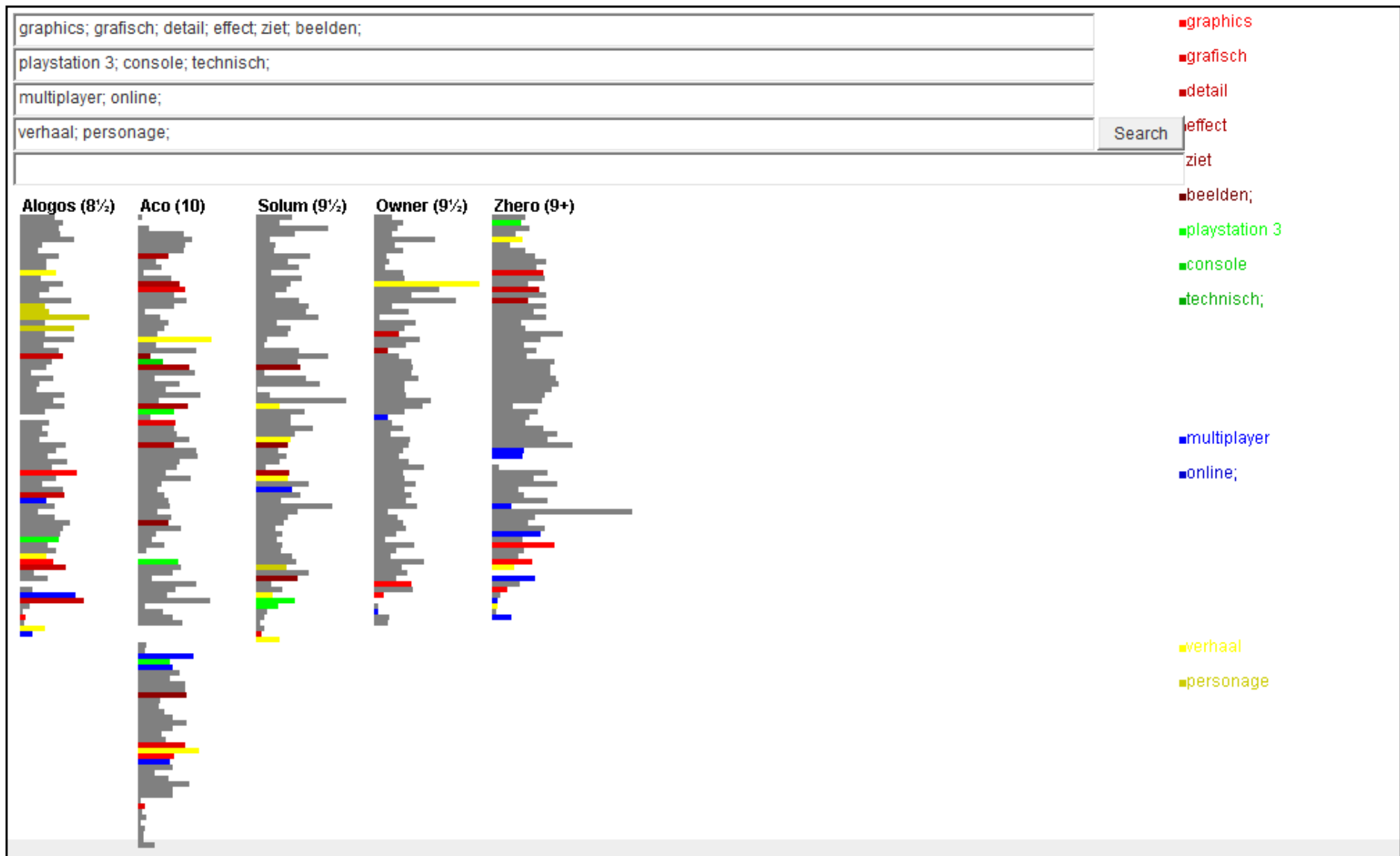


Figure 7: Graphical Splendor (red), Exclusive Relationship (green), Multiplayer (blue), Story (yellow)

Conclusion

In the first chapter I've outlined two steps that needed to be taken in order to find an answer to this paper's research question: what role have Guerrilla, Sony and the game press played in the appropriation of *Killzone 2* by fans, concerning their nonmarket reviews? The first step was to determine the most important elements in *Killzone 2*'s paratext. These elements turned out to be three themes, which were heavily promoted by either Sony or Guerrilla or the market journalists: graphical splendor, the exclusive relationship with the Playstation 3 and the multiplayer. The second step was to determine which of these themes were incorporated by the fans into their gaming capital. As the results in chapter three show, two of these themes was clearly incorporated into the fans' gaming capital: the graphical splendor theme and the multiplayer theme.

By combining all this information, the research question can be answered: Sony, Guerrilla and the market journalists have played a shaping and structuring role at three different levels. Firstly, they have shaped and structured expectations by heavily promoting three themes of the game, creating a paratext around *Killzone 2* that includes these themes. Secondly, they have shaped and structured fans' gaming capital because fans – active as they are – have interacted with the paratext surrounding *Killzone 2*, and incorporated – without being aware of it – two out of three themes, as the results in chapter three show. Thirdly, Sony, Guerrilla and the market game press have thus also indirectly shaped and structured fans' gaming experience – through shaping and structuring fans' gaming capital, since gaming capital can determine how gamers interact with a game (Consalvo, 2007: 4).

Finally, this also leads to another conclusion: this may be a vicious circle. As we have seen in this paper and as figure 1 illustrates, the interaction between gaming capital and the paratext is a dynamic one. Thus, by adding to the existing paratext a text (such as a nonmarket review) that was shaped and structured *by that same paratext*, the fans unconsciously seem to contribute to that paratext more or less the same themes that Sony, Guerrilla and the market press consciously contribute, only making the paratext stronger and more pressing.

Final remarks

Looking back at the process of researching and writing this paper, I am rather pleased about the results. Even though not all the themes were incorporated, still a significant difference existed between the promoted themes and the themes that were not promoted.

What do these results mean? First of all, it means that even though fan-made material is often seen as more “real” and “independent” than commercially made material – as the terms nonmarket and market also seem to suggest – this does not seem to be right, at least in the case of fan-made, nonmarket reviews. That brings us back to the struggle between corporate, top-down media industries and bottom-up, grassroots creativity (Jenkins, 2006: 131). At least in the case of the nonmarket, bottom-up reviews of *Killzone 2*, the media industries seem to play a fairly significant role, illustrating again how complex the relationship between the two is. It also seems to mean that fans are not autonomous when they play a game, but that a concept like paratext can explain that there are forces actively shaping and structuring this playing experience. Finally, these results – and the thesis in general – demonstrate how aspects of different existing methodological approaches can be combined into a specific multidimensional toolkit, which in turn can provide fresh insight into the scientific field of game studies.

To conclude this thesis, I would like to emphasize more research is necessary to gain more insight in the role the game industry and game journalism as cultural industries play in the appropriation of games by the fans. The results in this paper seem to show a tip of the iceberg. But even though the corpus of analyzed reviews in this paper was limited, it did lead to some significant results, which show us how concepts like paratext and gaming capital can help us understand more about the way games are promoted, experienced and played. For example, how would these concepts relate to the more controversial subjects surrounding games, such as addiction and violence?

One never knows, it might just lead to some surprising insights as well...

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