Videogames Censorship in China: A Study on the Effects of Censorship Regulations and the Response by the Players

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Abstract

China is a rapidly growing market for videogames where the industry has to cope with stringent yet often ambiguous censorship regulations. After providing an overview of the controversial discourse surrounding games as cultural products in China, this research presents recent normative trends related to game content regulations. The effect of such regulations is then exemplified with an in-depth analysis of the game content alterations carried out to avoid censorship in the game *Civilization IV*. In the core part of this research, we present a selection of comments related to the topic of censorship in *World of Warcraft* and collected from Chinese discussion platforms. Our aim is to provide insights on how the players received alterations to content elements in the Chinese version of the game. Our findings highlight a generally unfavorable response to censored elements, although sizeable groups express favorable and indifferent attitudes. The analysis of the data collected highlights a discourse that develops beyond the opinions on censored game content, touching upon the topics of censorship in general and the perceived instrumental use of censorship.
1 Motivation of the Research

The aim of this study is to analyze the response by Chinese players to the changes that were performed on videogames during the localization process in order to avoid the intervention of censors. As players are one of the agents within the videogame industry, we believe that it is important to examine and provide qualitative insights on how the discourse over this topic develops among them. The research question we will try to answer is: How did the Chinese players react to game content modifications carried out in order to comply with censorship regulations?

We will try to answer this question by collecting comments from discussions taking place online and related to the topic of censored game content in the Chinese version of games. We intend to identify different types of opinions regarding the changes, the different ways players expressed those opinions and, on a more general level, the perception they have of censorship and its impact on the specific products and on the gaming industry. We believe in the importance of this type of information since the consumers remain the discriminating factor between the success and the failure of a product. Collecting and translating into English a portion of this players-generated content is, in our intention, a way to make this information readily available and more accessible to whoever might be interested.

Finally, because of recent normative developments that suggest the further strengthening of control over the internet by the authorities, with the users possibly losing the ability to engage in online discussions anonymously (Sonnad 2017), this research acquires the collateral function of preserving the comments collected, since the generation of this type of content, sometimes harshly critical towards the establishment, could be no longer possible in the future.

2 Literature Review

Videogames have become a global phenomenon and a ubiquitous presence in today’s society (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013). In more recent years virtual entertainment has become extremely profitable with some products generating profit margins higher than those of top-grossing films (Carlson and Corliss 2011). The direct consequence of this success was the surge of attention towards videogames localization which allows titles developed mainly in Japan and in the US to be adapted for a wide range of international markets (O’Hagan and Mangiron 2013). One critical aspect in the process of adapting a product for international markets are the limitations posed by national regulatory boards (Carlson and Corliss 2011), as inappropriate content can trigger the intervention of censoring authorities.

Videogames content regulation and censorship are a complex topic that involves the instances of different actors and, especially at the industry level, has relevant implications. As O’Hagan and Mangiron describe “in
addition to including territory specific content for target versions, developers must ensure that the game and its content conform to mandatory territory-specific requirements and regulations. Legal teams in publishers always perform a thorough check of the content of a game before it is released” (2013, p. 216). According to Burna and Lau (2005), in general, three forms of censorship can be identified:

1. pre-censorship, content subject to approval before circulation based on published rules and regulations;
2. post-censorship, based on complaints filed and the government takes action;
3. self-censorship, based on the creator’s fear of punishment or perception of anticipated rejection by government regulations […]

(p. 199)

They also identify three possible response that can be adopted by the computer gaming industry:

1. Doing nothing, which allows full freedom of artistic expression in the complete ignorance of the censorship criteria of any jurisdiction
2. Localization, which alters computer game content to make it acceptable to a specific jurisdiction’s censorship criteria
3. Self-regulation, which is the application of a rating system to games as a form of self-censorship

(p. 204)

The issues of the response by the public to sensitive content in the media (not limited to videogames) and the way authorities address the problem, is tightly connected to the topic of censorship and presents differences in every national context. Kocurek (2013), reports that in the US initiatives to regulate the production and distribution of violent video games have mostly failed due to the fact that the Constitution protects freedom of speech. However, controversy over harmful game content has been ongoing. Kocurek also points out that while protecting freedom of speech, the U.S. government urged the industry to self-regulate, developing a rating system, in order to avoid governmental intervention. The resulting system was the ESRB, now generally adopted but not legally binding, which despite the wide adoption was not enough to completely solve controversies. Also highlighting the importance of freedom of speech in the US, Wolf and Dee (2013) report that, in a pool of 350 survey participants, the majority feels that freedom of speech protection takes precedence over concerns about violent video games. Their research also points out that most people believe that the rating systems should be the only restriction applied to videogames and that further governmental intervention would not be appropriate.

Support for censorship has been sometimes related to the concept of third-person effect and social distance, according to which “a person exposed to a persuasive communication in the mass media sees this as having a greater effect on others than on himself or herself” (Davison 1983, p.1). The research conducted by Lin (2010) studies the perception of negative and positive influences in videogames. The results highlight the consistent impact of social distance, third-person effect and difference in age on the perception of negative videogame influence, while positive influence related findings were mixed. Differently, the results of the experiment by Ivory and Kalyanaraman (2009) suggest that person abstraction, the idea that people distant from the subject are more likely to be influenced, does not have a significant impact. However, they found that content
abstraction\(^1\) played a significant role in the perception of negative effects, as participants considered specific games they were familiar with to be less dangerous than games in general.

If we look at Chinese context specifically, regulators tend to avoid direct intervention, requiring instead media product/service providers to adopt their own censoring systems (MacKinnon 2008) thus encouraging self-censorship. Media censorship in China also appears as a system that is both dynamic, since the strategies changed over time, and diversified as several censoring authorities are involved with different priorities and agendas (Tai 2014). Zhang (2012) points out the fact that two government bodies have jurisdiction over media censorship, namely the General Administration of press and publication P. R. China (GAPP, 中华人民共和国新闻出版总署) and the Ministry of Culture P. R. China (MOC, 中华人民共和国文化部), which has resulted in some conflict caused by overlapping authority of these two departments. As for the specific regulations on content, Zhang provides this extract from the 2011 “Regulations on Publication Administration (出版管理条例) issued by the State Council of P. R. China (国务院). These regulations apply to all media products and point out what types of content are deemed unacceptable:

1. those opposing the basic principles established in the constitution;
2. those endangering the unification, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state;
3. those divulging secrets of state, harming national security, or impairing the honor and interests of the state;
4. those inciting the enmity, discrimination of nationalities, jeopardizing the unity among the various ethnic groups, or violating the customs and habits of minority nationalities;
5. Those spreading cults and superstitions;
6. those disturbing social order and destroying social stability;
7. those inciting pornography, gambling, violence or instigating a crime;
8. those insulting or libeling others, violating the lawful rights and interests of others;
9. those endangering social morality or fine national cultural traditions;
10. other contents which are prohibited by laws and administrative regulations by the state.

(Zhang 2012, p. 344)

Zhang’s article points out how some of the concepts in this list are not sufficiently clear and might be applied differently based on interpretation. This ambiguity is combined with the absence in China of an age rating system (Zhang 2008), which would provide a clearer framework for publishers if implemented.

When studying the phenomenon of game censorship in China and the response by the public, it is crucial to understand how these cultural products emerged and evolved in the Chinese market and what responses came from the Chinese Society. Zhang (2013) describes the contrasting views that have accompanied the videogame media throughout its development in China. Zhang identifies the party-state, the industry, the gamers and the non-gaming public as the four agents competing over the meaning and representation of this new technology. The status of videogames as a contested space caught in the dialectal representation as either productive or pathological suggested by Zhang constitutes an important underlying element of our research. In fact, by exploring how the gamers’ opinion about censorship is expressed in the online discourse this research aims not only at providing insights on how effective modification and localization strategies were but also at divulging the voice of one of the agents in the evolution of the Chinese videogame industry.

\(^1\) Similarly to social abstraction, content abstraction suggests that pieces of content closer to us tend to feel less dangerous than content of that type in general.
3 Methodology

This research starts by focusing on videogames as cultural products in the Chinese context, providing a knowledge framework that we consider instrumental in order to understand the implications of the other, more in-depth parts of the research. This first general section presents the arrival and development of videogames on the Chinese market, describing how they attracted increasing attention, eventually being put under scrutiny by the authorities, and the role of censorship regulations. For the normative overview included in this research, we have worked on the documents released by the authorities and available on official websites. After examining the original Chinese version of these documents, we reported the aspects that were more relevant in terms of game content. The translation into English of selected parts of text was carried out by the author of this research. To exemplify how the normative system impacts a particular product we have chosen the strategy game Civilization IV (Firaxis 2005) which had been already mentioned as an example by Zhang (2012). The description of the changes made to this game is based on first-hand gameplay using a retail copy of the Chinese version of the game. Besides describing in more detail the elements previously mentioned by Zhang we also present additional elements that were identified during the collection of data for this research.

As for the online content analysis, which constitutes the core of this research, the videogame we have selected is World of Warcraft (Blizzard 2004), which was the most popular western online game on the Chinese market for a long time (Wen 2016). We utilized the search engine Baidu, and used World of Warcraft (WoW) and censorship related keywords, in order to locate discussions related to the topic. The keywords used, with their English translation, were: 魔兽世界和谐 (WoW and Censorship), 魔兽被和谐吗 (Was WoW Censored?), 魔兽世界哪些东西被和谐 (What was censored in WoW?), 魔兽世界需要和谐吗 (Was it necessary to censor World of Warcraft?), 为什么要和谐魔兽世界 (Why was WoW Censored?). The results were discussions hosted on the communication platform Baidu Tieba and the question-and-answer platform Baidu Zhidao, both services provided by Baidu itself and the gaming websites Duowan and 3dmgame. Interestingly we could not find useful discussions on official forums. The reason for this could possibly be a higher level of attention by internet censors towards platforms directly related to the game, although no evidence supports this hypothesis. The collection of content has been carried out based on single comments and contributions to these discussions. Only comments that expressed an unambiguous opinion about the censored elements in the game or censorship in general were taken into account and collected into a corpus of 120 entries. After being analyzed and interpreted the comments were translated into English and organized in topic-based categories:

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1 https://www.civilization.com/civilization-4
2 https://worldofwarcraft.com
3 www.baidu.com
4 tieba.baidu.com
5 zhidao.baidu.com
6 http://www.duowan.com/
1. Response to censored game content. This category includes comments on the specific elements that were altered in the game and is divided in the sub categories negative opinion of censored elements, irony over censorship, criticism of practical issues caused by censorship, positive opinion of censored elements and pragmatism/indifference.

2. General criticism of censorship. This category includes comments that express criticism over censorship without being directly related to specific modified game content.

3. Economic and political use of censorship. This category includes comments that steer further away from expressing a direct opinion on the altered game content, developing a discourse over the alleged instrumental use of censorship instead.

We wish to remark that the corpus used for this research is very limited and therefore can only offer a limited indication of how Chinese players react to censored game content. The manual collection of forum comments was preferred to automatic systems because of issues specifically related to the Chinese language and the “internet slang” developed by internet users, which constitutes a serious limitation to the use of keywords for automatic content harvesting; although the possibility of using this method could be considered for future larger-scale research on the topic.

4 Videogames as Cultural Products in China

Videogames first appeared in China in the early 80s, during the years following the economic reforms introduced in the post-Mao period (Cao and Downing 2008). The first steps of the videogame industry in the country saw the dominance of arcades and home consoles. Arcade venues represented an important novelty for the young generations which finally had an alternative to more traditional and state-organized activities (Zhang 2013). Even in the general context of a society reorienting towards market and consumption, arcades became an underground culture phenomenon arguably because of the marginal nature of the industry at this early stage. Because of the unusual and potentially alienating nature of videogames, arcades were soon met with criticism by large shares of the public, mainly parents worried about the influence of these “unhealthy” forms of leisure on their children’s studies and the shady atmosphere of arcade venues. The media characterized game arcades as “dens of evil” (Zhang 2013, p. 2395). The stigmatization of game arcades indirectly helped the performance of the earliest home consoles in China. The opportunity generated by this sentiment was successfully exploited by Xiaobawang (小霸王, English name: Subor) which produced the homonymous gaming console combining the features of a Japanese Famicon\(^8\), released by Nintendo in 1983, and a computer keyboard. The Chinese name of the company and the device was probably inspired by a hero from the traditional novel Water Margin and translates as “Little Conqueror” which effectively appealed to

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\(^8\) A cartridge-based gaming console, the name is a contraction of “Family Computer”.

parents anxious to see their children succeed in a new and competitive society. These devices were marketed as “study consoles” (Cao and Downing 2008, p. 516) that helped students to become familiar with keyboards and computing in a time when home computers were rare in common households (Zhang 2013). However the most appealing feature for the young users was the possibility to play pirated Famicon cartridges, which circulated in great numbers on the market. Piracy was widespread as the main international players were not present on the Chinese market (Cao and Downing 2008). The first consoles marketed by Nintendo, and later Sega, after the North American Video Game Crash of 1983 were released in a not yet fully globalized market where several territories were left out because of the impossibility or unwillingness of gaming companies to uphold their intellectual property rights (Plunkett 2011). At the same time, piracy discouraged those companies from investing in the Chinese market thus cementing the situation. Such consoles, sometimes labelled “Famiclones” were popular not only in China but in several territories where international producers were not present with strong distribution networks. As for PC games, although they were present in China since the early 80s, their diffusion and development was hindered by the high cost of home computers (Cao and Downing 2008). As the country opened more and more to the outside world, the idea remained that although letting foreign ideas into the country would prove beneficial to modernize it, some “harmful” ideas and values would also slip in through the door. Videogames proved to be a particularly controversial medium in that sense, even in comparison with other cultural and artistic products, since they portray alternative realities in an interactive way. On the other hand videogames were seen as a potent conduit to bring the young generations closer to new technologies.

Another driving element in the discourse over videogames was the nationalist sentiment within parts of the public and the institutions. During the 90s home computers gradually became more common among the elites of Chinese cities which constituted the first embryo of the Chinese internet population. As Zhang describes:

This new consumer segment quickly allied itself with the burgeoning PC games industry, from which emerged the first generation of Chinese programmers, web designers, IT entrepreneurs, and digital technology enthusiasts. Those “digital-utopists” became ardent champions of the local video games industry. (2013, p. 2397)

The call for a national video games industry representing national values and interests was not only the product of patriotism, which existed was reinvigorated in those years by episodes such as the American bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999 or the ongoing dispute with Japan over the Senkaku islands, but was also the consequence of the ongoing effort by the state to integrate video games into its nation-building agenda (Zhong 2002). Besides video games, new technologies in general became a tool for exercising nationalism. In certain occasions Chinese hackers attacked several “perceived enemies of the PRC” such as official Japanese ore American websites and even engaged in cyber-skirmishes with their Taiwanese counterparts (Hughes 2000, pp. 205-206).
The public awareness of computer technologies started to soar following the rise of the controversial Wangba (网吧) phenomenon. The internet started to be commercialized on the Chinese market in 1995 (Cullen and Choy 1999) and its internet population kept growing ever since, although the density of internet penetration varies greatly across the country based on the local level of development. In the late 90s Wangba (internet bar) became the new favorite venues of young urban citizens to surf the internet and play games. At an early stage Wangba were encouraged as they were considered a useful tool to spread internet connections (Zhang 2016); at the same time they stimulated the rise of a national PC games and later online games industry. However, the mushrooming internet cafés, which were often underground gaming rooms, started to cause concern over reported cases of internet addiction and exposure to harmful foreign content. As Zhang (2016) describes, the turning point was in 2002 when a fire destroyed an internet café in Beijing, prompting the government’s reaction with more stringent regulations.

For video games in general the tide seemed to turn at the beginning of the new millennium, when the notion of games as valuable education tools established by Xiaobawang was seriously challenged. In 2000 the government banned home consoles from the Chinese market over concerns for the influence they could have on younger generations. These regulations were never strictly enforced as gaming hardware continued to be available in the so-called “grey market” (Ashcraft 2010). However vague, the ban added to the persisting piracy issue and prevented console manufacturers to seriously engage the Chinese market (ibid.). The only notable exception was Nintendo that circumvented the ban in 2003 by establishing iQue, a subsidiary company, directly in China. The homonymous “iQue” console released shortly afterwards became the first gaming system to be legally distributed after the ban was implemented. What helped the console being allowed on the market was probably the fact that it was technically produced by a local company and that because of its unconventional configuration, it didn’t fall into the categories indicated by the legislators. The iQue (in Chinese Shenyouji 神游机 “Divine Gaming Machine”) was in practice just a controller, which contained the entire system, and could be connected directly to the television playing a limited selection of Nintendo 64 games. Even after the ban was lifted in 2014, the console market remained marginal (Custer 2016).

The Chinese online game industry took off in 2001 and developed quickly unconstrained by the issue of piracy and propelled by the growth of broadband internet connections and home computer ownership (Zhang 2013). Although the market was initially dominated by foreign companies, especially South Korean, these were soon challenged by the rise of local publishers. According to the data provided by Chung and Fung (2013) in December 2009 there were 361 large scale online games in China, and 87.8 of the market was occupied by 12 companies: Tencent (腾讯), Shanda (盛大), NetEase (网易), Chang You (搜狐畅游), Perfect World (完美时空), Giant Entertainment (巨人), NineYou (九游), Guanyu Huaxia (光与华夏), The9 (第九城市), Kingsoft (金山), Net Dragon (王龙) and Tiancity (世纪天成) with the other minors competing for niche parts of the market. Chung and Fung also point out that Chinese game companies adopted a combination of globalization and localization to develop products aimed at a regional market. This formula was drew inspiration from internationally established products but then applied local elements that appealed to the
regional audience. This strategy was probably encouraged by what Cayla and Eckhardt (2007) describe as the difficult situation of Asian brands in general, caught between the awareness of a renewed global relevance and the persistence of prejudice about regional quality standards. If this was the case for several developing Asian countries, it was arguably even truer for China. With a successful region-oriented strategy, game companies gained access to a vast market and could postpone the international challenge for a later phase.

The success of games “from China and for China” was, as Cao and Downing (2008) point out, a consequence of the high level of control by the institutions with regulations that proved “protective in nature”, requiring foreign companies to operate through local partners. In addition to this, strict regulations on content shielded the local market from competition with many foreign products, either blocking or delaying their access to the Chinese Market. Regulators even advised on what types of content the government considered healthy. As Chung and Fung describe:

At the state level, the Chinese government sets up boundaries for creative production in game development. Media censorship and the government’s quota system have created a restricted environment that prioritizes the political interest of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) over other interests. (2013, p.240)

Recent years saw the rise of mobile gaming together with the ongoing relevance of PC gaming (Batchelor 2017). In the years that saw China become the first national gaming market, the determination by the authorities to control this industry has not diminished and, as we will see, new normative documentation has been issued.

5 Overview of Recent Policy Trends

Since 2012, when Zhang’s article was published, the Chinese videogame market witnessed some important changes; the most notable one was probably the ban on consoles being lifted in 2014. In this section we will present some of the most prominent policy trends that developed in the last few years. A selection of official documents will be used as the leading thread of the discussion. In accordance to the scope of this research, the focus will be on the aspects that impact game content, therefore the following should be considered extracts and not exhaustive summaries. The text sections that are quoted in this article have been translated by the author of this research.

5.1 Lifting the Ban on Consoles

In 2013 it was announced that the ban on gaming consoles would have been lifted. This opening was part of the larger project of the Shanghai Free-Trade Zone (上海自由贸易试验区), a 120 square kilometers area that constituted the first free-trade area in Mainland China. On March 31 2014 the Shanghai Government issued the “detailed implementing rules for the opening of the culture market in the free-trade zone Shanghai, China” (中国(上海)自由贸易试验区文化市场开放项目实施细则). The document states that foreign game console manufacturers and vendors will be allowed to produce and sell games and gaming consoles after
their content has been verified and approved by the Department of Cultural Administration (文化主管部门).

The document states that the games submitted for approval should include content that:

- Respects intellectual property, is beneficial to the propagation of science, arts and humanities knowledge and is beneficial for the healthy growth of the young. Does not include content forbidden by article 13 of the “ordinance on the governance of public entertainment” (national circular〔2006〕N. 458), do not involve gambling features such as slot machines, coin return and roulette. The external shell of the device, the content of the game and game instructions should be in the national common language.

  (Shanghai Government, 2014)

The “ordinance on the governance of public entertainment” (娱乐场管理条例) that is referenced in the document contains a set of rules equivalent to the one described by Zhang (2012). The mention of the language issue is interesting as in recent years it seems to have become an increasingly relevant issue. In fact, as Ahmad (2017) reports, mobile games were not approved because some English expressions were present in the game. Acronyms such as “HP”, “HD” or “KO” tend to be internationally accepted and recognized but in this case made the difference. Ye also points out that the rule is not a new one but the strict enforcement of it is a recent development. As far as localization is concerned this might prove to be an additional complication. It should be noted that the requirement of using simplified Chinese already prevented publishers from using traditional characters version from Hong Kong or Taiwan in the Mainland market.

According to the document, when applying for content approval, the applicant should provide a device with the content installed. Documentation about the whole content should be provided in the form of a video or a demo video. It is requested that these documents represent the final version of the product that is to be released on the market. It is specified that content not commonly displayed during the use of such product as well as it final physical appearance should also be documented. In addition, the applicant should provide a list of all names used in the game, all audio files used in the game (including background music), a list with the names of all tracks and a transcript of the lyrics in English and Chinese.

5.2 Additional Notice on Gaming Consoles

On July 21 2015 the Ministry of Culture issued the “Circular of the Ministry of Culture regarding the permission for national and foreign enterprises to manufacture and sell gaming consoles” (为文化部关于允许内外资企业从事游艺设备生产和销售的通知) as an addendum to the regulations specified in the document from 2014 that was presented above. Similarly to the previous document, the second section of this circular describes what forms of gaming devices are officially encouraged:

The development, manufacture and sale of gaming devices that respect intellectual property rights, embody the national spirit, have content that is healthy and uplifting for intelligence, education, motion sensitivity and physical training are encouraged and supported.

  (Ministry of Culture P. R. China, 2015)
This part expands over the general indications previously provided. The mention of “national spirit” is an unambiguous statement about what type of entertainment industry the government is trying to shape and is an important element in the aforementioned discourse over “games from China for China”. Section two also reaffirms the prohibition to have content described in article thirteen of the “ordinance on the governance of public entertainment” as well as gambling game mechanics.

Another interesting part of the document is section three where it is stated that the verification and approval of console content is managed at the province-level Culture Administration Sections. This point highlights the role of local authorities is the overall process. It is then described that the team in charge of examination and approval can be constituted by representatives of the departments of culture and public security (or other departments) and by industry experts. When it is difficult to take a decision on the content submitted, it’s possible to seek for additional advice from experts or to request a review by the Ministry of Culture itself. Although this matter is only briefly discussed in the document, the fact that there appears to be no explicit obligation to include experts of the gaming industry in the approval process is relevant. As Zhang (2012) reports, the absence of a clear description of the methods used to assess content together with the fact that the individuals carrying out the assessment are not necessarily familiar with the medium is likely to be frustrating for gamers. At the same time this can be worrisome for applicants, especially the smaller ones that rely on timely release for revenue.

5.3 Norms on Online Games

Although suggesting that the success of locally produced online PC games in China was an intended consequence of the ban on consoles might be bold, it was arguably an important contributing factor. Online games constitute one of the largest segments of the Chinese gaming industry. For this reason it is not surprising that they became a priority for regulators. Besides general regulations for internet services and internet culture, some official documents address online games specifically. In particular we should mention the *temporary measures for the regulation of online games* (网络游戏管理暂行办法) which was issued on March 17th 2010. The document includes instructions for the governance of online games and discusses, among other things, what authorities are responsible, the application and evaluation criteria for enterprises and content limitations, with a ten-point list equivalent to those previously mentioned.

A more recent document is the *Ministry of Culture’s notice on the monitoring after release within the strengthening of the norms on online games operations* (文化部关于规范网络游戏运营加强事中事后监管工作通知) issued on December 5th 2016. As the name suggests, the document focuses on operations and specifies several requirements and limitations on in-game purchases and luck-based features. At point five it is demanded that updates to the game, the introduction of new virtual items, modifications of the function of virtual items and their validity in time as well as upcoming limited-time events must be published in a visible location on the official website or within the game, including the name of the items, their characteristics, price, exchange ratio, validity period, purchase methods etc.
Point six of this document is of particular interest as it touches upon the luck-based mechanics of online games and therefore connects to the broader topic of the strict censorship rules aimed at gambling or gambling-like features. This also brings us back to the discourse over internet and gaming addiction, an element that has always been central for Chinese regulators. Point six states that:

The enterprise operating an online game that provides virtual articles and additional services based on random drawing, shall not require users to directly use real or virtual currency to participate. The enterprise operating the online game should publish on the official website of that game or on the random drawing interface the name, attributes, content, number and draw rate of all virtual items and additional services. The information about the random drawings that are published must be real and effective.

(Ministry of Culture P. R. China, 2016)

Additionally, point seven requires that the results of the drawings must be published on the official website of the game and preserved for inspection for at least 90 days. Point eight adds another interesting element, requiring the operating enterprise to offer at the same time alternative ways to obtain articles and services with equivalent attributes via items exchange or direct (i.e. not randomized) purchase using virtual currency.

Finally it is interesting to note how the opening part of the document signals a recognition of videogames as a cultural product that has the potential to enrich society. In the first paragraph it is pointed out that online games had a “very active role in the development of the internet cultural market, in providing rich cultural entertainment for the masses; broadening and leading cultural consumption”. The unstoppable development of the gaming industry into a key component of China’s booming digital entertainment economy (Zhang 2013) helped promoting the image of games as a positive form of entertainment. Efforts by regulators to turn this potent medium as a tool of state-building even promoting “games as a form of literature” (Chung and Fung 2013, p. 242).

6 The Effects of Censorship Regulations on Localization: Civilization IV

The stringent regulations on game content and features can generate a difficult environment for publishers. In the case of foreign products, the process can be complicated further by the numerous cultural aspects that could be targeted by censors. Having an application rejected will result in a waste of time and money, and it can represent an advantage for competitors. As far as game content is concerned, we have seen how regulations provided by the competent bodies are ambiguous on several points and don’t clearly specify what is considered unacceptable. This additional pressure can potentially encourage publishers and their Chinese partners to adopt a very cautious stance in the localization of their products, modifying all content that might prove problematic at a later stage. Describing how censorship impacts game localization, Zhang (2012) points out that in China self-censorship is not only a precaution that publishers adopt in order to control risk but is also encouraged by officials. Among other examples, Zhang also describes many of the changes made to the 2005 strategy game Sid Meyer’s Civilization IV, developed by Firaxis Games and published for Windows by 2K Games. The game
was released in China in 2007 in partnership with CEASIA (中电博亚). As Zhang reports all content related to China was rewritten in order to avoid censorship-related issues that could be caused by the political/cultural nature of the game’s content. This chapter goes further into details analyzing the changes made to this game during its localization for the Chinese market; focusing mostly on text but including the rare, but existing, graphical elements that were affected.

Although Civilization IV is now a rather old game it remains a valuable example of the reaction to ambiguous restrictions on content. Additionally, there is an advantage in the fact that the game was not yet integrated with the platform Steam, which is the case for later installments in the franchise, and it was possible to purchase a physical copy that could be used directly out of the box. As Ahmad (2016) reports, Steam has been largely unaffected by the restrictions on games release in the country; this helped the platform to become very popular as it allowed Chinese users to purchase otherwise inaccessible content. However, Ahmad also points out that this situation is unlikely to last very long in the future. Because of the advantageous environment offered by Steam at the moment, it can be expected that publishers utilizing that platform won’t be under the same level of pressure. Lastly, the choice of Civilization IV was also motivated by the fact that the franchise enjoys a good level of popularity in China. A copy of the basic game was used for this research, without any expansions or patches. The screenshots presented have been collected during first-hand gameplay. The in-game text presented was translated by the author of this research.

6.1 Chinese Civilization and Leaders

The first change we can identify in the Chinese version of the game is about the two leaders available for the Chinese faction. Originally these were Qing Shi Huang (秦始皇), first emperor of China, and Mao Zedong (毛泽东), first chairman of the People’s Republic of China. The former was renamed Tai Gong (泰公) which translates as Duke of Gong, however the graphical portrait in the game was not altered. Mao Zedong, a much more sensitive character, was removed from the game altogether and replaced with a characters absent in the original version: Tang Gong (唐公), which translates as Duke of Tang.
As for the name of civilization itself, it has been changed to the “Civilization of Nine Ding” (九鼎文明). The term used here refers to a legendary set of nine tripod cauldrons forged in ancient times and passed down as a symbol of power. What is interesting about this choice is that politically relevant elements have been avoided by utilizing a concept from a remote era, while maintaining the overall cultural identity. The description of the civilization in “Civilopedia”, an encyclopedia within the game, was removed and replaced with new text, which can be translated as:

In order to make the game more interesting and enjoyable, a fictional civilization was added to the Chinese version of Civilization IV: The Nine Ding Civilization. All game elements related to this civilization including characters, plot, attributes and symbols should be considered fictional; any similarities are purely coincidental and they should not be linked to real elements.

Similarly, the “identity” of the civilization was hinted at, but in fact removed, by partially modifying the automatically generated names of cities. In the game, the first city founded by a civilization is given the name of the capital city of that culture or nation in the real world, although the player can edit a new name if they wish. Further cities will be named after other historically important cities in that culture or nation.
In the Chinese version only the first syllable in Chinese cities’ names remains, while the second syllable has been replaced by “city”. As a result names such as Beijing, Nanjing, and Shanghai have been modified into Beicity, Nancity, Shangcity etc.

6.2 Technologies

In the games of the Civilization series, one of the ways for players to advance is by researching technologies. One very distinctive feature of the franchise are the quotations that accompany every newly researched technology. In order to avoid censorship, changes were made to different aspects of technologies. The most notable example is the “Communism” technology. Its name was changed into “National Welfare Doctrine” (国家福利论). In this case the quotation was reduced in order to remove any reference to communism. Below is how the original (top) and Chinese (bottom) versions of the quotation compare:

- “When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.”
  - Dom Helder Camara

- “When I give food to the poor, hey call me a saint.”
  - Dom Helder Camara

The hammer and sickle symbol that originally identified the technology was replaced by a more generic picture. The description in Civilopedia was also changed. The new description can be translated as:

In this game, the National Welfare Doctrine considers the country as belonging to all its citizens. The country shall adopt fiscal policies that allow the redistribution of the people’s income, enact social
welfare to improve life standards, adopt “anti-crisis” measures that stimulate investments and consumptions, thus protecting employment and economic prosperity.

Another technology that was modified is “Rifling”. In this case the name, symbol and description were not altered. In the original version of the game this technology featured a quotation by Mao Zedong. This was removed and replaced with a quotation by Confucius. Below is how the original (top) and Chinese (bottom) versions compare:

- “Political power grows out the barrel of a gun.”
  -Mao Zedong

- “In order to do a good job, an artisan needs good tools.”
  -Confucius

Finally, another technology that was likely to be put under scrutiny by the censors is “Fascism”. The picture symbolizing the technology was not modified. However the name was not translated into Chinese with the term Faxisi zhuyi (法西斯主义), which would have been the most literal way to transfer the concept. Instead, the equivalent but less evocative expression “Extreme Authoritarianism” (极端独裁主义) was used. As for the quotation, no Chinese text appeared in the game and the original English text was still displayed, as can be seen in the screenshot below.
6.3 Religion and Great Wonders

Civilization IV features some of the most prominent religions on the real world as well as special buildings called “Great Wonders”. During the localization for the Chinese market the Confucian religion was renamed into “Religion of Reason” (理教). Every religion gives the player who discovers it first the possibility to build a special holy building. In the original version the sacred building for Confucianism was the “Kong Miao” literally meaning “Confucian Temple”; while in the Chinese version this was changed into “Altar of the Religion of Reason”. The Confucian temple and the Confucian monastery, two regular buildings, were also renamed according to this principle. The description of Confucianism in Civilopedia was also replaced. The entry can be translated as:

The Religion of Reason is a fictional religious doctrine in the game. Emerged in the feudal society, it pays particular attention to virtues such as benevolence and righteousness, it has a rather large influence on the life of the populations in the game.

No graphical elements related to Confucianism were altered. It is interesting to notice that if Confucianism was somehow removed from the game, a quotation by Confucius himself was actually introduced into the game, as previously seen. It is also interesting to notice that Taoism, another Chinese religion featured in the game, was not addressed by similar changes. We can speculate that the rationale behind this decision was the fact that Confucianism has been traditionally closer to power and government and therefore could trigger the reaction of the censoring bodies. Another plausible reason could be the fact that the status of Confucianism as a religion is debatable. In fact, it is often considered primarily a philosophy and a doctrine related to governing, although the figure of Confucius was in some cases actually worshiped. It is possible that the changes made were meant to avert controversies over the topic.
The original version of the game featured the Chinese Three Gorges Dam as a Great Wonder. Great Wonders are a selection of special building that represent different cultures and different ages of human history. The Three Gorges Dam (三峡大坝) has been effectively replaced by the Aswan Dam (阿斯旺大坝), in Egypt. The graphical model has been maintained, but the Civilopedia entry has been rewritten:

The Aswan Dam will exploit the great power of the Nile’s water to produce energy and will have a strong flood prevention capacity. After its completion it will be 112 meters high, 5 kilometers long and will be one of the world’s largest power generating dams.

It is not clear why this description was written using the future tense.

### 6.4 Other Changes

In the loading screen preceding the main menu of the game CEASIA added a message that states: “CEASIA Beijing ltd earnestly points out that the content of this game is purely fictional and is only intended to provide entertainment”. Interestingly, not only the Chinese civilization was modified for this version of the game. Mongolia (in Chinese Menggu, 蒙古) was renamed Wala (瓦喇) the Chinese name for the Oirats, an ethnicity associated to the Mongols and once situated in the westernmost regions of Mongolia. Consistently, the original leader of the Mongolian faction Genghis Khan was also changed into the Oirat leader Kho Orluk (和鄂尔勒克). We can assume that Kho Orluk was preferred to Genghis Khan since during his conquests he led his tribe westwards and unlike Genghis Khan never invaded China and sacked Beijing.
7 Censorship and the Reaction by the Users: World of Warcraft

The fantasy MMORPG World of Warcraft (WoW), by Blizzard Entertainment, is one of the few western games to become highly popular in China. It retains a significant fan base to this day, although its subscribers have declined since the peak of 2010/2011. WoW was released in the West in 2004, and in China the following year. For the Chinese launch, Blizzard Entertainment partnered with the local online-game publisher The9. In China the game’s name was translated into Moushou Shijie (魔兽世界), literally “World of Magic Beasts”. The beta version of the game which became available the month before launch and had 100,000 players signing up in the first hour, and 500,000 players in total; while 1.5 million (non-concurrent) players were reported in China within the first month (Andrews 2014).

However, World of Warcraft’s road to success was not without obstacles. As we have previously mentioned, in the late 90s and early 2000s internet cafés were becoming popular venues for internet surfing and gaming. Mounting concern over the negative effects on young users sometimes spending entire days there, attracted increasing scrutiny. The interesting expression Pao Wangba (泡网吧), literally “soaking in an internet café”, effectively conveys how this phenomenon was perceived by the public, somehow comparing Wangba patrons to soaking tea bags. World of Warcraft was well received by the growing online gaming community but consequently was criticized as a cause of addiction and a potentially harmful product. As Andrews (2014) reports, the 2007 expansion The Burning Crusade went live in China nine months after its release in the West. This was because during localization Blizzard’s partner The9 decided to modify some aspects of the game fearing that some parts of the content would be viewed negatively leading to a rejected application. In 2008 WoW concurrent players in China reached one million. Some of the most notorious changes made to the game include skeletons, bones, skulls and flesh being removed or replaced. Similarly, after the changes the spot where a character died were not marked by piles of bones but tombstones. Zhang (2008) reports that besides the aforementioned elements, several terms deemed sensitive were altered upon translation into Chinese. The 2008 expansion Wrath of the Lich King went through a similar adaptation process after two applications were rejected for inappropriate content. However, as Zhang (2012) reports the expansion
reached the Chinese market only in 2010 due to a conflict of authority between the Ministry of Culture and the General Administration of Press and Publication. According to Andrews (2014) The9 lost the mandate to operate WoW in China as it got caught between a frustrated blizzard, an intransigent censorship board and angry players, to be then replaced by Netease soon afterwards. This episode brings us back to the topic of how an approval process that is not sufficiently clear, both in terms of rules and jurisdiction, can impact on the release of a product.

7.1 Harmony and Censorship

The concept of harmony is important in traditional Chinese culture. The word now commonly used, *Hexie* (和谐) has at its core the character *He* (和) which carries the meaning of harmony since ancient times. According to Wang et al. (2016) “when we speak of harmony in a Chinese context, the use of the term conjures up a distinctive ideological load seated in over two millennia of Chinese history and Confucian traditions”, although they also point out that although the concept is now tightly connected to Confucianism, its origins are even more ancient. Possibly because of how deeply it was rooted in the Chinese culture, Confucianism was targeted during the Cultural Revolution. With the end of Mao’s era, as the country slowly opened to the outside world and revolutionary ideas lost relevance, Confucianism and its emphasis on governance became prominent once more.

The goal of building a “Harmonious Society” (*Hexie Shehui*, 和谐社会) was formulated in September 2004 by former President Hu Jintao during a speech at the fourth plenary session of the Sixteenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (Wang et al. 2016). One of the ways that this project was carried out was an increased control over the internet and the media. In 2006 the notorious Great Firewall, a combination of regulations and technologies became operative rapidly proving a sophisticated and effective system to control online content. To achieve a harmonious society harmful content should be avoided but, as we have seen, the regulations expressing what should be avoided are not as explicit as necessary and leave ample margin for interpretation.

Internet users had to cope with the possibility that the content they shared online could be deemed “disharmonic” and removed. It was on the internet that the term *Hexie* became synonymous with censorship. Since one of the techniques used to perform censorship is based on the detection of sensitive key terms, China’s internet population developed a slang formed by alternative ways to express those sensitive terms. To indicate “harmony”, i.e. censorship, which is *héxié* (和谐) the term *héxiè* (河蟹) “river crab” is used. Although these two words are formed by the same syllables both the tones, used in Chinese to differentiate homophonous syllables, and the characters are different. Another method often seen online is to use the initials of the syllables from the phonetic transcription of the hidden term. Therefore the word “government” *Zhengfu* (政府) can be indicated by the upper case letters ZF.
7.2 Response to Censored Game Content

The amount of user-generated contributions to the discourse over censorship in the Chinese version of World of Warcraft is sizeable, although we can suppose that part of it was removed as a result of internet censorship. Discussion threads on forums and Question-&-Answer platforms often aim at comparing the international version of the game to the Chinese localized version. As we mentioned above, most elements related to death and boy decay were removed or modified. This is reflected in the online discussion which revolves around motifs such as skeletons and bones being covered up and reshaped into more “normal-looking” bodies, pieces of flesh being replaced with flour bags, and particularly grotesque open wounds being sewed up, blood being turned from red to green, etc. These rather intrusive changes have significantly reshaped the visual experience offered by the game triggering a varied set of reactions from the users. Based on the comments that we have collected, for several players the changes were not acceptable and the game resulted overall less appealing after localization:

What is this harmonized thing supposed to be? ...I don’t understand what it is…
User 1

The non-harmonized ones are better... I don’t feel like playing anymore after hearing all this…
User 2

What’s wrong with those saying that the harmonized ones are better?  
Weren’t these settings designed by Blizzard to create an atmosphere?  
Anyway, I always use the “anti-harmonization”
The censored elements are not the real thing
User 3

I hate the fact that they sewed up the belly, if I wasn’t using the notebook I would use the “original flavor”
User 4

[…] The undead now look like there is a layer of centipedes on their body. […] The undead now are disgusting. Give me back the bones
User 5

[…] The first time I played World of Warcraft I was fascinated by the Undead, their cool movements, their sorrowful eyes, the emaciated figure. They were really damn cool! The undead now make me feel like puking. […] Did the undead become a hunchbacked version of humans? Just call them zombie. Why even call them undead, annoying…
By the way, yesterday I went to the medical school to visit a friend and he made me visit their dissecting room. When I saw a shelf full of bones I shouted: Damn, that needs to be harmonized immediately! Give us the bones back.
User 6

If that’s really how things are  
I’m surely not going to play on the Chinese servers anymore
User 7

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9 In translation we have decided to keep using the term “harmony”, which in this context is equivalent and synonymous of “censorship”.
10 Arguably a method to circumvent censorship restoring the original content.
11 Arguably a method to circumvent censorship restoring the original content.
Damn, I feel like stopping to play a little bit
User 8

I feel a bit like stopping to play. I want to play “World of Warcraft”, not “World of Backpacks”
User 9

I hope someone will soon create a package to restore the original version, I’m afraid that when I’ll see these bags in the game I’ll have a crisis and delete my account.
User 10

Haha it’s so ridiculous,
If it’s really harmonized to this point I won’t play anymore
User 11

Laughing till I pee my pants
User 12

Absolutely ridiculous
User 13

Another way players expressed their dissent towards censorship was the use of irony. We have decided to keep this set of comments separated from the previous one since, although closely associated, they don’t generally express their disappointment as directly. One aspect that makes ironic comments important is that they give us an idea of how vibrant and varied the discourse over the topic is, testifying the level on engagement of the players.

They all grew flesh after arriving on the Chinese servers
User 14

Not happy without meat12
User 15

Because green is the color of harmony!13
User 16

Because in this world there are a few countries and territories that don’t allow people to bleed red blood, they think that’s against society and that a rotten green color is esthetically better
User 17

I just know that those loafs of bread14 are out there in the wild
User 18

Since they don’t even let ox bones pass, I suppose they will have to make ox bone soup look cuter too […]
User 19

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12 In Chinese the terms “meat” and “flesh” are be both expressed by the character 肉 ròu. The player’s ironic comment is a reference to the idea that if there is no meat a meal is not complete.
13 The color of blood in the game was changed from red to green.
14 Pieces of flesh were replaced with loafs of bread.
The Chinese servers are too slow so it fossilized\(^{15}\)
User 20

Carrying forward the tune of socialism
User 21

World of Bags and Cases\(^{16}\)
User 22

A harmonious society... right
User 23

Harmony, we really need a harmonious society.
User 24

No wonder Taiwan is afraid to come back... I guess they would get “rived crabbed”\(^{17}\) as well
User 25

They harmonize for the sake of the river crab [i.e. they censor for censorship’s sake]
User 26

Actually, when a character dies neither bones nor tombstones are really “river crab”, tombstones are creepy too. It should be “river crabbed” to the point that when a character dies, NPCs carry the corpse to a deserted place and burn it.
User 27

The old men at the Ministry of Incineration and Bare Bottom Office need to be “river crabbed”.
User 28

Harmonious society huh, the thing is that everything in this world needs to be censored, including people
User 29

Very good,
Very glorious,
Let them continue to “river crab” away,
Remove the troll’s long teeth,
Make the night elf’s ears shorter,
Remove the Minotaur’s horns too,
And why not just pulling off the dwarves’ beards altogether.
User 30

I must get rich quickly and emigrate…
I reincarnated in the wrong place…
I feel confused
User 31

Son of a bitch, is this still World of Warcraft or is it World of Backpacks?
User 32

\(^{15}\) Referred to bones being covered by stone-like textures after censorship, thus resembling fossils.

\(^{16}\) Censored elements were sometimes replaced with bags and boxes.

\(^{17}\) By “River Crab” the player means “harmony”, i.e. “censorship”. This applies to all occurrences of the term.
Isn’t this the legendary World of Backpacks?
User 33

Even the bones get censored? Why don’t they censor the fossils in museums?
User 34

After World of Cases, do we now have World of Bread?
User 35

I really don’t understand why bones are a problem. Underage students of art also study the skeleton and muscles, shouldn’t the teachers of those schools be arrested?
User 36

We have no thought and we can’t object. We are all little kids. We are not allowed to see blood
User 37

A minor group within the corpus is represented by contributions complaining about practical issues that were generated in the game by the modifications carried out as part of the localization effort. Because of the objective issue we can learn about from these contributions, it seemed appropriate to associate them to the negative reactions to “harmonization”, albeit they do not directly express a judgment on the topic. Although this group is extremely limited, we consider it to be an important testimony of the consequences of this kind of interventions and their impact on gameplay when the visual aspect of the game is modified but the mechanics remain unchanged.

Once I was doing a quest, I had to go pick up bones from the ground. I searched them for a very long time then the guys besides me told me that the pieces of bread in the corner were the bones...
User 38

The corpse by the river in Elwynn? I also searched it a long time
User 39

I also got stuck in Elwynn because of that, I was so angry that I switch from human warrior to a dwarf warrior
User 40

Many chains of events have been erased. I remember that year I heard that quests from the main story line of The Lich King were erased
User 41

However, a significant share of the contributions in the corpus points in a very different direction. A sizeable group of users did in fact express their preference for the “harmonized” elements in the game. As we can see from the comments below this is not only motivated by the original content being “scary” but also by what appears to be a genuine preference for the modified elements. Another relevant pattern we can observe is that the preference is alternatively expressed in general terms or in regards to specific pieces of content, with a prevalence of the latter.

The Death Knight mount after being harmonized into the ghost griffin looks good
User 42
How come I like the harmonized ones better? Am I not normal?
User 43

I think the harmonized ones look better, do I have a problem?
User 44

How come I have decided that the harmonized ones look better? Everybody say that those skeletons that lost every bit of flesh after drinking a potion look better, how come I do not agree? They look like skeletons in a laboratory. Am I not normal?
User 45

The harmonized ones look better, just a personal opinion
User 46

After seeing them I think the harmonized ones look better
User 47

Some of the non-harmonized ones are really repulsive
User 48

The most classic one is the Karazhan Crypt... I use the censored version, my buddy has the anti-censorship, when I looked at his game and I got so scared
User 49

The uncensored things are too scary, I’m too afraid to play
User 50

Actually I think many of the harmonized ones look better
User 51

Quite a few harmonized elements look good...
User 52

I think that the harmonized ones look a bit better
User 53

I think the harmonized ones look better
User 54

I’m afraid to even leave the main city in the uncensored version, thank you government18
User 55

I feel uncomfortable when I look at the uncensored floor19 of the Icecrown Citadel
User 56

There are some pictures from the original version that make me feel disgusted for days after looking at them
User 57

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18 Literally the comments says “thank you country”.
19 The floor presents a decoration motif that portrays skulls.
However I don’t like the fact that the undead are all bones, a little flesh doesn’t hurt, also now that the Karazhan Crypt has been harmonized too I won’t see the upside down people if I don’t turn on the anti-censorship

User 58

I’m pleased to say goodbye to those bones

User 59

To be honest, some pictures look better after being modified

User 60

Another significant group within the contributions collected is formed by the players that reacted with pragmatism and sometimes even indifference. The dominant attitude here is that censorship was acceptable if necessary for the game to go live. This sentiment is understandable if we consider the delay accumulated by the expansions of the game, as mentioned above. Some players appear to consider the changes to be irrelevant.

Actually, it’s not a big deal...

User 61

It’s the same once you get used to it

User 62

If they had not harmonized the game you would be still playing The Burning Crusade!

User 63

I think after looking at the harmonized version you just get used to it, I’m not that interested in those skeletons

User 64

[…] these things are the inevitable trend of the Chinese servers, the fact they let Wrath of the Lich King go online is already good for us. I guess complaining is useless, if you are absolutely loyal to the original version you can play on the foreign servers

User 65

I don’t think there is much difference between harmonized and non-harmonized, I don’t usually look at the details

User 66

I don’t care about harmonization

User 67

I don’t care about what they do, I just want the servers to open

User 68

In China asking so many “why?” is useless

User 69

It’s because Chinese people have a limited capability to accept certain things, they can’t stand looking at scary things, their spirit would collapse (professional player excluded) I guess the Ministry of Culture was thinking about everybody’s health

User 70

What’s important is that we can play, it doesn’t matter if they harmonize “balls” into “eggs”

User 71
As long as the servers go live, the rest is not a big deal
User 72

I got used to it very soon
User 73

No blood, no bones, are these things important? Let’s do what the boss says, what matters is that the servers go live
User 74

If it wasn’t like that, Wrath of The Lich King would not go live
User 75

7.3 General Criticism of Censorship

Aside from the categories previously described, a considerable portion of the corpus expresses a more general criticism on censorship practices. Although these contributions are also based on the discussion over modified in-game elements, they tend to develop a principle-oriented take on the subject. We deemed this to be a significant difference that needed a separated category for this part of the corpus, as simply associating it to the “negative opinion” category appeared inappropriate. In fact, we can’t assume that the players that disliked the specific methods used to address sensitive content in this game would necessarily disagree with changes made to any other types of content in any other games. Contrarily, it seems more likely that the players refusing censorship as such would not welcome other types of “harmonization” operations. In some cases we can observe how the discourse on censorship can branch out and touch upon the broader topic of government control on the media.

I have my anti-censorship, I’m happy
User 76

A rotten country bleeds rotten blood
User 77

Out compatriots just overthought this, so much spiritual repression
User 78

World of Warcraft itself is a form of art. The moment that art is cancelled, there is no balance anymore
User 79

I hate the Ministry of Culture’s harmonization. Besides World of Warcraft, they don’t approve several movies because they show a bit of blood. They treat us like three years old kids that can be scared to death by such little things.
User 80

Let me say this, “harmonization” was not Netease’s original idea. Without “harmonization” the Ministry of Incineration wouldn’t have work to do, without work to do it becomes meaningless, when it’s meaningless it becomes hysteric, in its hysteria it starts biting people, after biting people it says that WoW is dangerous for society, after saying

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20 In some cases the Ministry of Culture (Wénhuàbù) is referred to as Ministry of Incineration (Fénhuàbù).
develop this of course it won’t be possible to approve it. Therefore, in order for us, the players, to reach out to the world, “harmonization” is necessary! The “invisible man”, the undead growing flesh, the “backpack magic” of the wizard, this is nothing! If they can they should fill up the continent of Azeroth with pandas that burn incense when they see someone!!! (One game shows the narrow mind and ineptitude of certain people)

User 81

[…] Then, the most prominent modification is that when attacking someone in melee, the blood that comes out is not red anymore but green… I say this is not sanguinary nor violent anymore, now it’s nauseating and deviated.

User 82

The first time I heard the word “harmonious” I had the impression it was a commendatory term, but after it was used as a weapon to kill off any form of free thought I’ve felt extremely disgusted. Today, this term already became a synonym of conservative and falsity. Add a “not” before it and you have a death certificate for anything. Beauty and ugliness, good and evil should be determined on the basis of superficial appearances, in the face of “harmonization” this statement is bullshit. […] When it’s just born a calf is not afraid of tigers. Similarly, the sense of fear is instilled in the children by the adults. Today they want to cover both their eyes. Who can still say that the “Celestial Empire’s” education system is not abnormal?

User 83

[...] Is the psychological endurance of our compatriots so weak? Next why not just block WoW altogether [...]?

User 84

Because at the SAPPRFT they are all three years old kids

User 85

[...] you must know that those people at the Ministry of Culture would have their pants scared off even by Death Note. Ah! Death! This word is too scary! Harmonize harmonize! Ah! Blood! This word is too sanguinary! Harmonize harmonize! Ah! Kill! This word is too violent! Harmonize harmonize! Ah! Thief! This word is against humanity! Harmonize harmonize! In their eyes, all the manga, games, novels and pictures in the world are for less than four years old kids.

User 86

Only our country has harmonization in the whole world, the things we harmonize are too many. Those war movies and crime movies on TV are violent and bloody, why don’t you harmonize those? Some TV programs are almost erotic, how come you don’t harmonize those?

User 87

[...] why as a Chinese citizen it is so complicated to play a game?

User 88

Closed door policy!23

User 89

I also think that there is no need to harmonize WoW. If the Death Knight’s massacres are not moral, then I think if the people that start a quest with the Death Knight have a little culture and a little mental order, they will all know that those are not moral. [...] people should not be put in a cradle, we have our own judgement.

21 The expression “Celestial Empire” (literally Celestial Dynasty) is sometimes used referred to China.
22 Japanese manga written by Tsugumi Ōba and illustrated by Takeshi Obata, published in 2003 by Shūeisha.
23 As opposed to the “Open Door Policy” which indicates the reforms that opened the country to the outside world after the end of Maoism.
Therefore, I think there is no point in harmonizing WoW
User 90

Harmonious society... that’s nonsense
User 91

Haha only in China you can see this kind of ridiculous and retarder censorship
User 92

7.4 Discourse over the Economic and Political Use of Censorship

A significant part of the contributions collected for this research belongs to the discussion developed around censorship and its function as a political and economic tool, in the eyes of the players. These comments provide interesting insights on how the players perceive the gaming industry in the larger picture of society. The most prominent topic is that of censorship as an instrument used to limit the influence of popular foreign products thus protecting the development of the national industry. This aspect is not only suggested by the players. According to Chung and Fung:

The present state-market relationship between the Chinese state and local game companies and transnational players reveals that foreign online games are allowed to be imported, but these games are often siphoned off by content censorship procedures. The Chinese authorities only give an important green light to one or two foreign games as a token of free and fair trade. In practice, the authorities have set a very high threshold for foreign games in order to protect their local markets, as well as censor any dissident ideology that accompanies foreign cultural products. (Chung and Fung 2013, p. 248)

Investigating the nature of this phenomenon is beyond the scope of this research, although it appears as a promising field for future research. It should be reminded that the comments from our corpus that point in this direction do not constitute a proof that censorship is in fact being used as a protectionist measure and to what extent. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that such a discourse is present among the players as this provides insights on how gamers perceive and understand the industry, the interactions between the parties involved and the motivations that caused the final product to be modified before being received by them. Other issues perceived by the players include feeling that WoW was being targeted more than other similar products.

What is ridiculous are not the Chinese servers, but the Ministry of Incineration. Every time I play Chinese browser games I can’t progress without bloodshed.
User 93

It’s only about foreign games, the local ones don’t get modified. I used to play Zhuxian, an ability summoned three enormous skulls and that was not harmonized.
User 94

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For example, in Dungeon & Fighter the skeletons on the initial dungeon are completely made of bones, they grew no flesh
User 95

Because World of Warcraft is a foreign game!
User 96

Because Blizzard is an American company, so it must be harmonized
User 97

The bird that pokes its head out gets shot!!! I think that Counterstrike Online is even more non-harmonic
User 98

The skeletons that were in WoW were all covered with flesh, this is the so called harmony! So why when I play other browser games like Lineage II the skeletons retain their original appearance and have no flesh? Why the other games don’t need to be harmonized?
I’m opening this thread to ask why Wrath of the Lich King couldn’t be approve for such a long time. It’s because of harmonization... but then why the other games don’t need harmony, don’t they need to be approved??? Isn’t it that World of Warcraft is “hit by the wind because it is a tall tree”? Everyone can go and see how many browser game do not need to be harmonized.
Why is that? [...] The publishers, the Ministry of Culture, they have their eyes fixed on WoW night and day!
User 99

The tall tree gets hit by the wind, there’s no way around this
User 100

The malevolent government can’t stand to see things grow big and wants to defend local productions. Perhaps Lineage II 25 (which I have not played) has yet to reach the point to draw the government’s attention
User 101

You must know that the interests of the party top everything else!
User 102

“There is no victory when you are at the top”, are you familiar with this principle?
User 103

The Celestial Empire likes to hit the bird that stick its head out
Setting a clear and educational example for the people
User 104

The wind destroys the tree that grows taller that the rest of the forest
User 105

Exactly, in China everything needs to be supported. Those pigs doing browser games would be unable to develop without being aided.
User 106

There’s nothing to do about this...
National browser games are in a dead end street already.
They keep imitating but are unable to surpass the others.

---

If they are worth anything why not develop their own products.
Often imitating but never surpassing, ultimately they will be lost to history.
So sad.
Ah...
User 107

National games grow under the red flag of the party, are perfected under the supervision of the party and earn money under the control of the party
User 108

The wind destroys the tree that grows taller that the rest of the forest
User 109

It’s about the profits. WoW is too successful so the other companies struggle. Therefore they have to harmonize and procrastinate [the approval of the game].
User 110

Lately there have been several reports of internet addiction on the CCTV. Some so-called experts and professors indicated World of Warcraft as the cause of several social problems. They said it is vulgar and sanguinary. This led to the game being harmonized again and again.
Could all that be possibly caused by WoW? Can one browser game have such a power? We can’t help be doubt that perhaps some people express dissatisfaction towards WoW for their own profit.
Of course I can’t deny that some people without enough self-control might become addicted to WoW. However, by blindly investigating WoW’s responsibilities don’t we lose fairness?
Looking back at our country, there were arcades in every street and all the games that could be played there had violent and illegal content. On top of that, most of the patrons were underage students. For example, the fights in Oriental Legend and Knights and Knights of Valor all had blood, don’t these games also qualify as violent? But these games have been around for a longer time than WoW, they were played by people from the 80s and the 90s, and they are still around today.
So why blaming WoW for everything?
User 111

The issue is not about games, it’s about economics, do you understand what I mean?
User 112

Because WoW is the most influential game
Even people that don’t play games (including several parents) and don’t know anything about games definitely know about WoW.
Its influence is great and so is its deterrent effect [as a result of being censored]
User 113

[…] our great party represents all that’s great, glorious and right. It doesn’t matter how non-harmonic the inside is, the surface must be harmonic. Why the police in China is called the people’s police? Why the government is called the people’s government? Think about it and you’ll answer yourself. There is also another thing: the one that stands out doesn’t end well.
User 114

The rest is just empty words, the main reason for the “river crab” is that we, the players, are a weak group. Actually World of Warcraft is much better than Mahjong26 or poker. How many families have been destroyed because of poker or fight the landlord27 […] to say the truth these games are low and vulgar, why don’t they “river crab” those? Just because

26 Traditional Chinese game, often played as a gambling game.
27 Chinese card game.
half of the Chinese like to play them, probably even they [the censors] play them. So let’s face it, we are a minority group and a weak group to the Ministry of “River Crab” can mess with us as they please, the media can distort the facts […]

User 115

Because the government wants to protect the national browser games market

User 116

This is not the right way to protect the national browser game market, protecting browser games companies at the expenses of the players, this method just won’t work

User 117

Did you think that during a banquet they pour you wine because they think it’s beneficial and healthy for you? That’s not the case of course, it is just an obedience test. They present you with unreasonable demands to test you, to confirm their status of dominance, so it’s always the boss or the investor who pours it, right? According to the same principle, no one really cares if you are scared of skeletons or not, they just want to destroy a little bit the things you like to see if you obey or not. If you accept and obey, next time they will put up even more unreasonable demands that will be accepted even more easily. Do you want to enter the Chinese market? Come on, let’s first have a toast with this glass of the annoying harmonization wine.

User 118

Many people say that the Chinese verification and approval control system is too strict and hinders cultural development. Actually control in China is not strict, it’s crazy. In the US it is possible that a TV series is given a higher age rating because of a scene with people smoking, while in China it does not matter how bloody and violent a film is, as long as it has an “anti-Japan” or “revolutionary” label on it, it can be broadcast without problem.

User 119

Yes, of all the game companies of the Celestial Empire, only the Great Penguin is allowed to have blood, corpses, bones, underwear and severed limbs.

User 120

8 Discussion

The analysis of recent normative documents we have carried out shows that on one hand censoring authorities are determined to maintain strict control over the Chinese gaming industry as it evolves by adding restraints such as those on the use of currency and luck-based game mechanics. On the other hands official documents also contains indications on the type of content that is encouraged, suggesting the intention by the authorities to not only control, but also shape and influence the development of the industry. At the same time, the documentation we examined suggests that regulations on content seem to have retained the ambiguity previously reported by other pieces of research. The analysis of the self-censorship practiced on the strategy game Civilization IV exemplifies the consequences of this ambiguity. As a foreign game, which had to adapt in order to enter the Chinese market, Civilization IV was heavily altered in many aspects related to history, politics and culture. Interestingly, these were not limited to China-related content but also affected other areas

28 Ironic reference to the company Tencent. The penguin is the symbol of QQ, one of the company’s most known products, and a sort of mascot for the whole group.
of the game, such as the Mongolian civilization, revealing the very conservative stance adopted during adaptation for China.

As for the response by the players to game content alterations, the data collected revealed a range of reactions that is more and less diversified based on how close to the specific in-game elements the discussion developed. In fact, the online discussions we have studied often featured listings and comparisons of original and altered in-game elements, and the comments by the users expressed either opinions about those elements specifically or about censorship in more general terms. After categorization, the comments about WoW censorship included in our corpus distribute as follows:

1. Negative opinion of modified content: 13
2. Irony toward modified content: 24
3. Practical issues caused by modified content: 4
4. Positive opinion of modified content: 19
5. Pragmatic attitude or indifference: 15
6. General criticism of censorship: 17
7. Criticism of the political economic use of censorship: 28

Although the size of the corpus is very limited, it is possible to highlight some very interesting trends. As far as opinions on game content are concerned, groups 1, 2 and 3 represent the majority with a total of 41. However, at this level important minority groups exist. Group 4, with 19 comments, represents a sizeable minority that considered the modified elements to be more appealing. Preference for censored content by those users is in some cases motivated by the fact that the original version is deemed unappealing or scary while in other cases it appears to be a simple issue of preference between two graphical elements. Group 5, which expresses indifference or pragmatism, is also relevant and includes 15 comments. These users didn’t see the fact that certain elements were censored as a big problem or accepted it as a necessary price to pay in order for the game to become available.

If we examine the more general level of the online discourse, we see that the relatively diverse environment described so far disappears, in favor of general negativity. The 17 critiques over censorship in general included in group 6 are a notable element in the discourse on censorship as a whole but are not as equally relevant when we try to determine how the audience reacted to game content modifications in relation to a specific product. In fact, we can suppose that these users would react deprecating censorship, regardless of the quality of the adaptation effort. Lastly, group 7, the largest single group with 28 comments, provides important insights on how many players perceive the dynamics driving the gaming industry. In particular, several comments point at an economic use of game censorship as a protectionist measure to limit the influence of foreign products or as an instrumentum regni used to serve the agenda of the government. Similarly to group 6, group 7 does not provide particularly useful contributions to the specific case of WoW. However, these last two groups tend to include more elaborate comments and tell us how vital and passionate the discourse about the medium is among the players.
9 Conclusions

As we have seen, to deal with a strict censoring system, game developers and publishers sometimes need to practice self-censorship if they intend to distribute products including sensitive content in China. *World of Warcraft* and *Civilization IV* provide different but complementary perspectives on what content can be considered sensitive and how producers can deal with the issue of censorship. In the specific case of WoW, the data we have collected for this study suggest that alterations were met with negativity by the majority of the players. Apparently, adaptation could not provide the consumers with a product that felt tailored for them as most players seems to perceive the Chinese version of the game as inferior. It should be remembered, however, that important minority groups expressed preference for modified game content or indifference/pragmatism. This suggests that although most players were unsatisfied, the perceived quality of the adaptation managed to captivate many players and to be accepted or ignored by many others.

Comments lamenting the instrumental use of censorship unveiled an unexpectedly vibrant discourse and, although far from being a proof of such phenomena, point out several interesting possible directions for future research on the issue. This study allowed us to take a closer look at some of the dynamics that concur in shaping videogames as a medium in China. As the data emerged from the official documentation we reviewed testifies the engagement of the authorities in the gaming world and the alterations carried out on products like *Civilization IV* and *World of Warcraft* shows the effort by the producers to adapt, the comments we collected provide quantitatively limited but significant insights on how the players engage in the discourse over the gaming industry.
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APPENDIX A. ORIGINAL USER CONTRIBUTIONS

和谐后的那玩意儿是啥。。看不出来。。
User 1

还是没和谐的好。。。听了不想玩了。。。
User 2

说和谐过好的什么心态？
这些场景不是暴雪为了气氛搞的？
我反正一直用反和谐
和谐的感觉不伦不类
User 3

憎恶肚子都缝上了，要不是我用笔记本，我直接开原汁原味
User 4

不错。作为一个老玩家，现在的亡灵看上去像身上有一层蛆样了，以为这个现在改玩 LM 了。实在恶心现在的亡灵。还我骨头
User 5

等待WLK的日子是无聊的。虽然每个星期都推倒鸡蛋，但是始终没有兴奋的感觉。WLK，你啥时候来呀？第一次玩wow，就被亡灵吸引了，帅气的动作，销魂的眼神，消瘦的身材，真他娘的帅！现在的亡灵，看的我想吐了..脸上的大 X 是和谐的标志，再也看不到那凌魂的骨头了。MB 的。亡灵成了人类的驼背版?干脆直接叫僵尸得了，叫什么亡灵，烦..
纠结啊.昨天去医院看朋友.他带我去参观他们的解剖室.看到一副骨头架.我当时喊了句:我X,赶紧和谐掉!

还我们骨头.

User 6

真的这样的话
肯定不玩国服了

User 7

我靠~~我有点不想玩了

User 8

我有点不想玩了，我想要玩的是<魔兽世界>,不是<背包世界>

User 9

求牛人速度做个还原包，我怕我在游戏里看到这些包会有删号的冲动的

User 10

哈哈。笑死我了。

如果真的和谐成这样，那么我就不玩了

User 11

笑尿

User 12

绝对高校

User 13

到了国服全长肉了

User 14

无肉不欢

User 15

因为绿色是和谐的颜色！

User 16

因为在这个世界上有些国家和地区，他们不允许人类流红色的血，觉得那个太反社会了，还是腐烂的绿色比较唯美

User 17

我只知道野外有可怕的面包

User 18

牛骨头也不放过，牛骨汤也要卖萌，他看到自己的老二一定要和谐的。
User 19
国服等太久 变成化石
User 20
弘扬社会主义主旋律
User 21
箱包世界
User 22
和谐社会。。。嘛
User 23
和谐，我们真的很需要和谐社会啊。
User 24
难怪台湾怕回归。。。。。以回归估计就被河蟹了。。。。。
User 25
因为要河蟹所以才和谐
User 26
其实 WOW 的角色死了后不管是骨头还是坟堆都不河蟹，坟堆也吓人呀。其实该河蟹成角色死了后直接跑几个 NPC 出来把尸体抬到没人的地方烧了。
User 27
焚化部和光腚局的老头子需要被河蟹。
User 28
和谐社会嘛 就是这世界没有什么不需要和谐的 统统河蟹掉包括人民
User 29
很好= =``
很强大``
让他们继续河蟹吧``
巨魔的獠牙没了``
暗夜的耳朵短了``
牛头人的角也没了``
矮人的胡子干脆也拔了算了= =```
User 30

赶紧赚钱 移民。。。。。。。。。。
投胎投错地方了。。。。。。。。。。
我晕
User 31

这他妈的，还是魔兽世界吗?背包世界??
User 32

难道就是传说中的背包世界
User 33

连骨龙都和谐？怎么不把博物馆里的化石也和谐了啊！？
User 34

继盒子世界以后现在是面包世界了么？
User 35

真想不明白骷髅骨架有什么罪过，那未成年人学美术的时候学习骨骼肌肉，这些学校的老师是不是都要被抓起来
User 36

我们都是没思想，没反对的人。我们都是小孩。见不得血
User 37

以前做任务，叫我去捡地上的骨头，我找了半天，旁边的哥们说，角落的面包就是骨头。。。User 38

艾尔文，河边的尸体？我也找了好久
User 39

艾尔文那个我也被坑过，气的我直接把人族战士换成了侏儒战士
User 40

还有好多任务链都被删掉了。我记得当年说的是巫妖王的主线任务链被删了
User 41

以前 dk 被和谐成幽灵狮鸠那个好看
User 42

为什么我觉得和谐了之后更好看，这是病吗
User 43

我觉得和谐之后好看，是病吗
User 44

我为啥决定和谐后的好看呢？都说喝药剂后变的那个一点肉都没有的骷髅好看，为啥我就不认为好看。和实验室里的人体骨架一样，这是病吗？
User 45

和谐后的好看 个人觉得 -
User 46

看了之后觉得和谐国的好
User 47

有些不和谐真心恶心
User 48

其实最经典是倒吊深渊那里。。。我开个和谐，我基友反和谐，一看他的图我就吓尿了
User 49

不和谐的东西太恐怖了，我都不敢玩了
User 50

其实我感觉有许多都是和谐后更好看啊
User 51

和谐好看的地方不少。。。。
User 52

感觉和谐的要好看些啊
User 53

感觉和谐过的好看=-=
User 54

不和谐我连主城也不敢出，感谢郭嘉
User 55

不和谐的 ICC 地板看的我不舒服
User 56

有些原版的图看的能恶心好几天
User 57
不过我不太喜欢亡灵都是骨头，肉一点不错，顺便倒吊深渊也被和谐了不开反和谐卡进去也看不到倒吊的人
User 58

再见骨头我很欣慰
User 59

说实话，有几张图还是改了之后好看
User 60

其实真的无所谓。。
User 61

看习惯了都一个样
User 62

要是没和谐你现在还在玩 TBC！
User 63

我就觉得和谐后看着习惯，我对那些骷髅没兴趣
User 64

骨灰变盒子，碎肉变面粉袋，骷髅长肉...dk 技能，图标，名字被改一这些已经是国服的必然趋势了，肯放行 wlk 这个版本已经是我们的福利了。吐槽也改变不了什么了吧，要是太忠于原版大可以去玩外服
User 65

和不和谐我怎么觉得没什么区别，很少仔细看
User 66

和谐无所谓了
User 67

管他们怎么弄呢，我只要开服
User 68

在中国问那么多为什么是没用的
User 69

因为中国人的精神承受能力有限 看到恐怖的东西会受不鸟精神崩溃的 (除了职业玩家) 估计文化部也是为了大家的身心健康
User 70
能玩是最重要的，他把蛋蛋和谐成一个鸡蛋都没关系
User 71

只要能开 F，一切都不是大问题。
User 72

早习惯了
User 73

没血就没血，没骨头就没骨头。整这些个没用的干吗？赶紧按照领导的指示，开服才是正经的
User 74

不这样就不会开 WLK
User 75

我有反和谐我幸福
User 76

腐烂的国家留着腐烂的血
User 77

国人就是想太多了，7 那么多的精神压迫
User 78

魔兽本身是一种艺术，一旦取消那种艺术，那就不协调了
User 79

讨厌文化部和谐，不止 wow，好多带点血腥情节的电影都不放过。当我们是三岁小孩，被这点东西就吓倒了。
User 80

这里要说一下，“和谐”并非网易的本意，如果不“和谐”那焚化部就没活干了，没活干了就要精神空虚了，精神空虚了就要歇斯底里了，歇斯底里了就要到处咬人了，咬了人后就说是 WOW 危害社会了，说 WOW 危害社会了自然就不能通过审批了。所以说，为了咱们广大玩家能早日冲出中国内陆走向世界，“和谐”是必须地！什么潜行者啊，亡灵长肉啊，术士的背包术啊，都不算什么，有本事就让整个艾泽拉斯大陆爬满熊猫，见人就烧香！！！（一款游戏就看出了某些人的狭隘和无能）
User 81

基本上第一次和谐的都是亡灵的东西 包括骷髅长肉 亡灵长肉 然后是盗贼这个职业的名字 部分技能的名字 致命毒药啊 邪恶攻击变成影袭啊之类 最近一次的修改主要是把部分骷髅的物品图标变成盒子 部分特殊技能图标变成盒子 也就是和谐了 所以墓地 任务区域地上本来堆积的骷髅变成了面粉袋 树上的骷髅就不用计算了。然后最明显的 物理攻击打人出现的不再是红色的血了 而是绿色的。。我说 这已经不叫血腥暴力了啊 是变态恶心了啊
User 82

我刚开始听到和谐这个词的时候感觉是个褒义词，后来这个词被用作为灭杀各种自由意识的武器时我对这个词感到无比的恶心。如今这个词已经成为保守、虚假、做作的代名词了，在这个词前面加一个不字就是任何东西的死亡证明！

不要用肤浅的外观来判断美丑善恶，这句话在和谐面前就是放狗屁，骷髅因为丑就要消失凤姐怎么不消失？明明初生牛犊不怕虎，小孩子的害怕意识是大人灌输的，如今却要蒙住他们的双眼，谁还敢说天朝的教育制度不畸形？

User 83

你把 dk 血沸图标由红变绿有啥意思，灵打图标强行把血去掉真的有必要？我国人民的心里承受能力就这么差？再下去就直接把整个 wow 都屏蔽得了，那些大蜘蛛大恶魔更恐怖

User 84

因为广电局都是三岁小朋友

User 85

不好意思，一直开着反和谐我还真不知道这玩意也和谐了

不过，我想起了盗贼。

连自己的职业名字都不被承认的职业。。。还有不被承认的技能：杀戮盛宴。。。不过勇士啊，你要知道文化部那堆人可是连死亡笔记都能把他们吓尿的人啊。

啊！死！这个字太恐怖了！和谐和谐！

啊！血！这个字太血腥了！和谐和谐！

啊！杀！这个字太暴力了！和谐和谐！

啊！贼！这个字太反人类了！和谐和谐！

毕竟在他们眼中这个世界上所有的动漫、游戏、小说、图片都是给 4 岁以下的小盆宇们使用的。

User 86

和谐全世界都没有和谐偏偏咱们国家要和谐，咱们要和谐的东西太多了，电视上的战争片，犯罪片。又血腥又暴力。怎么没看见你们和谐啊。有的电视简直可以是打了色情的擦边球。你们怎么不和谐呢？

User 87

是啊，做为中国公民玩一个游戏咋就这么不容易呢！

User 88

闭关锁国了！

User 89

我也认为，对于 WOW 的和谐是没有必要的

如果说 DK 的杀戮是不道德的

我想，经历过 DK 初始任务的人
只要有点文化，有点层次，都会知道，这是不道德的。
我有个朋友去外国玩WOW，经历了DK初始任务后，感叹一句：以后我绝不再蓝杀无辜（以前他经常随意杀人）。
我想这到也是个教育的方法，用反面例子。
至于那些看见杀戮就大呼过瘾，觉得痛快异常，立刻跟着滥杀的人毕竟是少数。
不要把人放在摇篮里，我们自己有判断能力。
所以，和谐WOW我也认为是没意义的。

User 90

和谐社会......真扯淡
User 91

哈哈 这种搞笑 弱智的和谐只有在中国能看到的
User 92

可笑的不是国服而是焚化部。但凡打开国产网游，砍怪不飚血都不能过！
User 93

也就国外游戏，国内游戏不会改的。以前玩诛仙，技能直接放出三个巨大的骷髅头，也没见和谐。
User 94

比如DNF里初级地下城的骷髅，就是全身骨头，没长肉
User 95

因为WOW是国外游戏！
User 96

因为嘛BLZ是美国公司所以嘛要和谐
User 97

枪打出头鸟！！！ 我觉得反恐OL就及其不和谐
User 98

原来魔兽世界里面的骷髅都给包上肉了，这就是所谓的和谐吧！可为什么我去玩别的网游（天堂2里面的骷髅还是原来的样子没肉）魔兽和谐了全包上肉了，为什么别的网游不用和谐。

User 99

开这个贴子就是想问问WLK为什么一直不能通过审批！就是因为和谐...那为什么其它网游都不用和谐，不用审批么？？？难道魔兽世界树大招风！大家可以去看看现在有多少网游不用和谐的。

这是为什么！乾坤有日，宇宙无青天！出版社，文化部，全是混吃等死的人吗！一天到晚只盯着魔兽

User 99

树大招风 没办法的事
User 100
万恶的ZF 看不得你做的大了 要维护国产么 至于天堂2（没玩过）可能还没达到ZF重视的程度
User 101

要知道党的利益高于一切！
User 102

知道“高处不胜寒”的道理吗？
User 103

天朝的习惯是枪打出头鸟
树立典型教育下民
User 104

木秀于林，风必摧之
User 105

对对，中国什么都需要扶持，做网游的都是些猪不扶持发展不起来。
User 106

没办法.....
国内网游已经走进了一个死胡同，
一直模仿别人，
但是又不能超越别人，
有本事自己开发游戏啊，

老是模仿,但是又不能超越,终归只能消失在历史的长河之中~!
可悲啊，
哎......
User 107

国产游戏在党的红旗下成长 在党的监督下完善 在党的控制中赚钱
User 108

木秀于林风必摧之
User 109

利益关系，因为山口山做得太好，使得其他公司日子不好过，所以就要和谐就要拖。
User 110

最近看CCTV和网上许多网瘾的报道。一些所谓的砖家叫兽把一些社会问题全部都指向了—魔兽世界。
认为魔兽是血腥和低俗的。导致魔兽被一再的和谐。
难道说这一切都是由魔兽世界造成的吗？一款网游真的有这种力量？我们不禁质疑，或许一些人为了某种利益而对魔兽不满。
当然，我们也不能否认魔兽是一些自制力差的人沉迷。但是一味的追究魔兽的责任，是否有失公允。
反观国内，大街小巷都有街机厅，里面的游戏有的都会有暴力与违规内容的内容，重要的是进入这些场所的是小学生居多。例如像《西游释恶传与三国战记》，里面的打斗都有血的效果，像这样来看，不就是符合版署所谓的暴力了吗？但是这些游戏却比魔兽存在得久，80后90后都玩过，现在也一直有。
那么为什么吧所有的矛头都指向魔兽世界呢？
User 111
重要的不是游戏问题，是经济问题，明白不
User 112
因为魔兽的影响力最大
从不玩游戏的人（包括很多家长）可能说不上来有些什么游戏
但是绝对知道魔兽
搞的就是影响力大的
震慑效果也大
User 113
楼主可能还不知道，我们伟大的党代表的是伟，光，正，不管深沉多么的不和谐，但是表面一定要和谐。为什么警察在中国叫人民警察，政府在中国叫人民政府。自己想想就知道了。还有一点就是出头鸟都没好下场
User 114
其他的都是虚的，被河蟹主要是因为我们玩家是弱势群体而已，说句实在话，魔兽世界这个游戏比起麻将和扑克好多了，有多少家庭因为麻将和斗地主，彩金花这些棋牌游戏家破人亡，妻离子散，而且说句实在话这些游戏又低级又庸俗，但是为什么河蟹部不河蟹他们，就因为几乎大半个中国人都在玩这个，说不定自己也在玩。所以，认命吧，我们是少数群体，是弱势群体，所以河蟹部可以随便冤枉我们，媒体可以随便歪曲事实，就像小时候那个故事一样，一只狼要吃羊，找了各种理由，被羊一一否定，最后一句话“反正我要吃你，这就是理由！！”
User 115
因为国家要保护国内网游的市场～～
User 116
保护国内网游不是这么个保护法，以损害游戏玩家的利益来保护网游公司的利益，这种方法行不通的
User 117
你以为饭局里灌你酒是对方认为喝酒有益健康么？当然不是，这叫服从性测试，提出一个不合理的要求来测试你，用来确认自己统治性的地位，所以从来都是领导或者投资方在灌对不对？同理，其实谁管你看见骷髅害怕不害怕呀，他们就是要把你喜欢的东西搞坏一点，看你服从不服从，你接受了服从了，那么好以后他再提出其它不合理的要求就更容易被接受了。想进中国市场吗？来，干了这杯和谐糟心酒再说。

User 118

很多人说中国审核制度太严导致文化发展受阻，然而中国的审核制度不是太严，而是神经病。在美国，一部连续剧可能因为一个吸烟镜头就被上调年龄评级，而在中国，一部片不管再怎么血腥暴力，只要打上一个抗日革命的标签，就能随便放。

User 119

是的，天朝所有的游戏公司只有大企鹅可以带血，尸体，骨头，内衣，断肢。原因就是它是大企鹅！

User 120

APPENDIX B. SOURCE DISCUSSIONS

We provide here the links to access the web pages from which the comments of our corpus were collected.

http://bbs.duowan.com/thread-14388772-1-1.html

http://bbs.duowan.com/thread-13745396-1-1.html

https://tieba.baidu.com/p/228095450

http://bbs.duowan.com/thread-14650567-1-1.html

http://bbs.duowan.com/thread-14926701-1-1.html

https://tieba.baidu.com/p/562247670


https://zhidao.baidu.com/question/1541321465385729667.html

https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4020782250

http://bbs.duowan.com/thread-16704154-1-1.html

https://tieba.baidu.com/p/2495646199


https://tieba.baidu.com/p/2163104621