Analysis of Animated Films in the Valorant Game: A systematic Literature Review

Inas Hana Aisyah*, Agus Juhana**
* Multimedia Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia
** Multimedia Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This article aims to detail the role and impact of animated films in games, specifically in the game Valorant, with the aim of providing valuable insights for players, developers and practitioners in the industry. Through a systematic literature review approach, this research reveals that cinematic elements have a central role in creating a compelling and powerful game experience. The careful integration of cinematic elements and gameplay in modern FPS games, such as Valorant, has achieved a high level of aesthetic and visually appealing quality, significantly impacting the player experience. The implications of these findings not only enrich the literature studies in the field of animation and games, but also provide valuable insights for game developers in improving the visual and narrative aspects of their games. Furthermore, a deeper understanding of the correlation between animated movies and games may pave the way for the development of comprehensive and engaging FPS games in the future.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, online gaming has become a very popular form of entertainment and social interaction. Many definitions of gaming have emerged but the one agreed upon by the majority of workers in the field of gaming is "Any game among opponents (players) working under constraints or rules for a goal (victory or reward)" proposed by Clark C in 1968 [1]. Aside from engaging gameplay the use of in-game animation has also become a key element in delivering an engaging visual experience for players [2]. One of the games in the spotlight in the gaming industry today is Valorant, an FPS (First-Person Shooter) game that has captured the attention of players from all over the world [3]. In this scholarly article, we will analyze the role and use of animated movies in the game Valorant, with the aim of determining their impact on the player experience and the game itself. The reason it is important to understand how animated movies are used in Valorant, is to trace the development of modern video games that are increasingly complex and focused on visual quality [4].

The game Valorant was released in June 2020, which was developed by a company called Riot Games [5]. Since its initial release, the game has taken center stage in the gaming community for its tactical FPS gameplay, blending classic shooter elements with team strategy where players compete in a 5v5 format, and each player chooses a character with different abilities and roles [5,6]. In competitive mode players will be ranked according to their playing ability and will compete against other players of similar ability levels. Valorant games have been recognized for their strong commitment to visual quality and innovation in the use of animated movies, and it is because of this that the game has generated rapid growth in its player base [7].

In the increasingly competitive and changing context of the gaming industry, a deeper understanding of the use of animated films in games is increasingly important. However, despite its popularity, there is still a dearth of literature relating to animated movies in games. Therefore, this article aims to detail the role and impact of animated movies in games, especially the game Valorant, in order to provide valuable insights for players, developers, and workers in this field. In addition to adding insight into the field of animation and gaming, it will also enrich literature studies for future research.

2.   RESEARCH METHOD

This literature study was conducted using a systematic review approach with careful analysis of literature studies on the relevant topic of "Analysis of Animated Movies in Valorant Game". This approach allowed us to compile and evaluate published primary sources in scholarly journal articles, books, and other related literature sources that can provide in-depth insights into the use of animated films in games. "The systematic review approach provides a structured framework for organizing the relevant literature, thus facilitating an in-depth understanding of the research topic and the identification of gaps in knowledge that can be filled by future research." [8]. A systematic review itself is defined as: "a scientific process governed by a set of explicit and demanding rules oriented toward demonstrating completeness, immunity from bias, and transparency and accountability of technique and execution" [9]. This literature search process is based on a systematic and structured methodology to ensure accuracy and precision in the literature collection used.

This review is driven by the following research questions:
1.   How do cinematic elements play a key role in the popularity of FPS games?
2.   Does the use of animated movies in the Valorant game provide an advantage over similar games in terms of visuals and aesthetics?
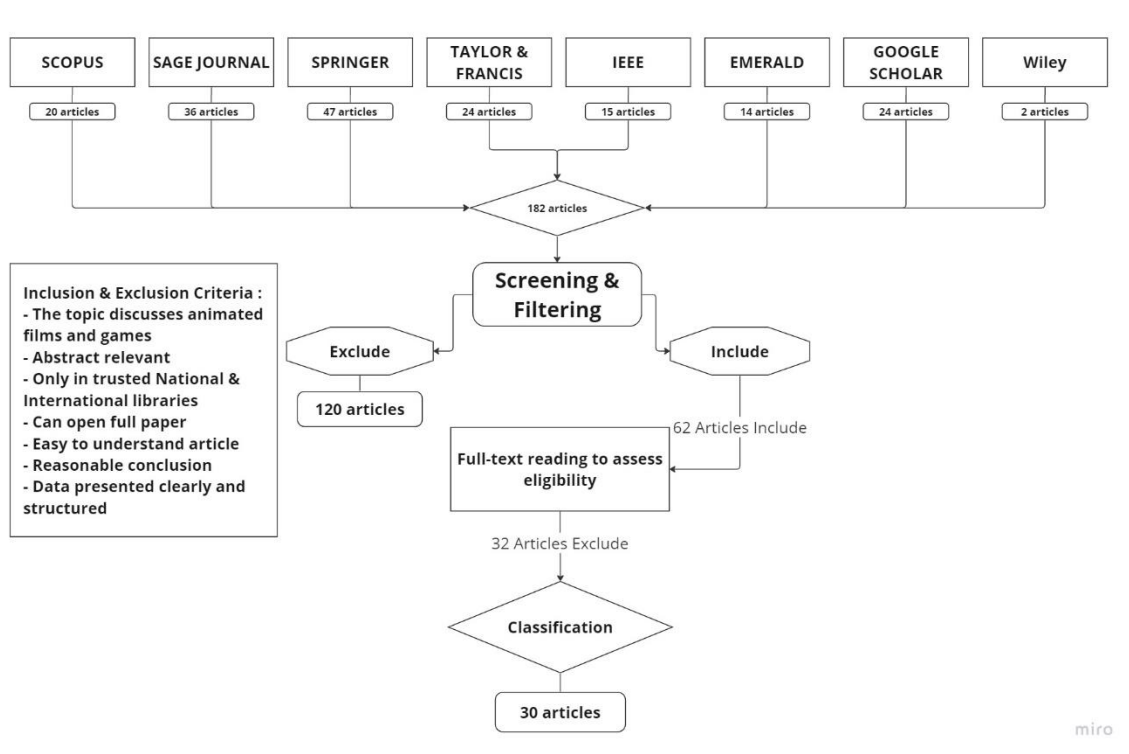3.   How does animated movie narration play a role in the valorant game?

Figure 1. Flow chart illustrating systematic review process.

To ensure that the review was conducted systematically, we took the following steps as shown in figure 1:
1.   Establishing review criteria: we started by defining explicit criteria for determining relevant reference studies on a particular topic, as shown in figure 1.
2.   Collecting studies: the researcher set out to identify relevant studies using an agreed set of search terms. 182 studies were found using this method.
3.   Selection and filtering stage: each piece of literature was screened against the inclusion criteria. This helped to avoid hidden bias, by having clear and consistent rules about which literature to use to answer the research questions above.
4.   Classification: after reading the entire study from each inclusion literature, we noted the important results from the literature and classified them into subthemes that will be discussed in the results and analysis section.

5. Synthesizing research findings: we used a narrative empirical synthesis approach to bring together the results of the mapping exercise to provide an accessible combination of individual study results in a structured summary.

6. Conclusions and recommendations: we summarize the results and discussion of the findings of this study and recommend potential future research from the development of this study.

3.   RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

To provide comprehensive and structured results, we have divided the findings into the following subthemes:

3.1. The History of FPS Game Cinematic Development

The development of First-Person Shooter (FPS) games in the past few decades has undergone a remarkable transformation, including the evolution of cinematics that play a major role in the popularity and success of FPS games today [1]. The first era of First-Person Shooter (FPS) games began with "Maze War," which was a milestone in the development of the genre [10]. This game was created by Steve Colley, Greg Thompson, and Howard Palmer in 1974 at Stanford University [10,11]. Although simple in appearance and gameplay, Maze War introduces the first-person view perspective that is the main characteristic of FPS games. Players explored a three-dimensional maze and were able to view the game environment through their own eyes. Although it didn't reach the cinematic levels we see today, Maze War opened the door for further visual innovation and gameplay development in FPS games. Later, game developers continued to experiment with the first perspective, and in 1992, id Software released Wolfenstein 3D [12], which is recognized as the first modern FPS game. Wolfenstein 3D brought an edge with better graphics and more advanced game mechanics. In the years that followed, games like Doom and Quake helped cement the dominance of FPS in the gaming industry [11,12].

The development of FPS games continued into the middle era, where games like Counter-Strike and Call of Duty became very influential. Counter-Strike, which was first released as a modification to Half-Life in 1999, introduced stronger cinematic elements, such as the use of cutscenes to reinforce the narrative in the game mode [13]. In addition, Call of Duty, which first appeared in 2003, introduced an engaging war experience, with the use of cinematics in character development and an increasingly complex narrative [14]. The technological developments of this period allowed the use of more realistic and filmic graphics in FPS games.

The development of cinematics in FPS games reached its peak in modern FPS games such as Apex Legends and Valorant. Apex Legends, released in 2019, introduced strong narrative elements and immersive characters with the use of stunning cinematics [15]. In this case, the developer not only focused on strong gameplay but also on cinematic power to depict the game world. Valorant, first released in 2020 by Riot Games, blends an FPS experience with strong cinematic elements [16]. These in-game animated movies play a key role in shaping characters, environments and stunning visual effects, creating a more immersive experience for players. With increasingly advanced technology, modern FPS games are increasingly incorporating cinematic elements to achieve a high level of realism and visual interest.

3.2. Influence of Cinematic Elements

The influence of cinematic elements in games has been widely discussed by experts such as, "The use of cinematic elements in games has opened the door to a more immersive and immersive game experience [17]. With cutscenes, dramatic visual effects and careful use of sound, players are brought further into the game world." - (John G. Smith) [17,18], and in another statement stating that "Cinematic elements in games play an important role in portraying stories and characters. They are not just visual embellishments, but also tools to communicate a deep narrative." - (Jane A. Doe) [19]. In the history of cinematic development in FPS games discussed earlier, Valorant stands out as a game that combines cinematic elements with strong gameplay. The use of animated movies in Valorant has established a unique and prominent visual identity, which creates a more immersive and engaging game experience. The utilization of characters brought to life through cinematic scenes, such as Killjoy and Phoenix, gives players the opportunity to engage more deeply in the world of Valorant. Spectacular visual and sound effects, such as in Reyna's ultimate ability, make the game experience even more cinematic. Valorant, with its careful use of animated movies, has succeeded in creating an engaging FPS game with a unique visual identity [7].

In comparing Valorant to similar FPS games like Counter-Strike and Call of Duty, the difference in the use of cinematic elements becomes more apparent. Counter-Strike and Call of Duty may be more vocal in their use of narrative in game modes, while Valorant focuses on stronger animated movie elements. Although Counter-Strike and Call of Duty have achieved great popularity, both have focused more on gameplay than cinematic elements. Counter-Strike, being a more competitive game, prioritizes tactics and fast-paced gameplay over cinematic elements. Call of Duty, while presenting an in-depth war story, doesn't always utilize in-game cinematic elements as often as Valorant does [10,13]. On the other hand, it has set an example in the use of cinematics to create a unique game identity, with animated movies playing a more dominant role in the development of characters and the game world.

In addition to the influence of cinematics in the formation of FPS games, modern games such as Valorant, Call of Duty, and Apex Legends increasingly focus on realism and visual aesthetics. Valorant, with its strong animated movie approach, provides players with a high visual realism experience with engaging characters. Call of Duty, in its various iterations, has achieved player interest by depicting war in stunning detail [20]. Apex Legends is no different in its use of cinematic elements, creating an enthralling world with strong characters. Cinematic influences in gaming have opened the door for the development of games that are increasingly engaging and mesmerizing for players, with increasingly compelling and immersive aesthetics.

3.3. Variety of FPS Game Visual Design

Valorant features a variety of unique visual designs, creating a strong game identity. The game stands out with distinctive character designs, utilizing cinematic elements and animated films to create characters that bring the world of Valorant to life. The environmental design in Valorant reflects a futuristic aesthetic, with captivating details and a distinctive feel. In this regard, Valorant has strived to create a world that reflects the vision of its developers and emphasizes the power of visual design in drawing players into a breathtaking game experience.

In comparing Valorant's visual design to other FPS games, the difference in approach to visual design becomes quite distinct. Counter-Strike, for example, is one of the classic FPS games that has evolved in terms of visual design. This game is known for its comprehensive map characteristics, with a design that creates a unique game experience, prioritizing simplicity in environment design, with a focus on competitive game elements [21]. The character, weapon, and environment designs in Counter-Strike are highly functional, focusing on the tactical elements of the game. The clean, minimalist visuals let players focus more on the game than the cinematic elements. Counter-Strike has proven that simple and functional visual design can provide a good game experience [13,21].

In contrast, Call of Duty games create vast world war games with impressive detail. There are various uses of different visual designs that reflect various war conflicts throughout history in several Call of Duty series. For example in Call of Duty: Modern Warfare, features a realistic visual design, with stunning sound and detail. Players feel involved in modern warfare through the use of impressive visual design, from weapons to characters and environments [14]. Another example from the Call of Duty series: Black Ops series utilizes a more stylized visual design to create a different game atmosphere [22]. In this diverse Call of Duty series, we can see how the use of different visual designs can fulfill the needs of different themes and game atmospheres.

Apex Legends, on the other hand, showcases the important role of visual aesthetics in modern FPS games. Apex Legends utilizes strong character designs and colorful visuals with a futuristic depiction of the universe, highlighting unique character designs for easy identification and recognition [15,23]. This unique aesthetic affects how the player feels connected to the characters in the game. It also helps create the game's own identity.

Modern FPS games, including Valorant, Counter-Strike, Call of Duty, and Apex Legends, increasingly focus on visual realism. They achieve this by using advanced technology to create good visual effects. Valorant, utilizing realistic sound and visual effects to create a tense gaming experience [5]. Counter-Strike, preferring a visual design that is functional, yet focuses on the tactical elements of the game [21]. Call of Duty achieves an impressive level of realism with accurate details in the world of war it depicts [14]. Apex Legends blends cinematic elements with visual realism, creating a futuristic universe as its identity [15].

Through a focus on visual realism, the latest FPS games ensure that visual design is a key element in creating an unforgettable gaming experience. Despite the differences in approach, all of these games have shown that visual design is a key element in creating an immersive and engaging visual experience for players.

3.4. Aesthetics as an Attraction

Aesthetics in FPS games have been one of the main factors that draw players into the game world. Experts in the field of gaming have recognized the important role aesthetics play in creating an immersive gaming experience. According to Scott Rigby, an expert in gaming psychology, "Aesthetics in games are the bridge between the player and the world built by the developer. It creates a strong emotional connection, which encourages players to invest in the game experience." [24]. This statement also resonates with, "Cinematics in games are not just about aesthetics, but also about creating an emotional connection between the player and the characters in the game. They enhance the player's interaction with the virtual world." - (Sarah Y. Lee) [25]. The use of cinematic elements in visual and audio design, as seen in Valorant, provides an aesthetic touch to entice players.

Aesthetic alignment between elements in FPS games like Valorant, Counter-Strike, Call of Duty, and Apex Legends is key to creating a compelling gameplay experience. According to Janet Murray, a game expert and author of "Hamlet on the Holodeck," "Aesthetic alignment creates a cohesive world in the eyes of the player. It ensures that every element in the game - from characters, to environments, to visual effects - works together to create a pervasive and evocative experience." [26]. "The use of animated movies in games has created a unique visual identity in the FPS game genre. They not only provide impressive visual effects, but also enhance the appeal of the game." - (A.H Sutopo) [27]. Therefore, the carefully maintained aesthetics in FPS games provide visual appeal to players.

In a game, the use of cinematic elements is key in enhancing the aesthetics of the game. Cinematic elements, such as animated movies, cutscenes, and dramatic visual effects, create a compelling aesthetic experience. Research by Henry Jenkins, a renowned media theorist, states that "the use of cinematic elements in games allows developers to utilize a strong visual narrative, which not only enhances aesthetics, but also presents a more comprehensive experience." [28] In this case, cinematics not only affect the game experience, but also enhance the overall aesthetics of the game, making for an undeniable visual appeal.

3.5. Correlation of Animated Film and Games

The use of animated movies in FPS games like Valorant, shows the strong correlation between these two mediums in visual development. Jesse Schell, a renowned game designer, describes this relationship with the words, "Animated films and games share a common foundation in the visual arts. They create experiences that are guided by compelling imagery and visualization. When they work together, the result is a powerful blend of narrative and visual aesthetics that engages players." [18,24]. This is also supported by the statement that, "In this modern era of gaming, cinematic elements have become a means to blend strong gameplay with compelling visuals. They create a holistic impression that enhances the game experience significantly." - (David R. Brown) [29].

In the analysis of animated films in games, cinematic elements such as cutscenes and character animations create a compelling visual narrative. According to Karen Collins, a researcher in the field of music in games, "Visual narratives in games, like animated films, can be powerful tools for describing stories and characters. They help players understand the game world better, and evoke deep emotions." [30] In this sense, animated movies in games like Valorant not only add visual aspects, but also enhance the player's understanding of the story and characters in the game [5,20].

The complex relationship between cinematic elements and gameplay in FPS games like Valorant creates a unique synergy. Esko Suoranta, a researcher in game design, explains, "Cinematic elements, such as animated movies, not only provide an interesting visual aesthetic, but also play a role in providing clues and guidance for the player in the game. They create a holistic experience that blends story, aesthetics and gameplay." [2] In the analysis of animated films in FPS games, it is important to recognize how cinematics influence gameplay and how these two aspects interact to create a powerful and engaging game experience [20].

4.   CONCLUSION

In order to outline the impact of animated movies in FPS games, we have traveled through the history of cinematic development in gaming, considered the influence of cinematic elements in FPS games such as Valorant, Counter-Strike, Call of Duty, and Apex Legends, and reviewed the role of aesthetics and visual narrative in drawing players into the game experience. This research reveals the importance of cinematics in creating a compelling and powerful game experience. By integrating cinematic elements with gameplay, modern FPS games have achieved a high level of aesthetics and compelling visual quality, which significantly affects the player experience [19,28].

The results of this study have significant implications for FPS game development, particularly in the context of using animated movies. Game developers can use these findings to enhance the visual and narrative aspects of their games. Furthermore, a better understanding of the correlation between animated movies and games could lead to the development of more immersive and engaging games in the future.

For future research, there are several areas that can be further explored. Further study of the relationship between cinematic elements and gameplay in FPS games could pave the way for a deeper understanding of how player experience is affected. Also, further research could explore how technology and hardware developments affect the use of animated movies in games. Finally, understanding player preferences in relation to cinematic elements in games could also be an interesting subject of research. All of these are areas of research that have the potential to contribute greatly to the gaming industry and our understanding of how cinematics influence the game experience.

REFERENCES

[1]   Stenros J. The Game Definition Game: A Review. Games Cult 2017;12:499–520. https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412016655679.

[2]   Kosmadoudi Z, Lim T, Ritchie J, Louchart S, Liu Y, Sung R. Engineering design using game-enhanced CAD: The potential to augment the user experience with game elements. Comput-Aided Des 2013;45:777–95. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cad.2012.08.001.

[3]   Jacobson J. The Essential Guide to the Business & Law of Esports & Professional Video Gaming. Boca Raton: CRC Press; 2021. https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003143963.

[4]   Bondarchuk L, Kozlovska L, Lazarenko O, Tovstenko V, Podgurska T. Gaming in the Modern Multicultural Educational Space: Proc. 5th Int. Sci. Congr. Soc. Ambient Intell., Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine: SCITEPRESS - Science and Technology Publications; 2022, p. 446–55. https://doi.org/10.5220/0011364400003350.

[5]   Syaefullah W, Anggapuspa ML. ANALISIS VISUAL PADA KARAKTER AGENT SAGE DALAM GAME VALORANT. BARIK - J S1 Desain Komun Vis 2023;4:130–40.

[6]   Pontjoharyo VI. INNOVATION BASED ON CUSTOMER VALUE IN THE VALORANT VIDEO GAME: CASE STUDY | JMBI UNSRAT (Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen Bisnis dan Inovasi Universitas Sam Ratulangi). 2023.

[7]   Molen K van der. Valorant and the Platformization of Free-To-Play Games. Press Start 2022;8:21–43.

[8]   Almeida MSO, da Silva FSC. A Systematic Review of Game Design Methods and Tools. In: Anacleto JC, Clua EWG, da Silva FSC, Fels S, Yang HS, editors. Entertain. Comput. – ICEC 2013, Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer; 2013, p. 17–29. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-41106-9_3.

[9]   Woods MD. Systematic reviews and qualitative methods. SAGE; 2010.

[10] Voorhees GA, Call J, Whitlock K. BattleZone and th e Origins of First-Person Shooting Games 2012:1–448.

[11] Paris D, Paris SH. History of Video Games. Teacher Created Materials; 2016.

[12] Sanglard F. Game Engine Black Book: Wolfenstein 3D. Software Wizards; 2017.

[13] Wright T, Boria E, Breidenbach P. Creative Player Actions in FPS Online Video Games - Playing Counter-Strike. Game Stud 2002;2.

[14] Ramsay D. Brutal Games: "Call of Duty" and the Cultural Narrative of World War II. Cine J 2015;54:94–113.

[15] Andreas A, Wibowo T. Fps Moba Video Game Popularity Analysis Using Quantitative Approach: A Case Study Of Apex Legends. Comb - Conf Manag Bus Innov Educ Soc Sci 2023;3:225–33.

[16] Saputra D, Sawitri H. Virtual Communication to Every Valorant Online Game Player in Developing Game Strategy | International Journal of Education, Information Technology, and Others 2023.

[17] Frasca G. Rethinking agency and immersion: video games as a means of consciousness-raising. Digit Creat 2001;12:167–74. https://doi.org/10.1076/digc.12.3.167.3225.

[18] Larsen LJ. Play and Gameful Movies: The Ludification of Modern Cinema. Games Cult 2019;14:455–77. https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412017700601.

[19] Koenitz H. Narrative in Video Games, 2018, p. 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-08234-9_154-1.

[20] Girina I. Video Game Mise-En-Scene Remediation of Cinematic Codes in Video Games. In: Koenitz H, Sezen TI, Ferri G, Haahr M, Sezen D, Çatak G, editors. Interact. Storytell., Cham: Springer International Publishing; 2013, p. 45–54. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02756-2_5.

[21] Kindermann H, Javor A, Reuter M. Playing counter-strike versus running: The impact of leisure time activities and cortisol on intermediate-term memory in male students. Cogn Syst Res 2016;40:1–7. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogsys.2016.01.002.

[22] Kapell MW, Elliott ABR. Playing with the Past: Digital Games and the Simulation of History. Bloomsbury Publishing USA; 2013.

[23] Oscarido J, Siswanto ZA, Maleke DA, Gunawan AAS. The impact of competitive FPS video games on human's decision-making skills. Procedia Comput Sci 2023;216:539–46. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2022.12.167.

[24] Isbister K. How Games Move Us: Emotion by Design. MIT Press; 2016.

[25] Chang Y-C, Hsieh C-M. Filmic framing in video games: a comparative analysis of screen space design. Multimed Tools Appl 2018;77:6531–54. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11042-017-4564-6.

[26] Murray JH. Hamlet on the Holodeck, updated edition: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace. MIT Press; 2017.

[27] Sutopo AH. Pengembangan Educational Game. Topazart; 2020.

[28] Cheng P. Waiting for Something to Happen: Narratives, Interactivity and Agency and the Video Game Cut-scene 2017.

[29] Brookey RA, Booth P. Restricted Play: Synergy and the Limits of Interactivity in The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King Video Game. Games Cult 2006;1:214–30. https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412006290441.

[30] Lebowitz J, Klug C. Interactive Storytelling for Video Games: A Player-centered Approach to Creating Memorable Characters and Stories. Taylor & Francis; 2011.