

# The Necessity and Supporting Measures of Game Rating System in China

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**Abstract:** Since the video game industry entered China, it has attracted wide controversy in the society. Due to the lack of the rating system of video games for a long time, the content review of video games has become a problem that makes all sectors of the society generally dissatisfied. Therefore, in recent years, the society is full of appeals for game rating. In view of this, this paper will start from the current problems in the supervision of electronic games in China to analyze, and put forward some supporting Suggestions based on the successful experience of foreign countries and the current factors restricting the emergence of China's game rating system, so as to clear the obstacles for the promulgation and implementation of the rating system.

## 1. Introduction

Since the entry of video games into China, it has quickly attracted a large number of players with its new and interesting features. At the same time, however, the various undesirable factors in video games have also adversely affected the physical and mental health of players. Because the rating system can not be effectively established for a long time, the country can only manage the content of the game in a simple and rude manner, and the result has a huge negative impact on the game industry in China. Therefore, this paper will analyze the problems arising from the lack of rating system in the current game content management in China, and combine some successful experiences abroad to propose some countermeasures for the game rating system.

## 2. China's game review problems

At present, China's content specification for video games is based on a censorship system. Since the late 1990s, it has been playing its part in regulating game content and maintaining social harmony. But as a large number of consumers began to demand the game, China's game review mechanism also exposed many problems.

### 2.1 Restrictive measures

After the video game industry entered China, although the game industry brought huge profits, due to the long-term stigma of Chinese games, the state's support for the game industry was too small. On the other hand, from the point of view of formulating laws and regulations, the relevant laws and regulations of the state have been dominated by binding documents for many years, which limits the enthusiasm of enterprises and developers who really want to develop high-quality games. It has hindered the transformation of the social image of the game industry.

### 2.2 Review criteria are simple and rude

Since the beginning of China's regulation of the video game industry, these responsibilities have always been the responsibility of the relevant government departments. The game review criteria and whether the game can be reviewed, the government has the final say. At this time, game companies and developers know that players may not accept, but in order to successfully sell the game, they can only delete any sensitive content; if foreign game companies want their games to enter the Chinese market, they also need to modify the content to meet the review requirements. .

Due to the long-term lack of game rating system, the game modified according to the standard often reaches the level of “all ages”, and removes inappropriate content such as pornography and violence, but the game modified in this way, whether it is a game developer or a game. The core players will not be satisfied. In the end, sluggish sales will cause developers to lose confidence in game development, and players will rush to more versatile and more enjoyable pirated games.

### **2.3 The blind restriction caused the emergence of the game black market**

Since the censorship system adopts a unified review standard for all games, all games must reach the “all age” requirement after being listed and operated in China, which cannot satisfy the players who advocate the “original” game. And in addition to limited content, genuine games will be listed and updated later than the overseas version of the same game, which will allow pirated games to preempt the market. Since the game products in the formal market can not fully meet the needs of the players, the players will find another way, which has contributed to the piracy of the domestic game machine market, the problem of parallel imports and the formation of private service issues in the field of online games. Since the content of pirated and parallel games has not been cut, it can better meet the needs of players, and players will be more inclined to choose pirated and parallel imports.

### **2.4 Review criteria are too subjective**

Since the content review of video games involves social ethics, only some ambiguous rules can be formulated for the ethical review standards, which will enable the relevant departments to have greater discretion when reviewing the game. As long as the review department determines that a game submitted for review contains inappropriate content mentioned in the above documents, regardless of the facts, the game will eventually be unable to be reviewed and will not be available for sale in China. This led to a lack of rigor in the game review, which led game developers to be too broad and unattractive, resulting in a large number of quality games eventually missing the Chinese market.

In short, China's current video game censorship system has become an important factor restricting the development of China's video game industry. With the continuous improvement of people's living standards, people will gradually produce demand for high-quality cultural products, including the electronic game known as the “ninth art”. In order to reduce the obstacles to the development of the video game industry, promote electronic The development of the game industry, in order to protect the player's choice and maintain the public order of good and good, the development of a national e-game rating system has become an increasingly urgent matter.

## **3. Foreign game rating system: taking the United States as an example**

At present, in order to manage game products more effectively, more and more countries and regions have established a rating system for video games. Among the game rating standards formulated in various places, the most typical is the US ESRB game rating standard. . Next, this article is prepared to start with a more detailed introduction and analysis from the US game rating standards.

The game rating system in the United States is established by The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), an industry self-regulatory organization for the gaming industry. This is a non-profit industry self-regulatory organization affiliated with the Entertainment Software Association. Established in 1994, shortly after the establishment of the ESRB, its game rating standards were also available soon. Because in the United States at that time, public opinion was also worried that video games would have a negative impact on the physical and mental health of minors. In 1992, the bloody and violent fighting game “Mortal Kombat” was launched in the United States. The strong dissatisfaction of the society, so the community generally called for a content management system for video games, which led to the birth of the ESRB rating system. After years

of development, the ESRB rating standard has become the world's longest and most representative video game rating system. In addition to being in the United States, the ESRB rating system are equally applicable in Canada and Mexico.

ESRB's criteria for rating games includes a description of the rating. The first is the classification. ESRB will classify the appropriate age range for video games based on the content of sex, violence, drugs, and bad language in the game, and use this as a basis to classify different levels. At first ESRB divided the game into five different levels, and then gradually improved to six levels. The six levels are: EC (Early Childhood), E (Everyone), E 10+ (Everyone 10+), T (Teen), M (Mature) and AO (Adults Only). [1]After the level is divided, a description of the content is required. This is a detailed criterion for determining that a game is finally divided into a certain level. It is generally marked next to the rating mark to explain the level of the game. The content description can be detailed. It is divided into 30 categories, including sex, violence, swearing, and the degree of drinking and drug abuse.[2]

In determining the rating process, the game publisher first needs to submit a rating data sheet to the ESRB during the final development stage before the game is released to indicate that the game may involve rating content, and the ESRB will then send the rating staff to the game content. Independent review, and these graders cannot be industry insiders in the gaming industry. When these rating staff agree, they will be reviewed by ESRB, after which ESRB will provide a preliminary rating result to the game publisher and the relevant basis for the result. If the game publisher has no objection to the rating result at this time, the rating determined at this time will be posted on the ESRB official website; if the game publisher disagrees with the result, it can also appeal to the ESRB. In addition, before the game is officially launched, publishers also need to provide ESRB with the official version of the game, and the ESRB will conduct a final review to ensure consistency between the rating results and the player experience.[3]

In addition to strict checks during the review phase, in order to avoid minors buying games classified as M-level or AO-level, ESRB will also check the sales of the game. ESRB will work with major game dealers to train the game's sales staff in rating, and will require dealers to provide an in-store logo description rating system and require dealers to ensure that M-level or AO-level games are not sold to minors. . By working with retailers, ESRB maximizes that minors don't have access to adult games that aren't suitable for them, and that's why, in order to ensure the sales of their games, most game developers try to avoid making too much. Adultized games, especially AO-level games that are only available to adult players.

As can be seen from the above, the ESRB rating system supervises the game throughout the whole process of a game from development to sales, although there is no legal restriction on AO-class games for adult players only, but due to the distribution of ESRB and games. Businesses have cooperated to limit the purchase of games that are not suitable for them, even if a game that is classified as M-class or AO-class is finally available for sale, it will be impossible for game developers and publishers because of narrower audiences. Profit from it. For this reason, developers often avoid adding too much, too serious adult content to the game when developing games. In short, ESRB has successfully guided the US game market to a healthy development path through a series of rating systems, which not only protects minors from bad games, but also protects all players from playing their favorite games.

#### **4. Countermeasures for the rating system**

It is not difficult to see from the previous analysis that although China's video game review has played a positive role in regulating the video game market and protecting minors from adverse games, with the gradual maturity of China's game market, strict restrictions The regulatory model has exposed more and more drawbacks, limiting the vitality of the game market and the enthusiasm of game developers. In terms of relative censorship, the rating system has obvious advantages in protecting the player's choice and maintaining the vitality of the game market. As long as it creates a healthy market and social environment for the rating system, it can maximize the protection of minors. People's physical and mental health. However, there are still many factors that restrict the

introduction and function of the rating system in China. Therefore, this paper intends to start from the constraints of the current rating system in China and the above-mentioned successful foreign experience, and provide some suggestions for supporting measures for the smooth introduction of China's future electronic game rating system.

#### **4.1 Encourage industry non-profit organizations to participate**

An important concept in modern new public management is that government agencies are responsible for “steering” rather than “paddle”. In the process of public governance, the government needs responsible decision-making in the direction of decision-making, rather than policy implementation. All the details are managed without any detail. Specific to the grading of video games, the government only needs to determine the general direction in this matter, and in the specific implementation, it needs to decentralize the market and society, and encourage major game companies to establish a non-speaking right. The self-regulatory organization of the for-profit industry, and handed over the grading standards and the power to implement the grading system to non-profit organizations.

From the successful experience of ESRB in the United States, it is not difficult to see that the ESRB is a non-profit industry self-regulatory organization composed of major domestic game companies. It is easier to absorb suggestions from parents, players and other sectors when formulating grading standards. To improve the social satisfaction of the grading system. In China, although there was a draft of the China Youth Network Association Green Game Recommendations drafted by a social organization in 2004, the social influence and discourse power of civil organizations at that time was too small, and the power of government departments was too large. This grading scheme was quickly forgotten.

At present, in the fifth article of the “Opinions on Reforming the Social Organization Management System to Promote the Healthy and Orderly Development of Social Organizations” promulgated by the State in 2016, the state has lowered the threshold for the establishment of four types of social organizations, such as trade associations, and stipulated industry associations. Social organizations can apply for registration directly to the civil affairs department. [4]This is an opportunity for the non-profit industry self-regulatory organizations in the game industry to have autonomy in society and to expand their social influence. After the autonomy and social influence of the industry self-regulatory organization in the game industry expands, the state needs to gradually transfer the power of “paddle” to the non-profit organization, and hand over the task of formulating and implementing the classification system to the non-profit organization. Non-profit organizations are encouraged to solicit opinions from all walks of life (parents, players, etc.). This will not only make the rating system more objective, but also improve the society's recognition of the grading system, and it can also play a certain role in restricting the power of government departments.

#### **4.2 Increase the protection of game copyright**

China belongs to the developing countries, and all aspects of construction must be later than developed countries. Therefore, while the economy is developing at a high speed, it is inevitable to lag behind developed countries in terms of system and concept, especially in the case of intellectual property protection. For a long time, the perception of intellectual property in our society is very scarce, and China joined the Universal Copyright Convention in 1992. The long-standing piracy has been an important factor restricting the development of China's game industry.

In the United States, due to the sound protection mechanism of intellectual property rights, and after years of cultivation, consumers have developed the habit of buying genuine products. Therefore, relying on the market support dominated by genuine games, the grading system can also be smoothly implemented. In China, due to the lack of copyright awareness of consumers and the strict control of cultural products by the state, there is still a relatively strong demand for pirated cultural products that are “good quality and cheap” and relatively free in content, and the relative

legal system of intellectual property rights is relatively Developed countries such as the United States are still very immature, so until now, piracy is still an important factor restricting the establishment of China's game grading system. Therefore, in order to ensure the smooth implementation of the game grading system, it is necessary to establish a more complete intellectual property protection system and give certain subsidies to video game developers. For social groups with sufficient ability to consume cultural products, they need to publicize intellectual property-related knowledge, cultivate people's copyright awareness, and also need to increase the punishment for piracy in society.

## **5. Conclusion**

In short, in the management of cultural products, the grading system relative review system has obvious advantages in protecting consumers' choice and protecting the physical and mental health of minors. However, due to various factors, a truly effective video game grading system has not been able to appear in China. Only when the factors that restrict the development of China's game industry and the formation of the grading system are improved, can the grading system of video games really play a role in China. The disappearance of these constraints is by no means a matter that can be achieved overnight. It requires the long-term concerted efforts of the government, the market, and the society to achieve it. I believe that with the passage of time and the change of attitudes of government and society towards video games, China's video game grading system can finally form and play its due role in this huge market.

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