



**WOMEN'S IMAGE  
ON VIDEO GAME  
COVERS: A  
COMPARATIVE  
ANALYSIS OF THE  
SPANISH MARKET  
(2011-2015)**

**LA IMAGEN FEMENINA  
EN LAS CARÁTULAS DE  
LOS VIDEOJUEGOS:  
ANÁLISIS  
COMPARATIVO DEL  
MERCADO ESPAÑOL  
(2011-2015)**



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## RESUMEN

En esta investigación se analiza la evolución de la imagen femenina en las carátulas de los videojuegos comercializados en octubre de 2011 y en octubre de 2015 por medio de un análisis de contenido con el software SPSS. De acuerdo con la literatura académica previa, se considera que los videojuegos son una herramienta socializadora de género cada vez más importante, y que las carátulas de los videojuegos son una de las formas publicitarias más decisivas para esta industria de ocio.

El análisis comparativo longitudinal revela un descenso en la presencia de violencia y del rol "objeto sexual" en las carátulas de los videojuegos. También se ha observado una asociación entre la sensualidad de los personajes femeninos y otras variables como la violencia y la infantilización de la mujer que podría distorsionar el concepto de sexualidad entre los menores.

### Palabras clave

*Imagen femenina; socialización de género; publicidad; videojuegos; infancia; adolescencia; análisis de contenido.*

## ABSTRACT

This paper studies the evolution of women's image on video games covers commercialized in October 2011 and in October 2015 by means of a content analysis using SPSS software. In accordance to previous academic literature, video games are considered as increasingly important gender socializing tools, and video game covers as one of the decisive forms of advertising for this leisure industry.

The longitudinal comparative analysis reveals a decrease in the presence of violence and in the role of 'sexual object' on video game covers. It has also been observed an association between the sensuality of female characters and other variables such as violence and the infantilization of women that may distort the conception of sexuality among minors.

### Keywords

*Women's image; gender socialization; advertising; video games; children; adolescents; content analysis.*

## 1. Introduction: Video games as gender socializing tools

According to the latest report published by the Spanish Video Game Association - AEVI -, during 2014, the recovery of the video game market was consolidated. In that way, this industry is ranked first among the different audiovisual and interactive options for leisure in Spain reaching a turnover of 763 million (EAE Business School, 2015). Furthermore, in comparison to other cultural products, many of the top-selling video games have a global impact in worldwide markets, even when the production areas are limited to the US, Canada, Japan, Europe and Australia (Near, 2013).

There is a line of research focused on the gender roles and the stereotypes that are portrayed in video games. The main hypothesis is that video games could spread gender stereotypes in a massive way, so this alternative for entertainment could reinforce gender discrimination.

Provenzo (1991) was one of the pioneers who analysed video game covers. He demonstrated that there was an underrepresentation of female characters in relation to male characters. Furthermore, women were depicted in a submissive way whereas men were portrayed with dominant attitudes. The research team led by Urbina Ramírez (2002), replicated Provenzo's study ten years later and they did not find real differences regarding the use of female images. Nevertheless, those authors considered that, as the female characters were duplicated, the sexist stereotyping in video games dropped. Estalló (1995) analysed the most bought video games in Spain during 1993. He observed a progressive elimination of sexist connotations.

The results obtained by Díez (2004) contradict these conclusions of Estalló (1995) and Urbina Ramírez (2002), since he stated that the majority of commercial video

games reproduced gender stereotyped which where opposed to the basic principles of our society.

Other researchers (Burgess, Stermer & Burgess, 2007; Collins, 2011; Downs & Smith, 2010; Near, 2013), basing the majority of their studies on content analysis, concur to observe female characters as underrepresented in comparison to male ones. In video games, women are also more likely than men to be portrayed in subordinate roles or 'hypersexualized' as sex objects. These researches showed that female video game characters were usually depicted wearing sexually revealing clothing, with partial nudes and unrealistic body proportions such as waist and breast size.

Near (2013) propound two causes for the underrepresentation and sexualization of women on video game covers. First of all, there is an economic motive for these repeated stereotypical depictions instead of alternative images, which is their positive relationship to sales. Secondly, this author assumes that a predominant male audience identify better with a male protagonist.

Recently, a new kind of video games has been developed to cover the unexploited market niche of female players. Several reports, compiled by Urbina Ramírez et al. (2002), reveal that girls dislike violent games and prefer interactive and role games. However, these games specifically designed for girls reproduce gender inequalities and sexist stereotypes that contribute to maintain the gender digital divide (Lalueza, Crespo & Camps, 2008). Among these 'pink games', the saga 'Image' stands out with a wide range of titles that offers traditional occupational roles to the youngest audience (Bueno Doral & García Castillo, 2012): the doctor is a pediatrician, the chef bakes cakes, the teacher works in a kindergarten and the sportswoman is a rhythmic gymnast. The female characters that appear on 'Imagine' covers are mainly

associated with values such as beauty, fame or social recognition and caregiving. This kind of audiovisual content, by means of an aspirational process, could influence the future occupational choice of little girls.

It is important to investigate the presence and effects of elements as sexuality and violence in video games and video game advertising. As Martins et al. (2009) indicate, academics should not assume that the theoretical models that have been proven as appropriate for traditional media can be equally applicable to video games, or that the effect is stronger due to the interactive nature of video games. Nevertheless, the role of video games in identity construction and in gender stereotypes transmission and perpetuation has been corroborated by numerous researchers (Díez, 2009).

According to Downs & Smith (2010) and from a social cognitive approach, stereotyped female portrayals on video game covers might have negative effects on youngest gamers' social and emotional development. These images of unrealistic bodies could promote the reproduction of gender representations in the general culture, eating disorders, low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, feelings of objectification or an increase in steroid abuse. Depicting women as sex objects leads some males to consider females' bodies as possessions (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997), so this learning may lead male adolescents to negative social, legal, and relational damage (Downs & Smith, 2010). Those effects can be produced because children may build their gender roles, identities and schemas in part on their observation of characters in video games and through their symbolic interaction with these roles. They also may imitate the gender behaviour that they see in video games but that is inappropriate in actual social situations of real life (Near, 2013). Moreover, Downs & Smith (2010) refer to Bandura's contribution to warn that, if a female

character is perceived as attractive, players may be more likely to find them socially acceptable and influential. On the other hand, as gender schema theory suggests, the repeated exposure to these 'hypersexualized' female characters of video games may interfere in children sexual and relational development. In addition, the underrepresentation of female video game characters, specifically as protagonists, could spread the perception that women are second-rate citizens (Burgess, Stermer & Burgess, 2007).

Some researchers could argue that video game characters are not an accurate representation of gender behaviour. But, according to Goffman (1979), gender advertisements that are understood as pictures are view as acceptable in its context. Thus, even if children know that video games are not real, they could accept the traditional and unrealistic representations of women in video games (Dietz, 1998)

Finally, there is a new line of research that correlates violence and gender stereotyping in video games with violence against women. Dill, Brown and Collins (2008) analyzed the effects of the prolonged exposure to this kind of content, and they discovered an increment of tolerance towards the sexual harassment and the myth of rape.

Behm-Morawitz (2014) defends that as researches and reports continue to criticize video game character representations, society may became aware and more critical of this leisure industry. The author continues with her reasoning, due to an increment in consumers' demands may promote a reduction in gender stereotyping in video game content as well as in its advertising. In fact, some researches point out that the protests and accusations against video game industry have promoted a new active female role; and newly released games tend to include, at least, a female main

character. However, these female characters, such as Lara Croft –Tomb Raider– and Helena Douglas –Dead or Alive–, that are pictured as dominant are also more likely to be portrayed with unrealistic bodies and fighting wearing revealing clothes (Downs & Smith, 2010; Jansz & Martins, 2007).

## 2. Objectives

With this study the authors wanted to investigate the evolution of the female image that is offered to consumers through video game covers, due to these pictures are advertising messages created with an obvious persuasive purpose.

As Burgess, Stermer and Burgess (2007) allege, the only content to which all buyers and potential buyers are exposed are game boxes. Moreover, whereas covers contain images that are present in the games, advertisements could show contents that are not directly related to the game. In addition, video game covers are one of the kind of advertising that game producers can control in contrast to video game reviews, so 'content analysis of box art is an appropriate method for interpreting the marketing used by producers in order to assess its effect on subsequent buyer behavior' (Near, 2013: 254).

By category, 81,5% of sales in the industry was for console video games during 2013 (EAE Business School, 2015). This is the reason why it has been decided not to analyse computer video games.

### 3. Methodology

With regard to the methodology, throughout this research qualitative and quantitative methods have been combined. A content analysis has been applied to the female characters that appeared on the covers of video games that could be bought in Spain in October 2011 and October 2015.

Of the quantitative studies related to the representation of female characters in video games, most of them have used content analysis to examine gender roles (Near, 2013). This methodology has been intensively used in the field of gender studies, as it is seconded by Rudy, Popova and Linz (2010, 2011) in the introduction of the two special issues of the journal *Sex Roles* focused on content analysis. They made a review of the recent studies and they realized that researchers often provided a longitudinal comparative analysis, as it is the case of the present paper. Furthermore, in a research project published by UNESCO, Ceulemans and Fauconnier (1981) established content analysis as one of the two valid indexes to prove female stereotyping in advertising.

The innovation degree of this research is justified on the previous section of this chapter, where it can be observed that the image of female characters depicted on video game covers is an object of study that has been scarcely studied in Spain; much less the relation between the sensuality of female characters and other variables such as the infantilization of these characters or the presence of violence, as well as its evolution in a period of four years.



The aim of our research is to study woman's image on video games covers and its evolution from 2011 to 2015 according to the following variables:

- Number of character. The unit of analysis.
- Number of cover. As there are cases that have more than one female character, each video game title has been associated with a number. The list can be checked in the appendix.
- Role of the female character. Three different functions or aspects of female characters have been analysed:
  - Self-sufficient. They seem to fend for themselves.
  - Dependent or subordinated to another character. This category was included in Goffman study in 1976.
  - Sexual object. Hypersexualized representation of female characters that are used as simple objects to adorn the commercial message.

Before the coding process was carried out, a fourth category was considered, 'other roles'. However, not a single character could be included in this option.

- Company of the female character. To understand in depth the autonomy degree of female characters. It is only indicated if the character is represented accompanied or alone.
- Level of nudity:
  - Lack of nudity.
  - Minor partial nudity. The character show off her cleavage, her thighs or wears tight-fitting clothes.

- Partial nudity. The character wears revealing outfits that almost show her nudity.
  - Total nudity. She appears without any piece of clothing.
  - Non-analysable.
- Beauty. As youth, it is one of the main advertising myths with regard to women's image. It has been registered if this quality is absent or present.
- Age. As girls were excluded from the sampling process and there were not any elderly woman on the covers of the periods, two categories were considered:
  - Adolescent or young adult.
  - Middle-aged.
- Sales presentation:
  - The usage of the analysed female character as enticement.
  - Showing some characteristics of the product or the storyline of the video game.
- Involvement. With this variable it was study the presence or absence of resources to catch the attention and interest of potential buyers, for example, when a female character gazes at the observer.
- Presence of violence. There are weapons, injured people or someone fighting in the scene where the analysed character appears.
- System. The different video game consoles for which video games are commercialized in Spain:

- Video game consoles marketed by Sony Computer Entertainment: PlayStation 2, PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, PlayStation Portable or PlayStation Vita.
  - Video game consoles developed by Microsoft: Xbox One and Xbox 360.
  - Home video game consoles released by Nintendo: Wii and Wii U.
  - Handheld game consoles developed by Nintendo: Nintendo DS and Nintendo 3DS. The reason why consoles of this company have been divided is because there are evidences of the different target audience depending on the console is portable or not (Bueno Doral & García Castillo, 2012).
- Year of commercialization. This variable is essential for the longitudinal comparative analysis. As it has been previously indicated, the authors selected the covers of the video games that were commercialized in Spain during October 2011 and October 2015.
  - The Pan-European Game Information code (PEGI). According to this video game content rating system, the female characters were classified depending of the logo that appeared on game boxes:
    - Suitable for ages 3 and older.
    - Suitable for ages 7 and older.
    - Suitable for ages 12 and older.
    - Suitable for ages 16 and older.
    - Unsuitable for persons under 18.

- Genre. This category is used to organize the different titles offered in the Spanish market. Although there are numerous classifications it has been followed the one that is used by one of the biggest video game retailers in Spain<sup>1</sup>:
  - Musical games. Players have to sing the biggest hits of this year.
  - Action. Genre that emphasizes physical challenges usually related to some sort of violence.
  - Adventure. Interactive story based on exploration and puzzle solving.
  - Racing games. The player participates in a competition independently of the kind of transport.
  - Simulator games. Designed to simulate the different aspects of a real or a fictional reality.
  - Role games. When the player takes the responsibility for acting the role of a character within a narrative acting, through a process of character development or decision-making.
  - Shooter games. The player assumes the role of an avatar that uses a weapon. These games test the reaction speed.
  - Fitness. Games designed to be in shape.
  - Sports. Games that simulate the practice of sports.
  - Fight. The player combats with an opponent.
  - Dancing. Players have to follow the rhythm and the dance moves.
  - Educational. Games designed with a clear educational purpose.

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<sup>1</sup> Since 1992, GAME is a specialist retailer of computer and video games, specializing in all major formats. The classification by genre of every analysed title can be checked on its Spanish web site <https://www.game.es>.

- Other. Those not included in the rest of variables.
- Sensuality. Even though the authors have already considered if the female character is used as a sexual object, they wanted to study the presence or absence of this characteristic associated to other roles. Among other aspects, it has been observed the proportion of their bodies -specially waist and breast-, the inappropriateness of some outfit according to the activity the character is performing, the face expression and the body posture.
- Manga style. It is specified if the character is drawn in a style influenced by manga. That could be defined as cartoonish characters with mask effect, and huge and expressive eyes.
- Infantilization. Sometimes is linked with manga cartoon, but not necessarily. Young women are dressed in a childlike way or showing naïveté.
- Level of prominence. According to the position of the female character on the scene:
  - Primary alone character. She appears in the foreground without any company.
  - Primary accompanied character. She is not the only character that is in the foreground.
  - Secondary character. She is in a second level of representation.
  - Tertiary character. She appears behind the previous ones or in the background of the scene.

## 4. Content: Results and discussion

### 4.1. Female characters and covers

Due to the scarcity of female characters, it was not necessary any sampling process. Our search gave as result 203 female characters -93 from 2015 and 110 from 2011- that appeared on 134 different covers.

The majority of the analysed covers had a unique female character, although 13.43% of them contained two female characters, 9% had three characters, and, in scarce cases, covers included four or five female characters.

The list of the analysed titles has been compared with the best selling console games in October 2011 and October 2015 according to the Spanish Video Game Association -AEVI-:

- October 2015: FIFA 16 (PlayStation 4), FIFA 16 (PlayStation 3), NBA 2K16 (PlayStation 4), Assassin's Creed Syndicate (PlayStation 4), Animal Crossing: Happy Home Designer + Tarjeta Amiibo (Nintendo 3DS), Animal Crossing: Happy Home Designer + Nfc Reader/Writer (Nintendo 3DS), Uncharted: The Nathan Drake Collection (PlayStation 4), FIFA 16 Kinect (Xbox 360), Pro Evolution Soccer 2016 - Day One Edition (PlayStation 3) and Grand Theft Auto V (PlayStation 4).
- October 2011: FIFA 12 (PlayStation 3), Pro Evolution Soccer 2012 (PlayStation 3), FIFA 12 (Xbox 360), Battlefield 3 Limited Edition (PlayStation 3), Formula 1 2011 (PlayStation 3), Pro Evolution Soccer 2012 (Xbox 360), Battlefield 3 (PlayStation 3), FIFA 12 (PlayStation 2), Gears Of War 3 (Xbox 360) and FIFA 12 (PlayStation Portable).

Among all this best selling titles, only Grand Theft Auto V shows a woman in the cover, which is attached in the following image.

**Figure 1. The only best selling title with a female character in its cover**



#### **4.2. Role of the female character**

It should be noted that there is a decrease in the number of female characters that are depicted as 'sexual objects', from 24.5% in 2011 to 19.4% in 2015. However, this reduction is counteracted by a considerable increase in 'dependent women' –from 9.1% to 16.1%– instead of 'self-sufficient women', category that remains almost steady as the most frequent role for female characters –from 66.4% to 64.5%.

In the qualitative analyses it can be observed how the main character of Tom Raider, one of the most successful video game sagas, is portrayed in 2015 as less erotic and more independent.

**Figure 2. Lara Croft in different video games sold in 2011 and 2015**



### **4.3. Company of the female character**

This one is an important variable if we want to know if female characters are provided with more autonomy on covers, even with a protagonist role in solitude. Global results obtained from the analysis do not show any advance in this process, due to the fact that lonely female characters were 20% in 2011 and 18.3% in 2015.

Nevertheless, by means of a contingency table analysis produce with the SPSS statistical software, it is confirmed a slight increase in 2015 of the percentage of lonely female characters that play the role of 'self-sufficient women' –from 19.2% to 23.3%– instead of 'sexual object' –from 29.6% to 16.7%. However, this last reduction can be caused by the general decrease in female characters as sexual objects. As it can be understood because of the definition of the category given on the previous section of this chapter, there are no dependent women that appear without any company.



#### 4.4. Level of nudity

It is clearly visible the increase in the 'lack of nudity', that reach 50,54% of the female characters that appear on video games covers sold in October 2015 whereas during the same month in 2011 this category represented 40.91% of the sample. This increment coincides with the total absence of 'total nudity' –there were two cases in 2011–, and with a significant reduction of 'partial nudity' –from 25.45% to 18.28%– and 'minor partial nudity' –from 29.09% to 26.88%.

**Figure 3. Covers of video games sold in 2011 showing total nudity**



With another contingency table analysis we can see that there is certain association between the role of the female character and the level of nudity. In this way self-sufficient women use to appear without any kind of remarkable nudity –57.1%– or with a 'minor partial nudity' –34.6%–, the same as dependent women –64% of them with 'lack of nudity' and 24% with 'minor partial nudity'. However, 84.4% of 'sexual objects' are depicted with 'partial nudity' wearing to revealing clothes.

#### **4.5. Age and beauty**

These results are analysed together because these categories tend to appear as intrinsic values to advertising throughout the history of commercial communication.

In 2011, teenagers and young adults reached 96.4% of the characters and 97.3% were portrayed as beautiful. In 2015, the percentages were quite similar, with 93.5% of young people and 97.8% of beautiful women. In total, there are five cases where female characters were not beautiful, and three of them were middle-aged women.

#### **4.6. Sales presentation**

The argument used as sales presentation by experts in communication for video games commercialisation has barely changed throughout these four years. In this way, in most cases –81.2% in October 2011 and 81.72% in October 2015–, the target audience or the potential buyers are tempted with some of the characteristics of the product or the storyline of the video game. So only in the remaining percentage of cases –18.18% in 2011 and 18.28% in 2015– the analysed female character is used as an enticement.

As it might be expected, women in the role of 'sexual objects' tend to be more used as enticements –68.9% of cases. There is a similar proportion of women that appear with 'partial nudity' and are also used for the same sales presentation –64,4%.

#### 4.7. Involvement

68.5% of the analysed female characters gaze at the potential buyers or players, so they catch their attention directly. The validity of this advertising tactic is proved because 80% of women with the role of 'sexual objects' stare at the target audience whereas 48% of dependent women are codified with the same feature.

#### 4.8. Violence

We can observe a decrease in the presence of any indication of violence on video games covers that includes female characters. However, this reduction is quite limited, from 29.1% in 2011 to 24.7% in 2015. This fall is shared by all brand platforms, with the exception of XBOX, whose percentage increases from 38.9% to 50%.

The strong association between sexual objectivation and violence observed on covers sold in 2011 is also reduced in 2015. Due to the percentage of women in the role of 'sexual objects' that appear in a violent scene has fallen from 81.5% to 50%. However, the drop of the percentage of sensual characters with violent content is not so drastic –from 57.1% to 42.4%.

**Figure 4. Contingency data table that associates the level of nudity with the presence of violence. October 2011**

		Nudity					Total
		Lack of nudity	Minor nudity	Partial nudity	Total nudity	Non-analyzable	
Violence	No	Frequency 39	29	7	0	3	78
	%	86.7%	90.6%	25%	0%	100%	70.9%
Yes	Frequency	6	3	21	2	0	32
	%	13.3%	9.4%	75%	100%	0%	29.1%
Total		Frequency 45	32	28	2	3	110

**Figure 5. Contingency data table that associates the level of nudity with the presence of violence. October 2015**

		Nudity				Total	
		Lack of nudity	Minor partial nudity	Partial nudity	Non-analyzable		
Violence	No	Frequency	38	22	8	2	70
	%	80.9%	88%	47.1%	50%	75.3%	
Yes	Frequency	9	3	9	2	23	
	%	19.1%	12%	52.9%	50%	24.7%	
Total		Frequency	47	25	17	4	93

This reduction is also found in the association between the highest levels of nudity and the presence of violence observed on covers sold in October 2011, from 100% of ‘total nudity’ and 75% of ‘partial nudity’ to 52.9% of ‘partial nudity’ in the female characters corresponding to October 2015.

**Figure 6. Covers of video games sold in 2011 that show an association between sexual objectivation or nudity and violence**



#### 4.9. System of commercialization

In general terms, Nintendo with PlayStation and PlayStation Portable –59.6%– and Sony Corporation with Wii and Nintendo DS –56.7%– are the main trading companies

that include female characters on the cover of their video games. Microsoft Corporation, with Xbox, reaches the lower percentage with the 26.6%. To understand these figures it has to be explained that every system of commercialization has been considered as a different variable that indicates its presence or absence, and that the same video game can be commercialized for more than one console and by various companies.

If the longitudinal analysis is taken into account, the representativeness of PlayStation and PlayStation Portable increases from 47.3% to 67.7%, the same as Nintendo DS, from 18.2% to 36.6%. Nevertheless, the percentage for Wii dramatically drops from 44.5% to 19.4%, as happens with Xbox, from 32.7% to 19.4%.

#### **4.10. The Pan-European Game Information code (PEGI)**

As it is stated in the official website, PEGI is an age rating system conceived to inform European parents during the buying decision process. It was established in 2003 and it has been adopted in thirty countries: Austria, Denmark, Hungary, Latvia, Norway, Slovenia, Belgium, Estonia, Iceland, Lithuania, Poland, Spain, Bulgaria, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Sweden, Cyprus, France, Israel, Malta, Romania, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovak Republic and the United Kingdom. Major console commercialization companies have supported PEGI system, including those that are studied in the present research. Although there are also labels that describe the content of the video game on the back of the packaging, the authors will only analyse the age labels that appear on the front

of the cover. In this way, all video games covers provide one of the following labels to warn about each video game content and its suitability to an age range:

- PEGI 3. The video game content is suitable for all ages. It is acceptable some kind of violence in a comical context that cannot be associated with reality.
- PEGI 7. The content is similar to the previous one but includes frightening sounds or scenes.
- PEGI 12. Includes violence towards fantasy characters or certain degree of violence towards human-looking characters or recognisable animals. Video games that include 'nudity of a slightly more graphic nature would fall in this age category'. Bad language must be mild.
- PEGI 16. Violence or sexual activity show similarities with real life. There is more extreme bad language or/and some character consumes drugs, smokes or commits criminal activities.
- PEGI 18. The video game depicts gross violence or specific types of violence.

35.5% of the analysed female characters appear in a video game with PEGI 12 and 33.5% on covers with PEGI 3. Women associated to PEGI 16 are less frequent - 17.2%- and there is hardly any case of PEGI 7 -7.4%- and PEGI 18 -6.4%. If the results are divided depending on the year of commercialization, the percentages are quite similar with the exception of PEGI 18 that drops to 4.3% in October 2015.

**Figure 7. Contingency data table that associates each PEGI label with the role of the female character. October 2011**

			Pegi					Total
			3	7	12	16	18	
Role	Self-sufficient	Frequency	36	5	24	6	3	74
		%	<b>92.3%</b>	<b>83.3%</b>	60%	37.5%	33.3%	67.3%
	Dependent	Frequency	3	1	5	1	0	10
		%	7.7%	16.7%	12.5%	<b>6.2%</b>	<b>0%</b>	9.1%
	Sexual Object	Frequency	0	0	11	9	6	26
		%	0%	0%	<b>27.5%</b>	<b>56.2%</b>	<b>66.7%</b>	23.6%
Total		Frequency	39	6	40	16	9	110

**Figure 8. Contingency data table that associates each PEGI label with the role of the female character. October 2015**

			Pegi					Total
			3	7	12	16	18	
Role	Self-sufficient	Frequency	25	8	17	8	2	60
		%	<b>86.2%</b>	<b>88.9%</b>	53.1%	42.1%	50%	64.5%
	Dependent	Frequency	4	1	4	5	1	15
		%	13.8%	11.1%	12.5%	<b>26.3%</b>	<b>25%</b>	16.1%
	Sexual Object	Frequency	0	0	11	6	1	18
		%	0%	0%	<b>34.4%</b>	<b>31.6%</b>	25%	19.4%
Total		Frequency	29	9	32	19	4	93

By means of a contingency analyses produced with the SPSS statistical software that correlates PEGI label and the role of the character, it can be observed that video games suitable for the younger players -3 and 7- tend to use self-sufficient female characters. However, due to the general rise in dependent characters in October 2015, the percentage of this role increases in all age ranges. It must be pointed out that 34.4% of PEGI 12 characters in 2015 plays the role of 'sexual object', a percentage higher than PEGI 16 characters -31.6%. From 2011 to 2015 there is a noticeable drop in PEGI 18 characters that appear as sexual objects -from 66.7% to 25%. Nevertheless, in this last clarification it has to be taken into account the scarce number of units of analyses for PEGI 18 in October 2015 that could that could distort the results.

#### **4.11. Genre**

Role -20.2%-, adventure -16.3%- and musical games -15.3%- are the main genres that use female characters on their covers. A contingency analysis reveals that musical, adventure, dancing and simulator games tend to use self-sufficient characters on the covers, whereas action, role, shooter and fighting games have bigger proportion of sexual objects.

#### **4.12. Sensuality**

There is a drop on the percentage of sensual females characters between October 2011 -44.5%- and October 2015 -35.5%. In the majority of cases, sensuality is used in covers with PEGI 16 and PEGI 18, but it is alarming that 51.4% of PEGI 12 characters are depicted in a seductive way, with unrealistic body proportions or revealing clothes, even if 'nudity of a slightly more graphic nature would fall in this age category'<sup>2</sup>.

#### **4.13. Manga style and infantilization**

These variables are analysed together because 87% of cases of infantilization are drawn in manga style. The 54.3% of characters that are dressed in a childlike way are also portrayed in a sensual way. Moreover, this percentage increases from 52.9% in 2011 to 55.2% in 2015.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/28/>



Regarding manga images, there is a rise from October 2011 -23%- to October 2015 -53.8%. This mode of representation is especially used in the genre of role games.

#### **4.14. Level of prominence**

In global terms, there is a high percentage of primary female characters with undisputed prominence -36.9%-, but this percentage decreases from 43.6% in 2011 to 29% in 2015. So the most common level of prominence in 2015 is secondary character -37.6%.

## **5. Conclusions**

As the results of the present research demonstrate, youth and beauty are still indispensable requirements for the female characters that appear on video game covers.

The authors don not appreciate any evolution in the sales presentation nor in the presence of lonely characters. However, female characters in solitude are more linked in 2015 with 'self-sufficient' instead of 'sexual object'.

In the covers sold in October 2015 there is less presence of violence and female sexual objects, but there are also a higher percentage of dependent roles. It has been also observed a drop in the percentage of primary female characters appearing alone

and an alarming 51.4% of PEGI 12 female characters that are depicted in a seductive way.

There is a slight decrease in the severe associations observed between violence and other variables such as sexual objectivation and nudity. Nevertheless, there is an increment of the percentage of infantilized female characters depicted in a seductive way. These parallelisms may generate a distorted conception of sexuality among young people.

The authors think that the existence of video games with questionable content cannot imply reject video games as a whole. Even so, given that video games are increasingly important socializing tools consumed by children and adolescents, it is essential to study how video games transmit sexist stereotypes that may lead to discriminatory or violent behavior against women.

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## Appendix

- Rock band 4
- Divinity Original Sin Enhanced Edition
- Tales Of Zestiria
- Grand Theft Auto V
- Injustice: Gods Among Us Ultimate Edition
- Lego La Película: El Videojuego
- Just Dance 2014
- Tomb Raider: Definitive Edition
- Final Fantasy XIV A Realm Reborn Edicion Coleccionista
- Alien: Isolation
- Infamous: First Light
- Warriors Orochi 3 Ultimate
- The Last of Us Remastered
- Just Dance 2015
- Legend of Korra
- DarkStar One
- Zumba World Party
- Syberia: Complete Collection
- Tales of Xillia
- Singstar: Megahits
- Etrian Mystery Dungeon
- Harvest Moon: El Valle Perdido
- Inazuma Eleven GO Chrono Stones: Lllamarada
- Imagina Ser: Coleccion

- Dragon Ball Budokai Tenkaichi 3
- Lego Jurassic World
- Gabrielle Ghostly Groove
- Dance Party Club
- New Style Boutique 2: Marca Tendencias
- Inazuma Eleven GO Chrono Stones: Lllamarada
- Barbie y sus Hermanas: Refugio para Cachorros
- Just Dance 2016
- Oido cocina
- Cooking Mama: Bon Appétit
- Gardening Mama: Forest Friends
- Violetta
- Winx Club: Saving Alfea
- Super Mario 3D World
- Mario Golf World Tour
- Lego Friends
- Monster High: El Patinaje Laberíntico
- Aprende Inglés Con Biff,Chip Y Kipper Vol. 1
- Shin Megami Tensei Devil Survivor 2: Record Breake
- Monster High: La Chica Nueva del Insti
- Demon Gaze
- Dungeon Travelers 2: The Royal Library & The Monster Seal
- Hyperdimension Neptunia Re Birth 3
- Persona 4 Dancing All Night
- Sword Art Online Lost Song



- Xblaze Code: Embryo
- Steins Gate
- Operation Abyss: New Tokyo Legacy
- Tadeo Jones y el Manuscrito Perdido
- Deception IV: Blood Ties
- Hyperdimension Neptunia Re Birth 2
- Tokyo Twilight Ghost Hunters
- Hyperdimension Neptunia U: Action Unleashed
- Hyperdevotion Noire: Goddess Black Heart
- ABBA : You Can Dance
- Alice: Madness Returns
- Aliens Infestation
- All Star Karate
- Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell of Air Ciel
- Atelier Totori: The Adventure Of Arland
- Big League Sports
- CSI: La Conspiracion
- Dance Central 2
- Dance Dance Revolution
- Dance Evolution
- Dance! ¡Todo el mundo a bailar!
- DanceStar Party
- DDR - Hottest Party 5
- Dead or Alive: Dimensions
- Disney Sing It 3 Party Hits

- DodonPachi Deluxe
- Dr. Lautrec y los Caballeros Olvidados
- Dungeon Siege 3-Edición limitada
- Profesor Layton y la llamada del espectro
- Enredados
- Everybodys Golf psvita
- Exerbeat Gym Class Workout
- F.E.A.R. 3 Edición Coleccionista
- Final Fantasy XIII
- Grand Slam Tennis 2
- GTA: Episodes From Liberty City
- Grease
- House of the dead: Overkill
- Hyperdimension Neptunia
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- just dance 3
- Karaoke Revolution Glee 3
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- Los Sims 3 ¡Vaya Fauna!
- Mi experto en Defensa Personal
- Mi Experto en Fitness Club
- Move Fitness
- Musiic Party

- My Fitness Coach
- No More Heroes: Heroes Paradise
- Red Steel Nintendo Selects
- Resident Evil 5 Gold Edition
- Resonance Of Fate
- Samurai Warriors 3
- Scene It? Crepúsculo
- Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 3
- Sing 4
- SingStar Dance
- Sports Champion Move
- Tekken Hybrid
- The 3rd Birthday Twisted Edition
- The Black Eye Peas Experience
- The King Of Fighters XIII
- The Legend of Heroes: Trails in the Sky
- The Mystery Team
- Tom Raider Anniversary
- Two Worlds II Premium Edition
- U-Sing 2
- Venetica
- Virtua Tennis 4
- We Dance
- Wet
- Your Shape Fitness Evolved 2

- Zumba Fitness
- Barbie y el Salón de belleza para mascotas
- Animal Planet Escuela de Veterinaria
- Barbie: Planeta Fashionista (U-Draw)
- Busy Scissors
- Cooking Mama 4
- Cooking Mama World: Aventuras en el Camp
- Cooking Mama World: Hobbies and Fun
- Monster High: Instituto Monstruoso
- Princesas Disney Cuentos Mágicos