

Mapping The Landscape of Game-Based Cultural Diplomacy: A Bibliometric Analysis of Global Trends and Influential Research

Muhammad Abdul Azis¹, Nadia Angelina²

¹ Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia.

² Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia.

Abstract

Video games are becoming an important part of cultural diplomacy. They let countries show off their national identity and soft power around the world. In the past, Japan and Poland have utilized video games to spread their cultural values and get along better with other countries. For instance, Japan's "Cool Japan" campaign and Poland's smart gift of The Witcher series. With the debut of Black Myth: Wukong, an action RPG that combines Chinese mythology with modern gameplay, China has joined the trend. This study looks at nine scholarly papers from 2015 to 2024 that are listed in Scopus and Web of Science. It focuses on how video games are used in cultural diplomacy. The study examines the evolution of game-based cultural diplomacy globally through the analysis of research trends, significant figures, and notable works. The research examines the utilization of video games for diplomacy, nation branding, and cultural interaction, using Japan, Poland, and China as case studies. The results demonstrate that more and more people think that video games are a powerful and changing tool to influence people's thoughts, get people talking to each other around the world, and affect politics around the world. This study gives us vital information about how gaming, diplomacy, and soft power are becoming more and more intertwined. It also lets researchers and politicians see how video games can change international relations in the future.

Keywords: Video Games, Cultural Diplomacy, Soft Power, Bibliometric Analysis, Game-based Diplomacy, International Relations

INTRODUCTION

Globalization, previously analyzed mainly through political and economic lenses, now encompasses various domains, including cultural aspects. Nation-states utilize soft power through the strategic mobilization of cultural narratives, artifacts, and exchanges to influence perceptions, foster affiliations, and indirectly guide the development of international norms. Cultural diplomacy, defined as the systematic application of the arts, educational exchanges, cultural promotion, and public storytelling to foster mutual tolerance and understanding, has evolved from a sporadic gesture to a strategic necessity. Nye, (2009) explicitly defines cultural diplomacy as the primary component of soft power, arguing that voluntary attraction, as opposed to material inducement or military threat, produces the most lasting policy influence. Classical diplomacy traditionally focused on treaties, trade, and security agreements. In contrast, contemporary international relations scholarship recognizes the significance of cultural engagement—encompassing national narratives, academic collaborations, and the dynamism of creative industries—in reshaping diplomatic environments. Culture currently supports diplomacy by promoting favorable national representations, enhancing mutual understanding, and establishing enduring, informal connections among key social groups and political leaders.

Video games are a new technology that has changed the rules of cultural diplomacy in a big way during the past ten years. Whereas earlier generations predominantly regarded the medium as a source of entertainment, modern assessments contextualize it within the frameworks of intercultural communication. These digital platforms, supported by large global user bases and highly immersive diegetic settings, provide states a powerful means for the exhibition and propagation of national heritage beyond their domestic frontiers (Rodriguez Espinola, 2021). This is a huge change in how civilizations talk to each other because digital technology, especially video games, has made it simpler for people from different cultures to talk to each other. individuals can learn about cultural stories, meet individuals from all over the world, and share customs in new ways through video games. Game-

based cultural diplomacy is a new type of diplomacy that uses both technology and culture. It helps countries show off their beliefs, history, and identity in a way that has never been done before.

Beginning in the late 1990s, the video-game sector expanded from a niche youth market into a global, multibillion-dollar industry that cuts across borders and age groups. As games became woven into the everyday routines of younger cohorts, they also matured into venues for shaping collective attitudes, enabling intercultural exchange, and articulating national narratives. Immersive worlds sidestep territorial boundaries, which lets governments project symbolic messages outside conventional diplomatic channels. In that sense, games now function as a distinctive instrument of public diplomacy: they allow states to circulate culturally dense stories in shared online spaces through lived, interactive experience rather than static representation. The result is a shift from peripheral to central use of interactive entertainment in diplomacy, offering scalable ways to foster affinity, mutual recognition, and narrative alignment among distant publics—including those with historical ties.

Minecraft is a great example of how video games may be used for cultural diplomacy in today's digital world. Its sandbox architecture lets users build and explore hyper-realistic replicas of real or made-up places, each with a lot of cultural items that are unique to that place. In this adaptable setting, players frequently encounter accurately rebuilt monuments, regional architectural styles, and historically significant sites, thereby harmonizing recreational play with informal cultural education. Scholars contend that these emerging activities allow ludic settings to transcend mere entertainment, transforming into stewards of polyocular intercultural discussion, historical reflection, and informal diplomacy (Urueva, 2023). Consequentially, a constellation of sovereign actors has emulated this paradigm, purposely embedding modules that elucidate intangible cultural heritages, strategically branded tourism nodes, and curated nation-building narratives. By inviting a transnational adult and youth audience to promenade these recursively authored sites, governments tacitly extend an interactive soft-power curriculum, whereby mediated imaginative travel cultivates mutual recognition, and digital visitation, rendered spontaneous and autobiographical, nurtures a wider transitory or semi-permanent relational infrastructure.

A bibliometric study can spot research clusters and new lines of work in game-based cultural diplomacy. By tracking how key terms co-occur, mapping citation networks, and noting which authors drive the conversation, the research can see how the field has evolved and which themes dominate. The same map shows what's missing. Two gaps stand out: the mechanisms by which games influence international relations, and the practical ways they can be used to advance cultural values. This study takes those questions head-on by reading the literature at scale and charting the trends.

This study maps the landscape of game-based cultural diplomacy using bibliometric methods. It charts global research trends, identifies influential authors and institutions, and examines how digital games intersect with international relations and cross-cultural awareness. By analyzing the literature at scale, the research clarifies the field's contours, surfaces gaps, and establishes a baseline for cumulative work on the diplomatic and cultural roles of games.

The stakes are real. In an increasingly networked world, digital media mediate how people communicate and relate across borders. If cultural diplomacy is to keep pace, it needs clear evidence on when and how games can be used well. Yet the scholarship remains fragmented, and promising practice often outstrips research. This study responds with a structured, empirical map of the domain—evidence that can guide future research agendas and inform policy design.

The findings will help steer the next phase of game-based cultural diplomacy by clarifying how the field has evolved, where it stands now, and where the most credible opportunities lie. They also translate into practice: the study distills lessons on when and how games can be used in international relations and cultural exchange, offering policymakers and cultural diplomats' evidence they can act on.

In closing, this research makes a substantive contribution by mapping global research on this topic through bibliometric analysis. It identifies trends, themes, and key actors, and it shows how digital games can shape international relations, circulate culture, and foster cross-cultural understanding. The results carry both theoretical and practical weight, laying groundwork for future studies and informing strategies that use games more effectively in global diplomacy.

METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach with a bibliometric method. The quantitative approach was chosen because this research aims to analyze and map research trends and their impact in the context of game-based cultural diplomacy on a global scale. By using the bibliometric method, the data collected will consist of academic publications related to the topic of cultural diplomacy and games, which will be analyzed to identify important patterns such as dominant topics, prominent authors, and countries most active in this field.

The quantitative approach, according to Creswell (2014), is a method that focuses on the collection and analysis of numerical data with the aim of producing findings that can be generalized. In the context of this study, the quantitative approach allows for the systematic and large-scale collection of data regarding publications related to game-based cultural diplomacy. With this approach, analysis can be conducted objectively through statistical data processing to find relationships between the variables being researched, such as publication counts, citations, and the geographical and disciplinary distribution of research. Creswell also emphasizes that the goal of quantitative research is to test existing theories or concepts and identify patterns that can be used to draw conclusions about a larger phenomenon (Creswell, 2014).

The type of research employed is bibliometric analysis, a method that has been widely used in scientific studies to explore the development of specific topics in academic literature. Bibliometrics allows researchers to measure citation frequencies, identify frequently mentioned authors, and understand relationships between various scholarly works (Dervis, 2019). According to (Jeong et al., 2024), bibliometric analysis can also help in mapping knowledge networks, which is crucial for understanding the dynamics of game-based cultural diplomacy.

This approach aligns with the research objectives, which include identifying global trends in the field of game-based cultural diplomacy and mapping the contributions of research in this area from an international perspective. In this context, bibliometrics is used as a tool to examine the influence that previous research has had in shaping cultural diplomacy policies through games as a medium.

Instruments

Research instruments can be defined as tools used to collect the necessary data and information in a study. According to Fraenkel et al., (2022), research instruments in a quantitative approach function to measure the variables in the study systematically and objectively. In this research, the instruments used include bibliometric software and scientific databases that assist in analyzing and mapping academic publications related to game-based cultural diplomacy. Tools like VOSviewer and Bibliometrix allow researchers to identify research trends, leading authors, and relationships between existing topics.

According to (Creswell, 2014), quantitative research instruments must have high validity and reliability to ensure that the collected data is trustworthy and provides an accurate picture of the phenomenon being studied. In bibliometrics, that starts with the corpus. The researchers therefore rely on curated indexes—Scopus and Web of Science—and use Google Scholar selectively to widen coverage. Using credible sources raises confidence that the dataset is representative and that any patterns. In this study, the “instruments” are both the software and the procedures that link raw records to theory.

1. Bibliometric software

VOSviewer, Bibexcel, and CiteSpace will be used to process and analyze records. These tools support co-citation, co-authorship, and co-word (keyword) analyses and generate network maps that reveal clusters, influence, and temporal shifts in the literature.

2. Academic databases

Scopus, Web of Science, and (as a supplementary source) Google Scholar provide the publication data. These databases are selected for their credibility and international reach, enabling a broad yet reliable view of the field.

3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Included items address cultural diplomacy, soft power, and games in the context of international interactions, from both theoretical and applied angles. Publications from 2015–2025 are

prioritized. Exclusions cover irrelevant items and works not available in English or other accessible languages. Duplicates will be removed, and records will be cleaned (e.g., harmonizing author names and keywords) before analysis.

Together, these choices are designed to maximize validity and reliability while making the bridge from data to theory explicit.

Data collection procedures

This study is carried out in several systematic stages to achieve the established objectives. The first stage involves the collection of bibliometric data from various international databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and Web of Science. The analysis will focus on the terms "Game-based diplomacy" and "Cultural diplomacy through games," sourced from the Scopus database accessed on March 1, 2025. The investigation will be limited to the last decade (2015-2024). The Scopus database search is articulated as follows: (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Video Game as a tool of diplomacy") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Cultural and Video Games") AND PUBYEAR > 2014 AND PUBYEAR < 2025.

Data analysis

After assembling the corpus, the researchers will screen articles against clear criteria—topical fit (game-based cultural diplomacy), journal quality, and citation frequency—to ensure the analysis focuses on substantively relevant work. Title/abstract screening is followed by full-text review, with duplicates removed and decisions documented.

The curated set is then analyzed with VOSviewer, CiteSpace, and/or Bibliometrix. These tools support co-citation, co-authorship, and keyword/co-word analyses and generate network visualizations that surface dominant topics and structural relations among authors, institutions, and countries.

The researchers interpret the resulting maps and metrics to characterize global research patterns in game-based cultural diplomacy. Findings are read in both theoretical and applied terms to clarify how the field is developing and where key challenges or blind spots remain.

The final report synthesizes trends, collaboration patterns, and persistent challenges revealed by the bibliometric analysis, offering an integrated account of the field's trajectory and areas that warrant deeper study.

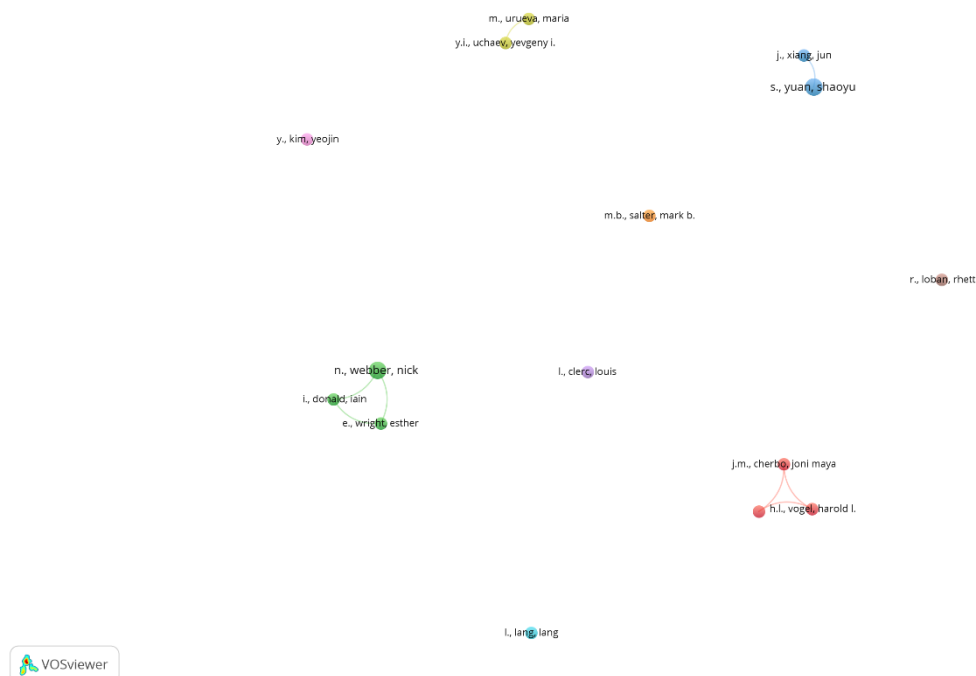
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

In recent years, video games have moved from peripheral curiosities to routine instruments of cultural diplomacy and soft-power projection. A bibliometric review of the scholarly record reveals several durable patterns. First, games are increasingly treated as platforms for cultural exchange: they carry national narratives and values across borders in ways that are participatory rather than merely representational.

Co-authorship networks point to a broadly interdisciplinary and internationally distributed community. Distinct clusters of authors and institutions have formed around recurring themes, signaling a coordinated effort to understand how games intersect with international relations. At the same time, the evidence base remains uneven. Much of the literature relies on single cases; genuinely comparative, global studies that link design choices and deployment strategies to diplomatic outcomes are still rare. This study provides a mapped baseline of the field and a set of priorities for next steps. By assembling the landscape—topics, collaborations, and blind spots—it offers a clearer agenda for future work on when, how, and for whom video games can advance cultural diplomacy.

Figure 1. Co-authorship network



Based on the co-authorship analysis, several authors show significant central positions in the research collaboration network in the field of game-based cultural diplomacy. Authors such as h.l., vogel, harold l., who is closely connected with j.m., cherbo, joni maya and i., lang, lang, as well as n., webber, nick, indicate important contributions to this research. There is also evidence of clustering among authors collaborating intensively, such as the group of i., donald, iain and e., wright, esther, suggesting related research topics. Other groups, such as m.b., salter, mark b. and y.i., ucheva, evgeny i., although somewhat separated, remain connected to other authors outside their clusters, indicating an increasing interdisciplinary relationship in this area of research.

On the other hand, there is notable diversification of cross-disciplinary collaborations, such as between m., urueva, maria, who is connected with j., xiang, jun and s., yuan, shaoyu, suggesting international and interdisciplinary collaboration in this field. Some authors, such as l.v., cler, louis, appear to collaborate more limitedly, which may offer opportunities to expand their collaborations with other author groups or institutions. Overall, collaboration between authors from various backgrounds and countries indicates that game-based cultural diplomacy is a topic that increasingly involves international and multidisciplinary cooperation, reflecting the growth of research in this field across various regions, which may have global implications.

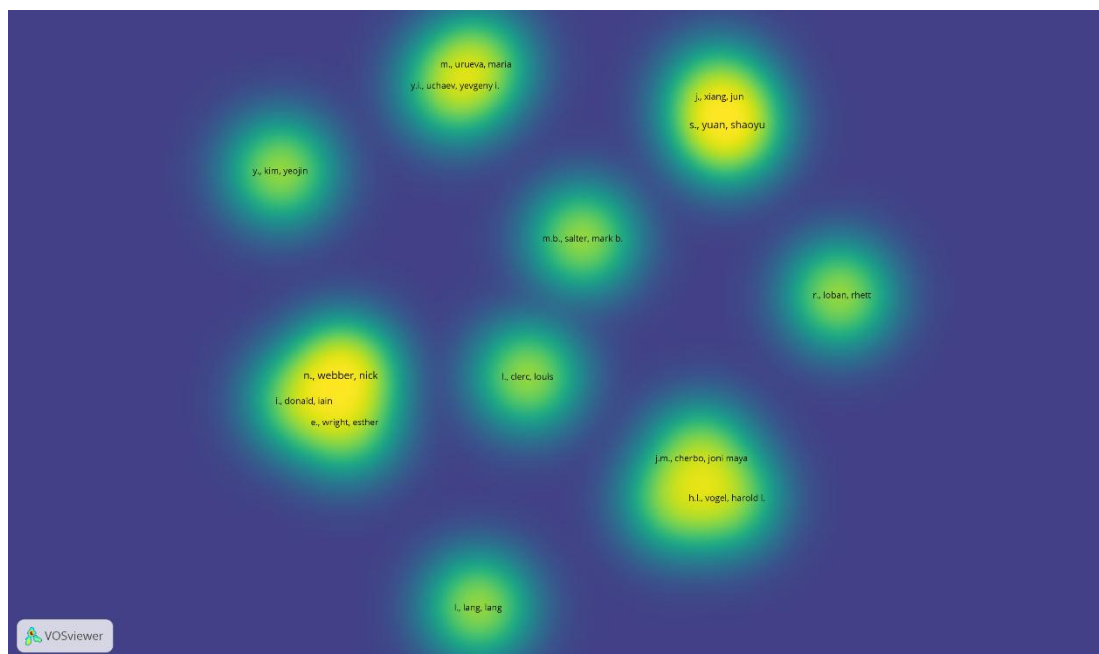


Figure 2. Density co-authorship

The co-authorship density map shows distinct collaboration clusters in game-based cultural diplomacy. High-intensity zones (yellow–green) mark the most central contributors—those who co-author frequently and sit at the crossroads of multiple teams. In this dataset, Harold L. Vogel and Joni Maya Cherbo occupy these dense cores, indicating sustained, wide-ranging collaborations and outsized roles in organizing the conversation. Their central positions suggest influence over how topics coalesce and which lines of inquiry gain traction.

Authors such as Nick Webber, Iain Donald, and Esther Wright also appear in relatively dense areas, pointing to active collaboration and overlapping research agendas. Their proximity on the map implies shared themes and recurring partnerships that help knit together the field's key debates.

By contrast, the periphery highlights room for growth. Louis Cler and Rhett Loban, for example, appear more isolated, with fewer direct ties to other scholars. That positioning signals untapped opportunities—new partnerships that could diversify perspectives, extend comparative coverage, and spur interdisciplinary work. Taken together, the density view captures a field with established hubs and open frontiers: concentrated centers of activity alongside clear pathways for broader, more connective collaboration..

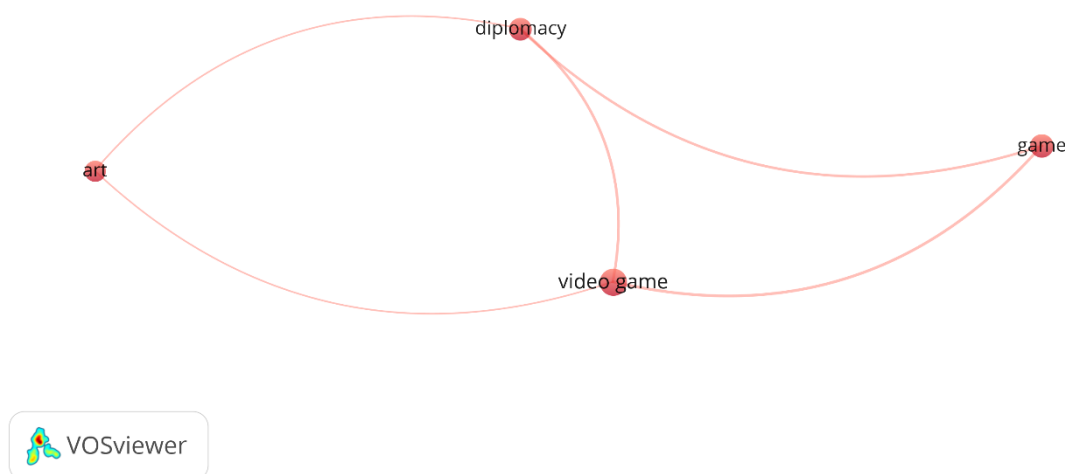


Figure 3. Keyword Network

The keyword co-occurrence map makes the field's center of gravity plain. Terms such as “diplomacy,” “game,” and “video game” form a tightly linked core, indicating that current work treats digital games as active platforms for cultural exchange and soft-power projection. The closeness of “game” and “video game” points to a discourse that is squarely about digital play rather than games in the abstract.

By contrast, “art” sits at the periphery with weaker ties to the core terms. That placement suggests the literature has prioritized the applied, strategic uses of games in diplomatic settings over their aesthetic dimensions. In short: it is the interactive and immersive affordances—not artistry per se—that appear to drive scholarly attention. This shift tracks a broader move from classical “art diplomacy” to participatory digital media.

Taken together, the network's structure—anchored by “video game” and “diplomacy”—signals growing recognition of games as tools for global engagement. Strong links between these nodes align with work on cultural exchange, identity-building, and cross-border dialogue, and they point to likely expansion as the field matures. A small caution is warranted: centrality and proximity are sensitive to query design and term normalization. Even so, this map offers a clear snapshot of where the conversation is concentrated—and where future studies can push, especially on the underexplored aesthetic and design pathways that might also carry diplomatic value.

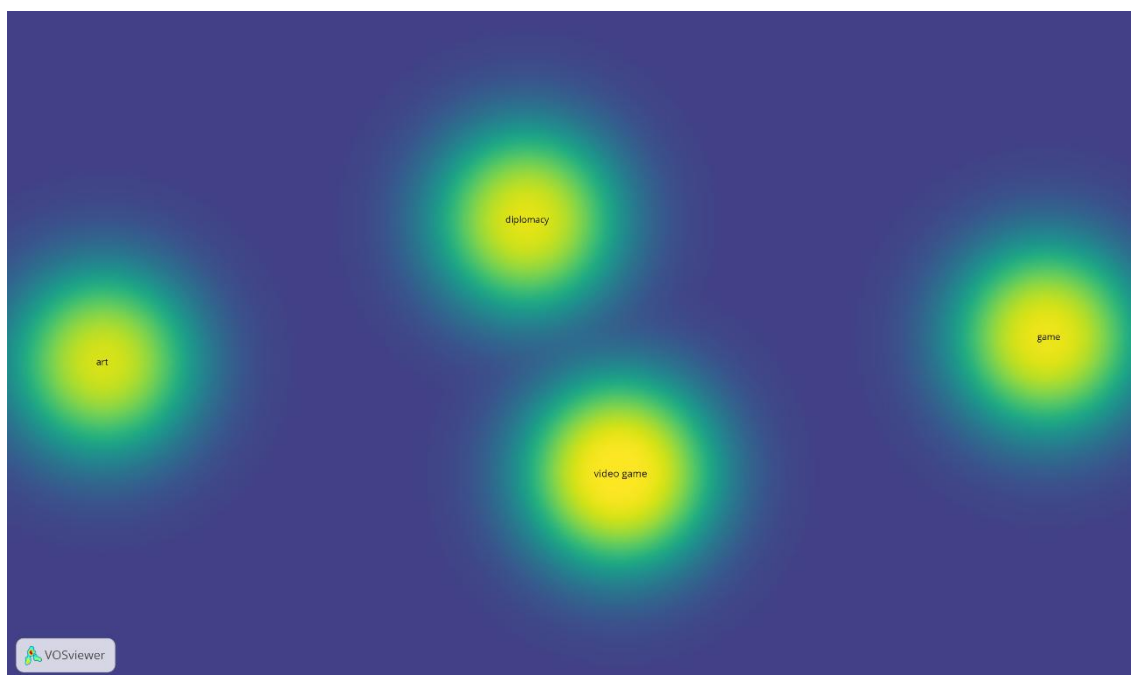


Figure 4. Density Keyword

The keyword–density map makes the field’s center hard to miss. “Diplomacy,” “video game,” and “game” occupy the brightest green–yellow zones, marking them as the most frequently co-occurring and tightly linked terms. Their clustering shows that current scholarship is organized around the intersection of games and diplomacy, with digital play treated as a vehicle for cultural exchange and international engagement.

By contrast, “art” sits in a lower-density area with weaker ties to the core. That placement suggests the literature has emphasized the interactive and communicative functions of games over their aesthetic qualities. Art still matters—as design and representation—but in this conversation it appears as a supporting element rather than the driver.

Taken together, the pattern positions “video game” as a bridge between “game” and “diplomacy,” reflecting a field increasingly focused on how games shape public perceptions, project national narratives, and facilitate cross-border ties. As the corpus grows, this convergence is likely to deepen, underscoring digital games as routine instruments of cultural diplomacy. A small caveat applies: density and centrality are sensitive to query scope and keyword harmonization, but the overall structure points to clear thematic priorities and room for adjacent lines of inquiry..

Discussion

The rising prominence of video games as instruments of cultural diplomacy warrants a theoretically anchored discussion that integrates soft power, nation branding, and public diplomacy with the empirical realities of global game flows and reception. Grounding this discussion in Nye’s soft-power logic, the literature indicates that video games function as attractive cultural products capable of shaping audiences’ preferences, values, and narratives without recourse to coercion. Moreno Cantano (2024) treats digital games as geopolitical instruments folded into nationalist agendas, where culturally resonant content and branding operationalize soft power. Šisler (2018) extends this view by tracing the transnational circuits of production, distribution, and reception that let games circulate cultural symbols broadly, generating shared—and sometimes contested—meanings across borders (Moreno Cantano, 2024; Šisler, 2018). Taken together, these accounts offer a sturdy frame for analyzing how the games project national narratives and creative-industrial capacity to global publics, thereby contributing to soft-power accumulation.

In addition to their cultural and diplomatic value, video games also offer significant potential in fostering public diplomacy. The interactive nature of video games—especially those with rich narratives, world-building, and multiplayer dimensions—produces experiential engagement, which research suggests can deepen cultural understanding and alter attitudes more effectively than passive media. Moreno Cantano (2024) frames digital games as instruments embedded in nationalist projects and political narratives circulating online, implying that public-diplomacy practitioners must anticipate reception dynamics and actively shape in-game messaging. Extending this, Törhönen et al. (2020) show how ancillary content—streams, Let's Plays, reviews—expands the ecosystem that forms perceptions, suggesting that effective public diplomacy should integrate multiple platforms and formats to sustain exposure and reflection. An ethics-oriented perspective sharpens these operational points: Bartel (2023) argues that persuasive aims must be balanced with responsible representation to avoid manipulation or misrepresentation that would erode credibility among foreign publics. Taken together, these insights support treating game-based public diplomacy as a situated practice grounded in ethical design, transparent objectives, and alignment with broader cultural and educational initiatives.

The strategic use of video games for nation branding carries clear diplomatic implications. Japan's Cool Japan initiative integrates games, anime, and related media to project a coherent image of creativity and technological prowess, with measurable spillovers into tourism and global cultural interest (Bahurekso et al., 2025). The *Witcher* franchise shows how a country's mythic heritage, coupled with contemporary creative industries, can yield a globally recognizable cultural export that stimulates demand for associated experiences—gameplay, travel, translations—while signaling cultural vitality. *Black Myth: Wukong* similarly leverages culturally resonant mythology to engage international audiences, aligning with China's Belt and Road-era goal of broadening soft-power assets through digital media exports. Taken together, these cases locate game-based diplomacy at the intersection of narrative craft, industry policy, and audience engagement. They demonstrate how interactive cultural products can deliver tangible branding and economic returns while also carrying geopolitical signals (Bahurekso et al., 2025; Sisler, 2018).

The bibliometric results point to game-based diplomacy as an increasingly salient force in today's cultural landscape. Co-authorship and keyword network maps show dense activity at the gaming-diplomacy nexus, with central nodes—including Harold L. Vogel and Joni Maya Cherbo—signaling sustained collaboration and agenda-setting influence in the literature. The collaboration patterns cut across political science, international relations, cultural studies, media/communication, and technology, underscoring the field's interdisciplinary character. This blurring of disciplinary lines mirrors broader shifts in academia and opens new angles on how interactive media mediate cultural exchange and diplomatic practice. A small caveat applies—centrality and density are sensitive to corpus design and term normalization—but the overall structure is clear: scholarly engagement is robust and expanding.

The findings point to a clear blind spot: the researcher still know too little about how video games actually shape public diplomacy. Anecdotes abound, but the field lacks comparative, cross-national studies with clear outcome measures. Our keyword network confirms a tight coupling between “video game” and “diplomacy,” yet work that ties games to soft-power gains, peacebuilding, or the mediation of cultural difference remains nascent. Closing this gap will require theory-led, multi-country designs that specify mechanisms—narrative framing, player identification, platform networks—and trace them to diplomatic outcomes. That shift would move the conversation from promise to proof and clarify the power dynamics that structure digital cultural exchange.

In the context of game-based diplomacy, art matters but it is not the center of gravity. In our keyword-density map, “art” sits at the periphery with weaker ties to “video game” and “diplomacy.” This pattern suggests that while aesthetic and narrative design shape how games look and feel, their diplomatic relevance stems more from interactive, immersive, and communicative affordances. Games operate not only as vessels for artistic expression but as participatory platforms that enable cross-cultural contact, perspective-taking, and sustained engagement. Because players co-create meaning through action and choice, games can support deeper, more personal encounters with foreign cultures than most static art forms.

An important set of considerations concerns production and industry dynamics, which condition the reach and credibility of game exports as diplomatic tools. Production studies highlight how labor conditions, monetization strategies, publishing arrangements, and platform ecosystems shape what content is available to international audiences and how it is perceived (Sotamaa et al., 2021). Consequently, the diplomatic efficacy of game-based branding depends not only on the content but also on the governance of its creation and distribution, including issues of intellectual property, cross-border collaboration, and access for diverse players (Jukić, 2024; Литвиненко & Tverdokhlib, 2024). Incorporating production studies into the discussion yields a more complete account of why some national-diplomacy game strategies succeed while others underperform; it also illuminates policy levers—such as public support for co-production, fair labor practices, and accessible distribution—that can amplify diplomatic returns (Jukić, 2024; Sotamaa et al., 2021; Литвиненко & Tverdokhlib, 2024).

Furthermore, the interdisciplinary nature of game-based cultural diplomacy is reflected in the diverse range of authors contributing to the field (Eklund et al., 2024). Scholars from various academic backgrounds, including political science, communication studies, cultural studies, and media studies, have been exploring the potential of video games as diplomatic tools (da Silva et al., 2024). This diversity of thought fosters a rich and multifaceted understanding of the complex relationship between video games and international relations (Eklund et al., 2024). The findings suggest that the field is rapidly evolving, with more researchers acknowledging the value of video games as instruments of national branding and cultural diplomacy. However, the interdisciplinary approach also presents challenges in terms of establishing a unified theoretical framework for understanding the full scope of video games' impact on diplomacy (Jayemane, 2017).

The concept of nation branding, an essential aspect of modern diplomatic practice, is also closely tied to the use of video games. Nation branding refers to the strategic efforts made by countries to shape their image and reputation on the global stage. Video games provide a unique opportunity for nations to showcase their culture, values, and history through interactive and engaging content. As seen with Japan's "Cool Japan" initiative, video games can effectively promote a country's soft power by allowing international audiences to experience its cultural narratives in an immersive way. The success of video games like *The Witcher* series also demonstrates the potential for countries to use digital media not only for cultural promotion but also for economic growth through the global popularity of their cultural exports. The findings emphasize the need for a more detailed understanding of how game-based diplomacy contributes to nation branding, offering a potential avenue for future research.

Another key aspect of game-based diplomacy is its capacity to facilitate intercultural communication and bridge gaps between countries with differing cultural values (Bjola et al., 2019). By providing shared virtual spaces, video games offer environments in which players from diverse cultural backgrounds can interact, collaborate, and learn from one another (Bjola et al., 2019; Kokko et al., 2018). Multiplayer platforms such as *World of Warcraft* and *Fortnite* illustrate how participants from various nations can cooperate toward common goals, thereby fostering intercultural exchange and teamwork that can complement traditional diplomatic channels. This collaboration in a virtual space encourages participants to understand diverse perspectives and engage in dialogue that may be difficult to achieve through conventional diplomacy, signaling a shift toward more dialogic, audience-inclusive forms of public diplomacy (Bjola et al., 2019). Consequently, video games have the potential to cultivate a sense of global community, promoting peace and mutual respect across geographical and political divides (Donald et al., 2023). By enabling these cross-cultural interactions, game-based diplomacy can function as a conflict-resolution forum that brings people together despite geopolitical barriers. While researchers are increasingly documenting these dynamics, future work should investigate how such virtual interactions contribute to the development of empathy and intercultural understanding—key elements for durable diplomatic relations—through systematic, cross-national studies and robust measurement frameworks (Bazlutckaia et al., 2024; Holmes, 2019).

In addition to their role in intercultural communication, video games can also serve as powerful soft power tools by shaping global narratives and influencing public perception. Countries use games as vehicles to promote positive images of their culture, values, and lifestyle, positioning themselves as attractive global players in the world stage. For example, Japan has successfully used

games as part of its soft power strategy through the "Cool Japan" initiative, leveraging games like Final Fantasy and Pokémon to introduce global audiences to Japanese culture and creativity. Similarly, Poland utilized The Witcher series to portray its rich history and folklore while simultaneously promoting its gaming industry. These games not only tell engaging stories but also highlight a nation's heritage, leading to increased international curiosity and respect. According to Nye, (2008), soft power is a form of influence that relies on attraction and persuasion rather than coercion, and video games fit perfectly within this framework by fostering positive global perceptions. These games not only serve as a form of entertainment but also as tools of cultural diplomacy that can reshape global narratives. As the popularity of game-based cultural diplomacy grows, it becomes essential to examine how effectively these digital narratives influence perceptions and contribute to shaping the diplomatic strategies of nations.

In addition to fostering cultural understanding, game-based diplomacy can also serve as a tool for education and public diplomacy. Video games that incorporate historical or cultural elements offer players an interactive pathway to engage with and learn about foreign cultures, supporting experiential learning that complements traditional didactic approaches (Muhamad & Yang, 2019). Such games function as educational platforms by embedding cultural artifacts, narratives, and perspectives into playable formats, thereby shaping learners' cultural literacy and intercultural awareness through active participation rather than passive consumption (Ćosović & Ramić-Brkić, 2019). Moreover, public diplomacy benefits from the interactivity and reach of digital games, as these platforms can extend educational messaging beyond the classroom into broader publics, aligning with contemporary public-diplomacy practices that leverage digital technologies to construct credible cultural narratives. The literature on intercultural education suggests that interactive experiences can enhance intercultural competence by providing structured opportunities for cross-cultural engagement and reflection, particularly when combined with guided interpretation and reflective activities (Ćosović & Ramić-Brkić, 2019). Future research should systematically examine how game-based educational interventions influence global perceptions, intercultural dialogue, and long-term diplomatic attitudes, leveraging cross-national designs and robust outcome measures to trace causal pathways from gameplay to public diplomacy outcomes.

Another notable trend identified in the bibliometric analysis is the growing involvement of China in game-based cultural diplomacy. As mentioned in the abstract, China's recent release of Black Myth: Wukong marks its entry into the game-based diplomacy space, signaling a shift in how global powers are using digital media to influence international relations. This development is in line with China's broader strategy to promote its cultural values and increase its global influence through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). By leveraging video games as a tool for soft power, China is positioning itself as a key player in the evolving landscape of game-based cultural diplomacy. The rise of Chinese digital media exports underscores the increasing importance of video games as part of global diplomatic strategies, especially in terms of nation branding and international engagement.

The increasing prominence of video games in cultural diplomacy is not without challenges. One significant challenge is the need to balance national identity with global appeal. While video games offer an opportunity for countries to promote their culture, there is always the risk of oversimplification or misrepresentation of cultural narratives. For example, the portrayal of a nation's history, customs, or values in a game might not always align with the realities of that culture, leading to potential misunderstandings or misinterpretations. The findings suggest that more research is needed to address these concerns and explore the ethical implications of using video games as tools for cultural diplomacy. Future studies could examine how to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of cultural representations in games to prevent cultural appropriation or distortion.

Finally, the potential of game-based cultural diplomacy to influence global politics is a topic that warrants further exploration. The ability of video games to reach a wide audience and shape public opinion makes them a powerful tool for soft power projection, as evidenced by the success of games like The Witcher in shaping global perceptions of Polish culture. However, the full extent of video games' impact on international politics remains underexplored. The findings indicate that video games have the potential to influence global discussions on issues such as cultural identity, nationalism, and international relations. As the field continues to develop, future research will be

essential in understanding the long-term political implications of game-based cultural diplomacy and how it can be leveraged to foster international cooperation and peace.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the growing role of video games in game-based cultural diplomacy, demonstrating how this medium is increasingly utilized by countries to enhance their soft power, promote cultural exchange, and foster international relations. The findings reveal a significant shift in how nations leverage digital gaming, transitioning from mere entertainment to strategic diplomatic tools. By focusing on key examples like Japan's "Cool Japan" initiative, Poland's *The Witcher* series, and China's recent entry with *Black Myth: Wukong*, this research underscores the dynamic potential of video games in shaping global perceptions and enhancing cultural diplomacy. Video games, with their immersive and interactive nature, serve as an effective platform for transmitting national narratives to a global audience, effectively creating spaces for cross-cultural dialogue and mutual understanding. As digital technology continues to shape global communications, this study highlights the importance of further exploring how video games influence international relations and soft power.

The research also emphasizes the interdisciplinary nature of game-based diplomacy, where scholars from diverse fields such as political science, media studies, and cultural studies contribute to understanding the intricate dynamics between games and diplomacy. Through bibliometric analysis, the study identifies key contributors and evolving research trends, shedding light on the growing academic interest in this area. However, gaps remain in systematically assessing the effectiveness of video games as diplomatic tools, particularly in terms of shaping public opinion and influencing foreign policies. While anecdotal examples are numerous, the need for more structured and comprehensive studies is evident. Future research could expand on the educational value of games, exploring how their narratives contribute to global understanding and cross-cultural interaction.

Moreover, this study opens new avenues for future exploration, especially in addressing the ethical implications of game-based cultural diplomacy. The risk of oversimplification or misrepresentation of cultural values in games is a concern that needs to be examined more closely. Ensuring that digital games accurately represent diverse cultures will be crucial to preventing cultural appropriation or distortion. Additionally, further research should explore the role of video games in global politics and their potential to influence diplomatic strategies in the long term. As video games continue to evolve, they will likely become an even more integral tool in shaping international relations, and scholars should continue to investigate how they can be used effectively for peacebuilding, education, and global cooperation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Brawijaya (FISIP UB), for providing funding and support that made this research possible.

FUNDING STATEMENT

This research was funded by the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Brawijaya (FISIP UB).

REFERENCES

- Bahurekso, P. R., Ningrum, S., & Munajat, D. E. (2025). Video Games as Foreign Policy Tools: A Comparative Between Japan and Poland. *JLPH*. <https://doi.org/10.38035/jlph.v5i4.1540>
- Bazlutckaia, M., Sytnik, A., & Tsvetkova, N. (2024). Evaluating Audience Engagement as a Measure of Digital Diplomacy Effectiveness. *Mgimo Review of International Relations*. <https://doi.org/10.24833/2071-8160-2024-4-97-48-82>
- Bjola, C., Cassidy, J., & Manor, I. (2019). Public Diplomacy in the Digital Age. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1871191x-14011032>
- Ćosović, M., & Ramić-Brkić, B. (2019). Game-Based Learning in Museums—Cultural Heritage Applications. *Information*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/info11010022>

- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method Approaches*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208956>
- da Silva, I. C., Lyra, L. K., & Paludo, I. G. (2024). *Simulations and Games in Teaching International Relations and Strategic Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.5753/sbgames.2024.241334>
- Dervis, H. (2019). Bibliometric analysis using bibliometrix an R package. *Journal of Scientometric Research*, 8(3), 156–160. <https://doi.org/10.5530/JSCIRES.8.3.32>
- Donald, I., Webber, N., & Wright, E. (2023). Video Games, Historical Representation and Soft Power. *Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds*. https://doi.org/10.1386/jgvw_00075_1
- Eklund, L., Sjöblom, B., & Back, J. (2024). On Interdisciplinary Embraces in Game Studies. *Transactions of the Digital Games Research Association*. <https://doi.org/10.26503/todigra.v6i3.2172>
- Fraenkel, J. . R., Wallen, N. E., & Hyun, H. M. (2022). *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education* (11th ed.). McGraw-Hill Inc.
- Holmes, M. (2019). *Digital Diplomacy*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199743292-0258>
- Jayemane, D. (2017). Game Studies' Material Turn. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*. <https://doi.org/10.16997/wpcc.145>
- Jeong, J. , Chiu, W. , & Won, D. (2024). Mapping the research trends of digital game-based language learning (DGBLL): a scientometrics review. *Sport in Society*, 1–22.
- Jukić, D. (2024). *Video Game Industry: A Marketing Perspective*. https://doi.org/10.46541/978-86-7233-428-9_391
- Kokko, J., Vartiainen, T., & Tuunanen, T. (2018). *Value Co-Creation and Co-Destruction in Online Video Games: An Exploratory Study and Implications for Future Research*. <https://doi.org/10.24251/hicss.2018.144>
- Moreno Cantano, A. C. (2024). *International Geopolitics and Digital Games in the Nationalist Agenda of Great Powers*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780192859198.013.33>
- Muhamad, J. W., & Yang, F. (2019). Cross-Cultural Learning in Gameplay: BAFÁ BAFÁ, Persuasive Technology, and the Exploration of Intercultural Sensitivity. *Simulation & Gaming*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1046878119879742>
- Nye, J. S. (2008). Public diplomacy and soft power. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616(1), 94–109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207311699>
- Nye, J. S. (2009). Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power. *Council of Foreign Relations*, 201(5130), 36–37.
- Rodriguez Espinola, A. (2021). *Video Games as Tools for Non-State Cultural Diplomacy: A Case Study of the Video Game Never Alone*.
- Šisler, V. (2018). *Virtual Worlds, Digital Dreams*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190859329.003.0003>
- Sotamaa, O., Švelch, J. Š., Nieborg, D. B., Zabban, V., Consalvo, M., Wirman, H., Browne, P., Schram, B. R., Švelch, J., Phelps, A., Banks, J., Keogh, B., Minassian, H. Ter, Roessel, L. van, Ozimek, A., Kerr, A., Chia, A., Nakamura, A., Young, C. J., & Perks, M. E. (2021). *Game Production Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.5117/9789463725439>
- Urueva, M. (2023). Gaming Goes IR: Reviewing Videogames in Diplomacy. In *Uchaev, Yevgeny* (1st ed.). Palgrave Macmillan Singapore.
- Литвиненко, Є. В., & Tverdokhlib, Y. V. (2024). Problems of Copyright Protection for Gaming Content. *Analytical and Comparative Jurisprudence*. <https://doi.org/10.24144/2788-6018.2024.05.29>