

Interactive comment on “Taking a Breath of the Wild: Are geoscientists more effective than non-geoscientists in determining whether game-world landscapes are realistic?” by Rolf Hut et al.

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This is a very interesting paper on whether game environments provoke a type of ‘uncanny valley’ effect in their depiction of different types of landscapes and whether trained geoscientists are more effective at discerning this compared to the general public. Given that game environments are being more and more widely used to communicate geoscience, this is very relevant.

I have one main comment on the analysis method used and its interpretation. The

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numerical scale participants were asked to use essentially measures two potentially independent things: whether participants identify if the picture was real (6-10) or fake (1-5), and how confident they are in that choice (the absolute distance of their score from 5.5). The penalty score used in the paper therefore is measuring a combination of both these effects. While this is appropriate for the question the authors raise of “do people without a background in the geosciences rate landscapes from game worlds as more realistic compared to those with a background in the geosciences?”, it is important to understand the underlying factors between the two sets of penalty scores. I would suggest the authors therefore also compare whether there are statistically significant differences in both the success rate and the confidence of geoscientists compared to non-geoscientists and whether these are independent or not. This would then determine if geoscientists are more effective or just more confident (or some combined effect) in their judgements.

In addition, it would be helpful if the authors made a short comment about the likely types of non-geoscientists they were reaching by choosing to share through their own social media channels. Recent research has highlighted the critical number of Twitter followers to start reaching outside of the scientific community [Cote and Darling, 2018, Facets, <https://doi.org/10.1139/facets-2018-0002>]. Beyond the findings of that study, given that the authors are geoscientists, is it not likely that the people who follow them at least have an interest in the geosciences and therefore may be performing better than a truly representative random sample of the population? If the authors have any evidence of influencers unaffiliated with geoscience who shared the survey, this would also be highly relevant to this point.

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