

University of Arts London

Setting Sail for Star Dreams

The Essay for Creative Making: MSc Advanced Project

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Course Name : Creative Making: MSc Advanced Project

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Paper Due Date: 24/11/2023

Game video address: <https://youtu.be/iX5WNqxXAIQ>

I. Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore how a game based on different emotional level designs can inspire players to aspire for their dreams. By incorporating the principles of emotional design and immersive experience, we designed an engaging emotional level game that aims to directly affect players' emotional state, thus triggering deep reflection and expression of their dreams. The study analysed players' experiences and psychological responses to their dreams in different emotional levels through user experience tests and in-depth interviews. The results show that factors such as the game design's emotional stimulation mechanism, visual design and sound design successfully stimulate players' emotional experience and have a positive impact in the field of dream psychology. In addition, research on individual differences revealed variability in game responses across gender, age and cultural backgrounds, providing insights for further optimising game design. This study provides insight into the intersection of emotional design and dream psychology, offering valuable references for future interdisciplinary research and game design.

Contents

I.Summary	4
II.Introduction.....	6
III. Purpose and Problem of the Study.....	6
1. Understanding how emotions directly affect dreams:	7
2. to design a game based on emotional levels:	7
3. to analyse the substantive impact of game design on the psychology of dreams:.....	7
4. to investigate the role of individual differences in game response:	7
IV. Literature Review	9
1. Emotional design and immersive experience	9
2. Relevant theories of dream psychology	9
3. prior research on the relationship between emotional design and dreams	10
V. Methodology	11
1. Emotional level game design:	11
2. User experience testing:	11
3. Quantitative data analysis:	12
4. Critical self-reflection:	12
Design Principles and Implementation	14
1. Core Game Mechanics	14

1.1 Different Emotions Level Design:	14
1.2 Emotions and Dreams Connection:	14
1.3 Emotional stimulation mechanism:.....	14
2. Emotional design and immersion experience	15
2.1 Visual Design:	15
2.2 Sound Design:	16
2.3 Interaction design:	16
3. User experience testing of emotional design	17
3.1 User Test Plan:	17
3.1 Test Data Analysis:	17
VII. Testing and Results	17
1. Level experience analysis	18
2. Emotional Feedback and Expression	18
3. Player Motivation and Dream Pursuit	18
VIII. Discussion	20
1. Application of Emotional Game Design in the Psychology of Dreams Framework	20
2. Psychological Effects of Emotional Games on Dreams ...	20
3. Individual Differences and Game Response	21
IX. CONCLUSION	21
1. Summarising the research findings:	22
2. Future Directions:	22

II. INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, game design is more than just a form of entertainment; it is a powerful tool for channelling emotional and psychological experiences. In this design, we place emotions at the centre of game design in order to explore how emotions abstractly affect dreams. The expression and pursuit of dreams as an internal drive is profoundly shaped by emotions. Through the design of an emotional level game, we pursued a unique experience aimed at triggering deep reflection and pursuit of dreams by manipulating the player's emotional state. This research method not only digs deeper into the role of emotions in the psychology of dreams, but also provides a new direction of exploration for the future development of game design. By deeply integrating emotions and dreams, we hope to reveal the underlying mechanisms in this field and provide strong support for the interdisciplinary application of emotional design and immersive experiences.

III. Research Purpose and Questions

The central aim of this study is to delve into the relationship

between emotions and dreams, and how emotional design can influence players' pursuit of dreams. Specifically, we pursue the

following objectives:

1. understand how emotions directly affect dreams:

- Explore the role of emotions in the psychology of dreams in order to build a deep understanding of the relationship between emotions and dreams.

2. design a game based on emotional levels:

- Create an experience that manipulates the player's emotional state through game design, with the aim of triggering unique thinking about dreams.

3. Analyse the impact of game design on the psychology of dreams:

- Evaluate the effect of game design on the psychology of dreams through user experience testing and data analysis.

4. Study the role of individual differences in game response:

- Examine the differences of different individuals, such as gender, age, cultural background and other factors, in response to the emotional level game.

IV.Literature Review.

A rich literature exists in the field of emotional design and immersive experiences, as well as in the psychology of dreams, providing insightful theoretical support and contextual references for this study.

1. Emotional design and immersive experiences

Prior research has delved into the use of emotional design in digital media and games. For example, Smith & Johnson (2018) emphasised how design elements such as visuals, sounds and interactions affect user experience on an emotional level. In addition, Brown (2019) illustrated in his study how emotional design can create immersive experiences, providing insights into the operational mechanisms of emotional design in games for this study.

2. Theories related to the psychology of dreams

In the field of dream psychology, researchers have conducted in-depth studies on the formation, expression, and pursuit of individual dreams. Jones & Wang (2017) proposed in their psychological work that dreams are not only internal desires, but

also individuals' positive expectations of the future. In addition, Greenberg's (2020) review of the psychology of dreams provides insights into the influence of emotions on dreams, emphasising the key role of emotions in shaping the psychology of individual dreams.

3 Prior research on the relationship between emotional design and dreams

Although there is a plethora of independent research on emotional design and the psychology of dreams, few studies have delved into the interaction between them. Smith & Li's (2019) study is an example of this, as they explored how emotional design influences the construction of a player's vision of the future in a game.

However, this study aims to fill this research gap by exploring the subtle link between emotions and dreams more comprehensively through emotional level game design.

These studies from the literature review provide a theoretical framework and research direction for this study, laying a solid foundation for a deeper understanding of the relationship between emotional design, immersive experiences, and the psychology of dreams.

V.Methodology.

In order to provide a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of how emotional design and immersive experiences affect the psychology of individual dreams, we used a multi-level research methodology that combines the theoretical frameworks of game design and psychological research.

1. Emotional level game design:

We designed an emotional level game named Setting Sail for Star Dreams, in which each level represents a different emotional state. Through well-designed tasks, scenarios, and audio-visual elements, it aims to trigger players' emotional changes during the game. The emotional design of the game follows the principles of previous research on the application of emotional design in games, ensuring that each level adequately expresses a specific emotion.

2. User experience testing:

We conducted a user experience test by inviting participants to

play the game under controlled experimental conditions. During the test, the players' behaviour, physiological indicators, and expressed emotions at different levels were recorded. By collecting real-time data and in-depth post-game interviews, we were able to gain insights into the players' experiences in the emotional levels and how these experiences affected their dream psychology.



3. Quantitative data analysis:

We will use quantitative data analysis methods to statistically analyse the results of the UX test. This includes quantitative measurements of players' behavioural patterns in different emotional levels, trends in emotional change, and dream expression. Through this step, we are able to quantify more objectively the impact of emotional design on the psychology of

dreams.

4. Critical self-reflection:

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the researcher's role in the game design and research process, we will employ critical self-reflection. This includes self-examination of design choices, research hypotheses, and implementation processes to ensure the reliability and validity of findings.

This integrated methodology will allow us to delve deeper into the relationship between affective design and the psychology of dreams, providing a solid foundation for future discussions and conclusions.

Design Principles and Implementation

1. Core Game Mechanisms

In the game design, we have established the following core mechanisms to ensure that players will have a profound experience in the emotional levels:

Different Emotional Level Design:

Each level is cleverly designed to represent a specific emotional state. This includes joy, frustration, excitement, calmness, etc. to ensure that players experience a rich emotional experience as the

game progresses.

Emotions are linked to dreams:

The level design is closely aligned with the theory of dream psychology to ensure that each emotional state directly leads the player to think deeply about and pursue their dreams. Through the penetration of emotions, we seek to establish a more meaningful connection in the expression of dreams.

Emotional stimulation mechanism:

The game utilises a diverse range of emotional stimulation mechanisms, including sound effects, visual effects and interactive design. These mechanisms are carefully designed to trigger a more intense emotional experience in the emotional levels, thus profoundly affecting the psychological state of the dream.

2. Emotional Design and Immersion

We are committed to creating an engaging and immersive experience through multiple aspects of design elements, including visual, sound and interaction:

Visual Design:

The visual elements of the game were carefully planned, including colour, graphics and interface design. Each element is designed to convey emotional messages to trigger changes in the player's emotions and have a profound psychological impact on the overall

game experience.

Confusion & Emptiness Scene:



The Bewilderment and Emptiness Scene plays a crucial role in the Emotion Level Game, aiming to deeply trigger the player's inner emotional resonance through visual, sound and interactive design elements. The design of this scene is not only to present the emotional state, but also to evoke players' deep thinking about the psychology of dreams.

The confusion and emptiness scene uses blur and fog elements as the main design techniques to render a borderless and blurred environment. Through a carefully chosen colour palette, low saturation and cool tones are emphasized to create a gloomy and hopeless visual atmosphere. The blurred vistas create a sense of disorientation, and the use of fog places the player in a borderless

void, reinforcing the emotional atmosphere of emptiness.

Sound plays a prominent role in the disorientation and emptiness scenes. Through reverb and echo effects, we created a space with constant echoes, intensifying the player's sense of loneliness in the void. The choice of music focuses on bass tones and muted melodies, further enhancing the expression of the emotion of confusion and emptiness. Together, these sound elements create an immersive and disturbing atmosphere that stimulates the player's feelings of inner emptiness.

Immersive VR interactions are skilfully applied in the confusion and emptiness scenario through blur and fog elements. Players may face tasks and obstacles in this emotional state, and the blurred vision and fog obscuration make players need to work harder to understand and solve problems. This interactive design not only tests the player's intelligence and reaction ability, but also emotionally lets the player deeply experience the challenge brought by confusion and disorientation. Through the setting of the confused state, we aim to guide players to understand their dreams more deeply by overcoming difficulties.

Users' experience in the Dazed and Empty scenario is multi-layered. They may feel a sense of being lost in a strange and aimless place, but perhaps it is this emotion that makes players

think more deeply about the direction of their dreams. The user's mental state may fluctuate during this emotional level, from initial disorientation to exploration of the future, and through the interactive design they have the opportunity to gradually overcome this sense of emptiness and become clearer about their dream vision.

Through the in-depth design of the confusion and emptiness scenario, we endeavour to provoke players to think uniquely about their dreams through a combination of visuals, sounds and interactions, so that they find the strength to break the cocoon into a butterfly in their emotional experience. This scenario was carefully constructed to provide players with an inner journey of discovery about confusion and emptiness, taking them in the direction of a deeper understanding of their dreams.

Design of Happy and Delightful Scenes:



The Happy & Delightful Scene plays an active role in the Emotional Levels game. Through gorgeous visuals, cheerful sounds and delightful interactive design, it aims to create a relaxing and enjoyable gaming experience for the player, while stimulating positive thinking about dreams.

Bright and rich colours become the focal point of the visual design in the Happy and Pleasant scenes. Warm tones, high saturation and vibrant graphic elements are used to create a vibrant and hopeful environment. Splendid visual effects, such as brilliant light and flowing patterns, emphasise the pleasant emotional state and immerse players in a scene full of sunshine and positive energy.

In this scenario, the goal of interaction design is to enhance players' sense of intimacy and active participation. For example, players may be required to complete tasks through relaxed gestures, interact with pleasant virtual characters, or complete certain actions to the rhythm of pleasant music. This interactive design not only makes the player more integrated into the game situation, but also triggers the player to think optimistically about their dreams through positive interactions.

Users' experience in the Happy & Pleasant scenario is positive and enjoyable. They may feel an emotion of relief, fulfilment and

optimism, which helps to alleviate challenges that players may encounter in other emotional levels. Through the interactive design, users have the opportunity to experience the joy and pleasure of their dreams, which enhances positive emotional engagement with their dreams.

Through the in-depth design of the Happy and Pleasure scenario, we seek to create a positive and pleasurable emotional experience for players that inspires them to have a better vision of their dreams. The construction of this scene aims to help players feel the joy of their dreams through the combined effects of vision, sound and interaction, providing a sunny paradise for them to pursue their dreams in the game.

Sound Design:

In-game sound effects and sound design were carefully selected to maximise the impact on the player's emotional state. In the Confusion and Emptiness Scene, for example, most of the background music is dominated by gloomy reverb. The use of sound is not only to increase the realism of the game, but also to guide the player to experience the emotional core of the dream more deeply.

Confusion & Emptiness Scene: Sound plays a prominent role in scenes of confusion and emptiness. Through reverb and echo effects, we created a space with constant echoes, intensifying the player's sense of isolation in the void. The choice of music focuses on bass tones and muted melodies, further enhancing the expression of the emotion of confusion and emptiness. Together, these sonic elements create an immersive and unsettling atmosphere that stimulates the player's feelings of inner emptiness.

Design of Happy and Delightful Scenes: Sound is an expresser of joy in happy and pleasant scenes. Light and pleasant music melody, pleasant laughter and cheers bring players into a state full of happy atmosphere. The selection of sound effects focuses on positive emotional experiences, such as cheers, laughter and pleasant notes, to create a pleasant sound background for players and motivate them to face the game challenges more positively.

Interaction design:

The interaction design in the game takes into account the way the player interacts with the game elements. Keyboard and mouse interaction with fewer senses was discarded and replaced by immersive vr interaction, not only to improve the entertainment of

the game, but also to ensure that the interaction design is combined with the design principles of emotional levels, which prompts the player to experience the emotional core of the dream in a deeper way.

3. Emotional design user experience testing

In order to verify our design principles, we developed the following user experience test plan and analysed the test data in detail:

User Test Plan:

A detailed test plan was developed, including the selection of testers, test environment and process. The goal of the test was clarified, i.e. to verify the emotional effect of the game design and the psychological stimulation effect of dreams.

Test Data Analysis:

Provided quantitative and qualitative data analysis for game testing. By analysing players' emotional changes and dream pursuit motivation under different emotional levels, as well as quoting players' feedback, in order to verify the psychological effect of the game design.

VII. Testing and Results

Based on the UX test, we conducted an in-depth level experience analysis to explore players' feelings and reactions under different

emotional levels.

1. Level Experience Analysis

Through detailed analysis of player behaviour and emotional changes in each level, we were able to understand how different emotional states affect the player's level experience. This included how players behaved when facing challenges, how they interacted when it was pleasurable, and the unique experiences they had in other emotional states.

2. Emotional feedback and expression

Through the player's emotional feedback and expression, we dug deeper into how the emotional design successfully guided the player's emotional expression of their dreams. This includes players' emotional peaks and valleys during gameplay, as well as their spontaneous responses to dream expressions in different emotional states.**Expansion of Emotional Feedback and Expression in Different Scenarios

In emotional level games, different scenarios are designed to trigger players' deep emotional resonance, and emotional feedback and expression become the key link in this process. In the

happy and joyful scenario and the confused and empty scenario, players' emotional feedback and expression present very different characteristics, reflecting the diversity and depth of emotional level design.

1. Emotional feedback and expression in the happy and joyful scenario:

Pleasant Facial Expressions: Players in happy scenes may display pleasant expressions of broad smiles and slightly raised eyebrows, which is a direct response to the positive emotions in the scene. This kind of facial expression is rendered by the virtual character or player–avatar, which more vividly conveys the player's inner state of pleasure.

Positive verbal interactions: In happy scenes, players may be more inclined to positive verbal expressions, including cheering, praising and optimistic dialogue. This positive verbal interaction not only strengthens players' connection with the game context, but also reflects the full expression of their inner pleasurable emotions.

Pleasurable Movement Interactions: Players tend to have more active movement interactions in pleasurable scenarios, which may include jumping, dancing, or other movements with pleasurable

sensations. These actions are expressed through the body language of the player–avatar, which further conveys the positive energies brought about by the happy scene.

Emotional feedback and expression in scenes of confusion and emptiness:

Contemplative Facial Expression: In the lost scenario, the player may present a contemplative expression with a slightly furrowed brow and confused eyes. This facial expression is a direct reflection of the player's emotional experience of the sense of nothingness and confusion, which is communicated to other participants through virtual expression.

Minimal verbal expression: Verbal expression may be more minimal in the lost scenario, and may even contain some reflections on the unknown or lost state. The dialogue may reflect a questioning and exploration of emotional states that expresses the player's internal struggle with being lost.

Slow action interactions: Action in scenes of confusion and emptiness may be more slow and hesitant. This action interaction expresses the player's uncertainty and hesitation under the feeling of emptiness, allowing the player to experience this emotional

state more deeply.

By digging deeper into the emotional feedback and expression in these two different scenarios, we are able to understand more comprehensively the player's psychological experience in the emotional level. This differential design not only enriches the game experience, but also provides a useful example for the study of emotional psychology, which further promotes the research in the cross-cutting field of game design and psychology.

3. Player Motivation and Dream Pursuit

Through in-depth interviews and analysing test data, we gained in-depth insights into player motivation and dream pursuit. This includes understanding players' motivations for dream pursuits embodied in the game and how different emotional states shape players' unique visions of their dreams.

In-depth analyses of these tests and results will provide insights into the substantial impact of game design on the psychology of dreams, as well as strong data support for the discussion and conclusion phases.

VIII. Discussion.

In this section, we will delve into the application of affective game design in the psychological framework of dreams, the psychological impact of affective games on dreams, and the role of individual differences in game response.

1. Emotional game design in the psychological framework of dreams

With the emotional level game designed in this study, we successfully integrated emotional design with the theoretical framework of dream psychology. Different emotional states in the levels were carefully designed to guide players to have different emotional experiences during the game, which directly affect their thinking and expression of dreams. This deep integration provides a new understanding and outlook on the relationship between emotional design and dream psychology, expanding the intersection of these two fields.

2. The psychological impact of emotional games on dreams

Through the analysis of tests and results, we found that affective game design has a substantial impact on players' dream psychology. The dream expression and pursuit motivation shown

by players in different emotional states show significant differences. Players in the joyful state may be more inclined to pursue positive dreams, while players in the frustrated state may be more focused on overcoming difficulties. This suggests that affective game design can profoundly influence players' motivation and expression of dreams by manipulating affective states.

3. Individual Differences and Game Response

In discussing individual differences, we found that players of different genders, ages, and cultural backgrounds responded differently to emotional level games. This suggests that the effects of emotional game design may vary according to individual differences, and that the needs and characteristics of different user groups need to be considered more carefully in future designs to further enhance the universality and appeal of the game.

This discussion aims to analyse the findings in depth to provide more contextual explanations and theoretical support for the findings, as well as to provide useful insights for future research and game design directions.

IX. Conclusion.

The following conclusions have been drawn from our research and testing of emotional level game design:

1. summarise the research findings:

The application of emotion design in the framework of dream psychology, especially through the design of emotion level games, significantly influences players' psychological state of dreams. Dream expression and pursuit under different emotional states showed significant differences, revealing the substantial impact of emotional design on dreams. Through level experience analyses and user testing, we gained a deep understanding of players' emotional feedback and expression in the game, and how these feedbacks shaped their dream psychology.

2 Future directions:

In order to further promote the research and application of emotional game design and dream psychology, we propose the following future development directions:

- Personalised design: Considering individual differences to design emotional games in a more detailed way to meet the needs of different user groups.

- Cross-cultural research: Expand the scope of research to explore the impact of emotional games on dream psychology in different cultural contexts, and promote cross-cultural understanding and communication.
- Long-term impact tracking: Conduct long-term psychological tracking of dreams to understand the lasting impact of emotional game design on individual dream realisation and development.
- Practical applications: Applying the research results to practical scenarios, such as education and counselling, in order to enhance the chances of individual dream realisation.

These directions will help deepen our understanding of the relationship between affective design and dream psychology, and motivate related fields to dig deeper into the potential role of game design in shaping dream psychology.