

# COMP 210 Research Journal

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This essay will look at a number of factors effecting Virtual Reality (VR), it's development and it's uses.

## 1 Introduction

The intention of this essay is to look at a number of factors effecting Virtual Reality (VR) and it's development. The areas addressed will be VR interfaces and evaluating them. Controls in VR and how they effect the player, human factors in VR such as the players relationship with a virtual avatar and player differences that can effect VR.

## 2 VR Interfaces and Evaluation

Mentzelopoulos *et al* researched hardware interfaces for VR [1]. They said that a VR interface should be spontaneous and allow the player to understand it with no explanation. One important factor that should be considered in a VR system is low latency [1, 2]. Meehan says that latency is and important factor in VR. Meehan describes high latency as an effect that

can hinder or break the player's sense of presence in a virtual environment. Their study showed that in virtual environments designed to cause stress participants with low latencies had larger increases in heart rate and nausea [2]. Another factor is tracking the player's position and monitoring their input [1]. McArthur found that Wiimote accessories effected the player's accuracy and error rate [3]. Mentzelopoulos *et al*'s study involved participants playing with either XBox controllers or Razer motion controllers for input. The study found the game that used motion controllers to be more fun. However this could be due to the game not necessarily the controller itself. Also the study only used 18 participants all of which were computing or computer science which may have led to invalid results. However they stated that the results of the study were unclear and that more research is necessary.

The VR interface can be evaluated using a heuristics analysis [4, 5]. The analysis can be used identify weaknesses in the interface and improve on them. Pinelle *et al* created a series of heuristics specific to game usability. These heuristics can be used to analysis a VR interface. However Pinelle's heuristics were not designed for use in VR games some heuristics may not apply or need to be altered. Sutcliffe presented a method based on Nielson's heuristics to analyse virtual environments [6].

### **3 Player and Avatar Relationship**

Won *et al* conducted a series of experiments on the psychological and physiological effect VR avatars on the player [7]. There are many other studies that look at avatar embodiment and the fact that people can identify with avatars that differ from their own body [8, 9]. The results of Won *et al*'s experiments showed that players could adapt to avatars that worked differently to their own body. Also they suggested that intuitive controls could enable faster

adaptation and greater success. There findings match that of the Protues effect which says that people will subconsciously change their behaviour to match an avatar in a virtual environment [7, 10].

## 4 VR Controls

The Frustration — Aggression model says that aggression is caused by a person being blocked from reaching their goals [11]. This can be applied to games as some factor can prevent the player from obtaining their in game goal. Przybylski *et al*'s work showed that it is not necessarily violence in video games that causes player aggression and frustration. They suggest that it is instead competence impeding controls that cause aggression [12, 13]. These competence impeding controls block that player from performing their desired in game action causing frustration.

Kovarova and Maros researched using smart phones as controllers in VR games [14]. They suggested that the traditional keyboard and mouse input for video games can be restrictive in a VR game as the are not intuitive in a virtual environment. However they appear to have focused more on the hardware of a smart phone that could be useful in a VR controller. They also look at using a smart phone to make controls more intuitive [14]. Another issue is that Kovarova and Maros do not look at issues such as latency between the player input and the VR program receiving it. Meehan says that latency issues can break a player's sense of presence in the game. Therefore any potential latency issues with using the smart phone could effect the player's VR experience [2]. Bauer *et al* conducted a study on using smart phones for display interactions [15]. They found that the small screen size had a negative effect. Users managers to complete the given task even with little prior experience with a smart phone. However using a smart phone to

solve problems in 3D took longer and required more practise. VR is a 3D environment which suggests users may take have some issues with using a smart phone as a controller and may take time to adapt to it.

## **5 Human factors in VR**

Stanney *et al* researched the effects of human factors on VR and its uses [16]. They say for VR could be used in a larger variety of fields such as medicine and engineering but there are human factors that have to be considered to make that viable. Greenleaf also thinks VR should be used in medicine [17]. Early adoption of VR is likely to be in the games industry. However, after that it will have a large variety of uses in medicine such as training, treatment and diagnosis [17]. For VR to reach it's full potential a number of human factors need to be researched. The areas Stanney looked at are; human performance efficiency in virtual environment, health and safety issues and potential social implications of virtual reality technology.

Won *et al* suggested players have a higher success rate when controls are intuitive [7]. Similarly Stanney says virtual environments should minimise how much the player has to learn to use the virtual environment. If they player cannot navigate the virtual environment you cannot maximise players performance reducing it usefulness [16]. Stanney also says that player variation should be taken into account. This can be physiological differences such as interpupillary distance or psychological differences such as different cognitive styles [16]. Barfield found that differences in players can effect their sense of presence [18]. Therefore player differences should be taken into account when designing a virtual environment.

## 6 Conclusion

In conclusion there are a number of factors to consider when designing an using VR. Most of these relate to the player as issues such as latency and unintuitive controls can effect the players presence in the virtual environments which will effect the VR experience. Heuristics analysis such as Pinelle *et al*'s and Sutcliffe's can be used to find many issues and improve the experience for the player.

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