

Creation of a Framework for the Development of Quality Online Communities in Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games Using Self-Determination Theory

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Introduction

- Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPG's) contemporary design philosophy has shifted further toward the goal of sustained player subscription in favour of microtransaction sales (Clement, 2021) at the cost of meaningful community interaction.
- This paper implements the study of Self-Determination Theory, or SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985), and the PENS model (Ryan & Rigby, 2007) to analyse and evaluate contemporary MMORPG design principles and adapt them to create quality online community interactions.
- A survey was provided to 27 players of the MMORPG genre market leader, *World of Warcraft* (Blizzard Entertainment, 2007) in order to gather information regarding match-making content in games of the genre, the popular use of external add-ons and tools within the game, and their opinion regarding daily or weekly repeatable content.

Theory and Methodology

Self-Determination Theory, pioneered by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (1985) is the study of motivation from an 'organismic' perspective, suggesting that motivation stems from three basic psychological needs.

- Autonomy is satisfaction through self-governance
- Competence is satisfaction through mastery
- Relatedness is satisfaction through relationships interaction

SDT additionally concerns the two forms in which motivation can take:

- Intrinsic motivation, regarding tasks that are completed for their own sake
- Extrinsic motivation, regarding tasks that are completed for an essential reward or benefit, typically less psychologically satisfying

Cognitive Evaluation Theory notes that intrinsically motivated tasks can become extrinsic through the introduction of an extrinsic reward.

Organismic Integration Theory notes the ability for an extrinsically motivated task to become internalised, typically through satisfaction of competence

Relatedness Motivations Theory notes that autonomy and competence must be challenged as well as relatedness in a relationship for it to be of a higher quality

The survey used to gather player opinion on contemporary MMORPG design philosophy was analysed to create an informed discussion regarding the development of MMORPG mechanics that would theoretically lead to a healthier online community.

The survey is available to view [here](#). The results are pictured to the right.

Discussion

- Most players surveyed agreed that the social aspects of *World of Warcraft* are what they played the game for, while also being receptive to matchmaking content with unknown players.
- The loss of autonomy inherent in matchmaking content does not affect its satisfaction of relatedness. MMORPG's must leave room for emergent social interaction.
- External tools and add-ons are prevalent in the *World of Warcraft* player base, who value them as a tool for demonstrating and improving competence.
- This suggests that developers could benefit from developing performance measuring tools as a first party mechanic.
- Players do not regularly engage in repeatable content, suggesting that it is not relevant to maintained subscription counts regardless.
- Those surveyed agree that an extrinsic requirement to complete repeatable content would discourage them from playing the game, suggesting that repeatable content cannot be tied to advancement in player power.

References

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- Deci, E.L. & Ryan, R.M. (1985) *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Rigby, S & Ryan, R (2007) *The Player Experience of Need Satisfaction: An Applied Model and Methodology for Understanding Key Components of the Player Experience*. Immersyve, inc.

Survey Results

