

Alex Smetana

12/01/2022

CIS303

Assignment 04

The article, “*Avatar creation in virtual worlds: Behaviors and motivations*,” discusses the motivations for creating a virtual avatar and the two-way influence between avatar and an individual. The article conducts study by having individuals answer a series of questions about their motivations for the creation of online avatars. Overall, the results were surprising. The hypothesis of the article states, “a majority of the participants had multiple avatars; these avatars’ appearance did not merely resemble the human players; and their personality did not necessarily mirror the player’s real personality.” Avatar creation allows an individual to express a persona that would not otherwise be possible in the real world.

The article doesn’t directly specify what prompted this research, however it refers to past studies as evidence. It most likely prompted to help better understand the psychology behind avatar creation. The article attempts to answer the question two questions, what are the behavioral patterns and the major motivations of an avatar creation in the virtual world? This was done by having a group of individuals fill out a series of different questions in relation to avatars. Among MMORPG and COVE users that filled out the questionnaire, 224 fully answered the questions. It was found out that 73.0% of users had more than one avatar, with each user

spent an average of 20 hours a week using the avatar in the virtual world. These results were very surprising, as individuals spent the equivalent of a part time job with these virtual avatars. Around one-third of individuals were found to create non humanlike avatars, completely differing in appearance from themselves. They were able to conclude that users didn't necessarily make avatars that best reflected themselves.

The study, however, has a strong chance to have bias. Firstly, the study was conducted by posting on an online research announcement detailing MMORPGS and COVE. This has the possibility to lead to a very isolated group of the population, most likely avid avatar creators. Secondly, only 224 individuals completed the questionnaire which contains a leading to a very small sample size. With such a small sample size, the general population of a whole is not fully reflected. With the low sample size and location of the survey, more research needs to be conducted for a more definitive finding.

Although not fully evident, with further research needing to be done, this has an enormous potential in the field of cybersecurity. There is an enormous difference between crimes that occur in a physical setting and crimes that occur a virtual setting. Finding the gap between these can be difficult. When a user logs online, they can be whoever they want to be. There is a certain power that a user has online that wouldn't normally be present in person. Due to the anonymity of cybercrimes, it can be very difficult to gage what individual motivations are. This could lead to the potential help understand the psychology behind individuals and give clues into their personality. Understanding why an individual commits a crime can be key into cybersecurity. Most notably, this can be used in profiling which is very helpful when solving cybercrimes.

Overall, avatar creation allows an individual to express a persona that would not otherwise be possible in the real world. Avatar creation allows for an individual to express their personality in an online setting. This topic is important because it helps understand the psychology of individuals in a virtual setting. Since technology and avatar creation is still relatively new, it is one part of humans that still needs a ton of research. At the most basic level, avatar creation is a way for an individual to express themselves in a way which would normally not be possible. This can be done by customizing what a user can look like, wear, speak, eat, and more.

Citations

Lin, Hsin, and Hua Wang. "Avatar Creation in Virtual Worlds: Behaviors and Motivations."

Computers in Human Behavior, vol. 34, 2014, pp. 213–218.,

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.10.005>.