

P1: User Research

CPSC 481

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Project Description

Our project idea is to create a semi-anonymous matching service for gamers. Multiplayer games have their own matchmaking systems which matches users with other random users over the anonymity of the internet. We intend to improve that match making system by having the users complete a profile stating their most played games, how frequent and how long they usually play, their “gaming schedule”, etc. Not only that our service would automatically match users on their similar aspects, it gives the users the freedom to find people on their own, by filtering people based on certain criteria. Unlike other LFG (looking for group) websites/applications, our approach is to match users one on one in order to make the match more meaningful than just simply playing with teammates.

We intend our system to be used by people who play multiplayer video games but doesn't have friends who play the same game as them. These users would wish to develop friendships online opposed to only play with random people online every time they play. We intend our system to be used more as a matching platform (like Tinder, Bumble, etc.), opposed to an active LFG application. This allows the user to passively meet people (ie. other people “swiped right” on them) instead of just joining a chat room.

Stakeholders

Experienced users who play multiplayer games:

These users have experience in playing games where they need other players to play. Thus, they will have previous experience of in game or out of game programs that help to match players. They may feel the need for finding people who have the similar rank (experience level) as themselves to play a game. They will have more knowledge on the games that they play regularly and will looking for specific people to play games with (eg. those who play the same games regularly). They may also be part of game communities, forums, etc. Which also connects them to new people in the game community. As well, these users could also be looking for new friends with same interests in games to connect with.

Normal users who have trouble finding people to play games with:

They will not have as much experience and may not be as invested into games as an experienced gamer. But since they are not regular players they may not know many people who play a specific game they want to play and may just use in game team making mechanism in order to be matched with random people to play with. Most of these users will not be greatly invested in game communities and forums. Thus, their gaming social network may be

very limited to offline gamer friends. May also be just looking for new friends with the same interest in games and/or lasting friendships.

Users who are looking to try new games:

Since they are starting off in a new game, they will not have much information on game mechanics and people who play the game. Thus, they will need a way to find people to play with. These users will not have a wide social network within the specific game they want to try out. They may be experienced in using apps that give information on games or find information on the website that reviews the new games that they want to play.

Users who have never played games but want to start:

These users will have very little background knowledge on games and programs, communities, people related to games. However, they can have experience with social media apps, dating apps, and other non-game related matching apps. This experience will help in understanding a social app designed for gamers. These users will have no experience using programs where they can find new people to play with. Also, they will not have a very wide social network within the game community in general and may have an interest in finding lasting friendships within the community.

Streamers/content creators (Youtube):

If they are content creators related to games, they will have lots of information and experience using programs regarding games. They will be similar to the experienced gamer. They will have interest in widening their social network with other gamers.

Game companies:

They will have lots of information about the gaming community and what gamers are looking for. Some game companies will be interested in the product since it will get more people to be invested in their games, especially if they are a multiplayer game company. The companies will also hold an interest in the product since it will give more exposure to their games.

Advertisers:

They will be interested in the product if the product has a lot of traffic (many people use it), they can use it as a platform for their advertisements. Depending on what they advertise they will have a lot or very little knowledge on games and game programs that help people to find other players to play with. If they are trying to advertise specifically to gamers, they will have more information on the topic compared to advertisers who are aiming for a general population.

Research Methods

The two research methods that we used was a survey and character profiles. We decided to use the survey method because it is very effective in targeting a large group of people in a short time span. Since we only had a little over a week to conduct these research methods, we decided that a survey could be very effective in learning what features may be useful in our project and to learn more about our users. Surveys also provide many unique perspectives from people all around the world. What we learned was that most of our users are between the ages of 20 and 25 and that there is an equal distribution of genders. Most of users play many different types of games varying ranging from mobile games to computer games. They play games almost every day of the week and play around 2 to 5 hours on average. Most of the responses say they mainly play games on the computer and that they either have no trouble finding people to play with, or a lot of trouble. The responses favored message chat, a way to add friends and to be matched with users of similar skill level as features they would like in the application.

The second research method we used was character profiles. We used this method because a lot of our friends play games and we could base some of the profiles off of them, and use the survey responses as a part as well. This would help us easily develop these profiles and we could get a general idea on our potential user base. Understanding our different types of customers will help us develop new and more ideas to target them and use our application. Some of the profiles we developed were a 23 year old female named Naomi who likes to play instruments. She often likes to play multiplayer party games such as Overcooked, Mario Party, and Mario Kart. She wants to have a good time with friends and has an easy time finding friends to play with. However she still wants to find new people and make new friends but wants an easy way to contact them with no hassle and to block unfriendly users. Another user, with a different personality, would be Jason Wang, he is a 26 year old male student who is a serious and hardcore gamer. He has a low tolerance with silliness and prioritizes winning. This means he likes competitive games with a robust player base like League of Legends, Dota 2, and CSGO. He would like to find other competitive players of similar skill levels that will take the game seriously and be able to connect in real life. So from developing these profiles we learned that there are mainly two audiences we should try to target, the casual gamer trying to find new people to play with and the serious gamer who wants to win and find equally competitive people.

The responses we received from the questionnaire can be found at:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Ncx7qQBUeMO6OhAmcMoMSN6FKiK4nPQdp0LnrMdPf_Q/edit?fbclid=IwAR29MdX7f7G1KzzC2TS1FivHRakfFE_q7_9U1yiecMmUCyOXS09BoIDScus#responses

The character profiles can be found at:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bB8U_Avjb9zCaJ3jfhblixKPU9DxOg0Rpq41Im5KCPc/edit?usp=sharing

Reflection

The two research methods that we chose – survey and character profiles – were very quick and efficient to carry out for the scope of the project. The survey research method garnered more responses than we were expecting; we were able to gather 45 responses for the survey within a week. Because the survey covered the questions that we wanted to know about the stakeholders, it was easy to see what kinds of users there were and get the rough structure of what the system should be. By doing the character profiles based on the survey responses, we were able to visualize the little details about the users which were not too clear just by looking at the survey responses. The profiles helped us to think and to develop ideas in what people would want to do/achieve with our system from a user's perspective.

However, there were problems with our chosen research methods. For the survey method, the questions were derived purely by us and the responses were confined to just those questions. Even if a user had patterns/personalities/habits that would affect the way that he/she used the system, we would not have been aware of them because the survey questions would not be able to cover all these. Also, there were a couple of joke responses among them and it was impossible to verify whether any of the “serious” responses were accurate. For the character profiling, it added even more ambiguity to researching the users because they were created based on our inferences and some creativity. Of course, these characters were created using the survey responses, but they were pretty much just barebones because we had to make a lot of assumptions due to the survey focusing on what the users wanted rather than who the users were.

Overall, our two research methods were very efficient in terms of time and effort to carry out. The survey method gave us a wide view of all the different types of potential users, and the character profiling method refined these views and put us into the perspective of the users. However, they left us with inaccuracy and ambiguity, and did not provide us with full details of the demographics of the potential users. In the future, we should triangulate our survey and character profiles with another research method like interviews, so that we can ensure more accurate information on the potential users.

Task Descriptions

Task Description 1

Justin is a 20 year old student/junior developer who cooks and bakes in his free time. He also frequently plays games with his online friends, but sometimes struggles to find people to play with. Justin is playing a game called League of Legends, and his friends do not play the game as frequently anymore. He plays more casually and likes to fool around and have fun rather than take the game seriously and competitively.

Justin wants to meet some people to play the game with who also play casually, and possibly befriend them. He uses our system to hopefully find some people who fit his criteria.

He browses some profiles, and “swipes right” on profiles that play League of Legends and who are also more casual than competitive. Half an hour later he checks the system and finds out that 2 people “matched” with him. Justin messages these 2 matches and after a few messages they exchange game-info and play some games together.

Task type: Typical User, typical routine task

Task Description 2

Jenny wants to play the new video game Apex Legends but she doesn't know anyone who plays the game. Since this game is designed with parties of three, Jenny would like to find one or two other people to play with casually. This is her first time using the system.

Setting up her profile she inputs a variety of information including her gaming preferences, and some things about herself.

Since she wants to play Apex Legends, if the profiles do not indicate they play Apex Legends she instantly “swipes left” on them, but if they indicate that they do play the game, she takes a deeper look at the profile. After looking through the profile, she “swipes right” if their profiles give the impression that they may get along in voice chat.

She gets more than 10 “matches” and since she is very social online, she has longer message conversations with each of her matches than what the average user does. One user was particularly rude, so she blocked that user and reports them to the system. She eventually exchanges game-info with 2 people and arrange a play-session.

Task type: First time user, Typical task

Task Description 3

Jason Wang, an extremely competitive player, wants to compete in CS:GO tournaments seriously. He wants to find a group of people who share his competitive nature and drive to win, and also around his skill level.

He “swipes right” on profiles that indicate they are competitive players who play CS:GO. He gets a few matches and after messaging them all he finds someone who has a group and invites Jason to play with the group. They play a couple games, but Jason gets into a disagreement with all the other players, and decides to find another person.

However, in the middle of contacting another person. His previous match is harassing Jason through the message feature. Jason reads the messages, then blocks him and reports the messages to our system. He then resumes contacting the second person. This time they get along, and they get into regular contact. Jason still wants to find other people to complete his team, but he decides he will continue the search another day.

Task type: Uncommon user, uncommon task

Task Description 4

Olivia is a 22 years old female student who likes interacting with people. When hangs out with her group of close friends, they usually play “social” games such as board games or Mario kart, etc. that require physical presence of people. When she was in high school, it was very easy to set up a time to meet with her friends and play games; she and her friends went to the same high school, and they would just go to a friend’s house to hang out about 3-4 times a week after classes. However, as she became a university student, and some of her friends moved away to other cities, their schedules started to not line up very well.

She still wants to play social games with her friends, but she now has a hard time finding people to play those games with. She is reluctant to use match-making apps such as Tinder because those are for dating, not to find friends to play games with. She discovers that there is a system for finding gaming friends, and tries it out. However, she finds out that the system is only for finding online gamers, not the boardgames (before the sign-up). Disappointed, she tries to search for other ways of finding people to play boardgames with.

Task type: Uncommon user, common task

Task Description 5

Maranda is from Australia, who likes outdoor activities. She doesn’t play games because she has other priorities and she doesn’t have friends who plays games regularly. She is against spending the whole day on the computer because she thinks that it is too unproductive.

Her coworkers suddenly get hyped about League of Legends, and convince her to play with them. However, they have troubles finding a person for the support position. Each person creates an account on the system first so that they can find a support role quicker, and skips any of the profile fields that would give out personal information (for the sake of one-time use). Each person tries matching with anyone who plays League of Legends. Once matched with someone, he/she tries talking to the match to see if that person is on League of Legends at the moment, and if that person is willing to play the support role for the team. It is frustrating for them to find a person to play the game with them; it requires them to iterate the process of sending requests to get matched, and if they are matched with someone, they still need to see if that person is available at the moment or not. They keep going at it for the spur of the moment.

However, Maranda gets tired of “swiping”, and she tells her coworkers that she wants to stop. She deletes her account from the system so she does not get unnecessary notifications from the system.

Task type: Common user, common task

Task Description 6

Adrienne wants to have separate groups for gaming and social lives. She doesn’t want to reveal that she is a game nerd to her offline friends, but she still wants to play games with

people. She thinks that her offline friends do not understand the hobbies that she has; she thinks they are too “normal.”

In order to build a social network of online friends who are comfortable to join up and jump into a casual game on short notice, she creates an account on the system, and puts up fake information about herself; the only information that she correctly fills out is the game interests. She is able to see the potential matches that are to her taste even though she filled out fake information on the profile. Exploiting on this, she makes up more fake information and updates her profile based on the ideal gaming “persona” that she is presenting herself as. Sometimes people who wanted to build a meaningful relationship with her would bash on her for being fake and has lied to them, but when that happens, she just blocks them and continues on using the system.

Task type: Common user, common task