

User Interviews: How do Minecraft players enjoy modification content?

CS 6650 Research Project by Skyler James

Process

Six questions were created, each with several follow-up questions, to address the following themes:

1. What modification content do players use and why?
2. What features contribute to a good experience?
3. What features contribute to a poor experience?
4. How do players learn to use new content?

Participants

Eight users responded to invitations to join the study.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the study, participants were required to:

- Be a legal adult (18+ years of age)
- Have prior experience using modded Minecraft
- Dedicate up to 20 minutes for the interview

Risks

There are no risks associated with this study outside the normal risks of everyday life.

Benefits

Participants will be given access to the final conclusions of this study to allow them to benefit from the information that is gained.

Questions

1. First, are you at least 18 years old and consent to participate in this interview?
 - The age requirement is due to US federal laws around research involving minors.
2. Tell me about the modification content you use (mods, packs, shaders, etc.)
 - How often, where did you find it, why do you use it
 - What makes X easy to use?
 - What makes X difficult to use?

- What makes X easy to learn to use?
- What makes X difficult to learn to use?

Goal: Determine what content players use or value most. This question and follow-up should take about 5 minutes. Note: makes more sense to ask question 6 after this.

3. What is your favorite X? (mod, pack, shader, etc.)
 - What do you like about it?
 - What features in X are the most important to you for a good experience?

Goal: Determine what features players use or value most

4. Tell me about modification content that you have used in the past and decided to stop using.
 - What caused you to stop using it?
 - Difficult to use? Difficult to learn?

Goal: Determine what features contribute to a negative experience

5. What X do you find difficult to use or have not used before?
 - Forge or Fabric mods, Server mods, Server data packs, Optifine, Client mods, Resource or texture packs, Shaders

Goal: Determine what content to use for usability tests

6. What are some things you do to learn how to use new modification content?
 - What do you try when that doesn't work?
 - What are some things that are not helpful?

Responses

Affinity mapping was used to create categories for responses. Following is a summary of the categories that were determined and a short explanation.

1. What modification content do players use and why?

Most players use mods that fall in one of these categories:

- **Immersion**
 - **Adventure** mods: Users enjoy mods that encourage exploration, adventure, and story-telling
 - **Tech** mods: Users enjoy tech mods that are “useful,” “adventurous,” “challenging,” and have “many possibilities.” Several mods that do this well are Create, Applied Energistics, and Botania
 - **Shaders**: One user expressed the immersion provided by shaders: “Can’t play without shaders” (S)
- **Convenience**

- **Quality of life:** Most users enjoy mods that allow a smoother gameplay experience, such as minimaps, JEI, plugins, and “tweak” mods. These mods allow users to spend less time worrying about unimportant parts of the game. Some aspects of tech mods fall in this category (for example, Refined Storage)
- **Utility**
 - Several users enjoy utility mods (such as server administration plugins).

2. What features contribute to a good experience?

Most responses fit into one of these categories:

- **Progression:** Many users emphasized the importance of “clear progression” in a mod.
 - Players value mods that have a clear way to progress.
 - Several players enjoy mods that encourage exploration.
 - Several players enjoy mods that provide a way to “scale” your progress (the mod is applicable to all stages of game experience).
- **Potential:** Several users enjoy mods that allow the player to use the mod creatively.
 - Players often enjoy mods that are “different” and have “many possibilities.”
- **Usability**
 - The mod **must** be configurable. Many players will stop using a mod if it cannot be customized to fit their needs.
 - Players enjoy mods with intuitive features and mechanics.
 - Players appreciate good documentation, especially for plugins that could otherwise be impossible to use.
- **Other**
 - Some players enjoy mods that are designed with story-telling and multiplayer context in mind.
 - Some players value mods that intentionally work well together.
 - Some players choose mods that “make sense” and fit into the Minecraft aesthetic.
 - Some players only use mods that they view as “useful.”

3. What features contribute to a poor experience?

Most responses fit into one of these categories:

- **Unclear usability**
 - Players do not enjoy mods that have **unclear progression**. This was stated many times. Content needs to be “properly discoverable” (S).
 - While many players enjoy the challenge of using a complicated mod, they often dislike mods that are too complicated and time-consuming to learn.
 - Several players dislike mods that are not intuitive or cannot be used without an outside guide (such as a wiki or tutorial). “If a wiki is required to use a mod, I don’t use the mod” (L).

- Rarely, the wiki is out-of-date or does not exist.
- **Cannot be customized**
 - The mod **must** be configurable. Many players will stop using a mod if it cannot be customized to fit their needs.
- **Unusable**
 - Some mods are not compatible with each other (especially common among Forge mods).
 - Many players stop using mods if they are not updated to their preferred Minecraft version.

4. How do players learn to use new content?

Most responses fit into one of these categories:

- **Playing with the mod**
 - **Experimentation**
 - Most users learn how to use a mod by experimenting with its content. They usually discover a mod's features by playing with it. Some players install utility mods such as JEI to list the items and blocks added by a mod, and use that to infer the mod's features.
 - **In-game guides:** Many mods have in-game guides, such as tutorial books, that teach the player how to use the mod. (For example, Botania)
 - Several players value in-game guides. However, some players do not enjoy using such guides or do not wish to learn about the mod by reading.
- **Guides and tutorials**
 - Some players expressed that most mods are not intuitive enough to use without a guide. Many players use wiki pages, Reddit, mod description pages, and/or YouTube videos to learn how to use the content in a mod.