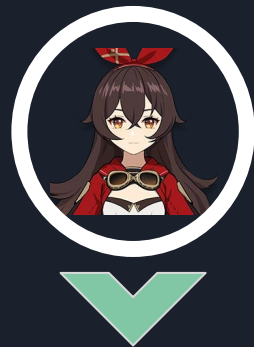# Genshin Impact:
Exploring Exploration

Agenda

- Motivation

- Overview of Exploration in Genshin Impact (GI)

- What is Repeatable Exploration?

MOTIVATION

Motivation: A Conflict of Interests

- Looking at recent GI patch updates, Mihoyo likes focusing on adding 3 types of content:
  - New Characters & Weapons
  - New Regions & Enemies
  - New Events
- Mihoyo primarily focuses on creating new content to attract new players and reinterest older ones.
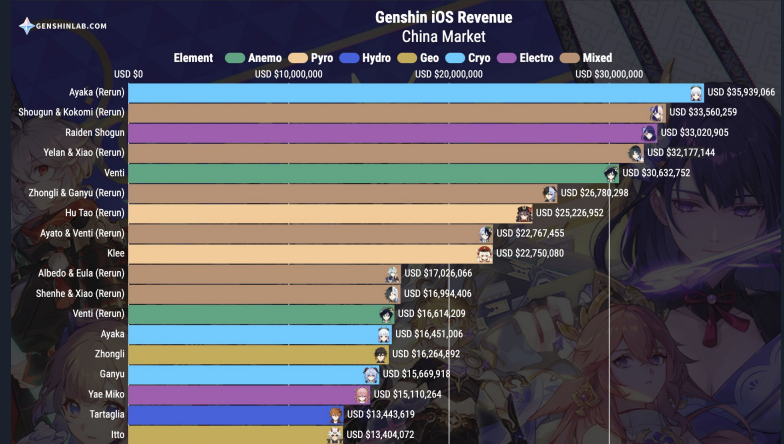
Motivation: A Conflict of Interests

- GI player reviews that previously headlined the iOS and Google Play Store:
  - "One of the best games… but… There's absolutely no end game content" - melt.slayer_666 5/17/2022
  - "Genshin is a one of [a] kind game and was so much to play in the beginning… The biggest problem with Genshin is the lack of endgame content. There is only one dungeon which resets twice a month… " - VrutiS 9/30/2021
- "End game content" refers to repeatable gameplay after completing the main storyline.
- For GI players, they often are referring to the following features:
  - Spiral Abyss: A series of dungeons that a small percentage of players fully complete.
  - Artifact Dungeons: Dungeons that players have limited attempts to complete per day to obtain rare Artifacts (stat-boosting equipment).
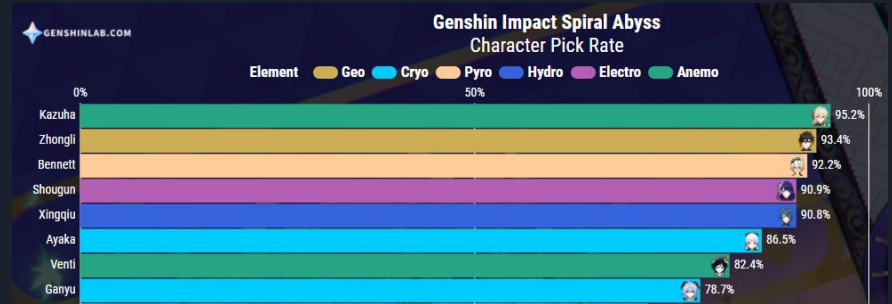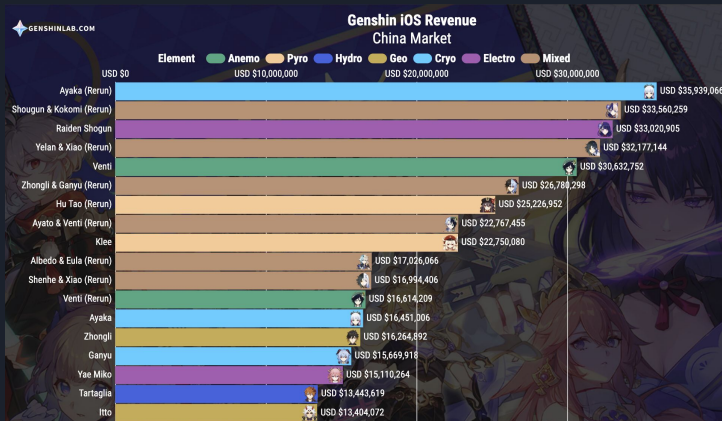
Motivation: The Reality

- The reality is that Mihoyo has been successful with its strategy to constantly push out new content.
- Every new character since Raiden Shogun (8/31/21) generated >$10M revenue in the China iOS market alone. (image and data from GENSHINLAB)
  - Raiden Shogun (8/31/21) - $33,020,905
  - Aratakki Itto (12/13/21) - $13,404,072
  - Yae Miko (2/15/22) - $15,110,264
  - Yelan & Xiao (Rerun) - $32,177,144

Genshin iOS Revenue
China Market

| Element | Anemo | Pyro | Hydro | Geo | Cryo | Electro | Mixed |

| | USD $0 | USD $10,000,000 | USD $20,000,000 | USD $30,000,000 |

Ayaka (Rerun) — USD $35,939,066
Shougun & Kokomi (Rerun) — USD $33,560,259
Raiden Shogun — USD $33,020,905
Yelan & Xiao (Rerun) — USD $32,177,144
Venti — USD $30,632,752
Zhongli & Ganyu (Rerun) — USD $26,780,298
Hu Tao (Rerun) — USD $25,226,952
Ayato & Venti (Rerun) — USD $22,767,455
Klee — USD $22,750,080
Albedo & Eula (Rerun) — USD $17,026,066
Shenhe & Xiao (Rerun) — USD $16,994,406
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Ayaka — USD $16,451,006
Zhongli — USD $16,264,892
Ganyu — USD $15,669,918
Yae Miko — USD $15,110,264
Tartaglia — USD $13,443,619
Itto — USD $13,404,072

Motivation: The Reality

- NOTE: Interestingly, rerun banners of popular Spiral Abyss characters have generated over $20M on average, outperforming some newer characters on their first release..
  - 2 noteworthy ones are the Shogun & Kokomi Rerun banner and Zhongli & Ganryu banner. (images and data from GENSHINLAB)

GENSHINLAB.COM

Genshin iOS Revenue
China Market

Element ■ Anemo ■ Pyro ■ Hydro ■ Geo ■ Cryo ■ Electro ■ Mixed

USD $0	USD $10,000,000 USD $20,000,000 USD $30,000,000

Character	Revenue
Ayaka (Rerun)	USD $35,939,066
Shougun & Kokomi (Rerun)	USD $33,560,259
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GENSHINLAB.COM

Genshin Impact Spiral Abyss
Character Pick Rate

Element ■ Geo ■ Cryo ■ Pyro ■ Hydro ■ Electro ■ Anemo

0%	50%	100%

Character	Pick Rate
Kazuha	95.2%
Zhongli	93.4%
Bennett	92.2%
Shougun	90.9%
Xingqiu	90.8%
Ayaka	86.5%
Venti	82.4%
Ganyu	78.7%

Motivation: The Reality

- Although some online commenters want improvements in endgame content, for Mihoyo, it has no obvious, measurable monetary benefits.
  - Mihoyo has more "true" player feedback with its in-game surveys and likely has a better understanding of overall player sentiment.
- New characters, regions, and events are clearly driving revenue.
- Rerun banner revenues demonstrate current endgame features provide enough value.
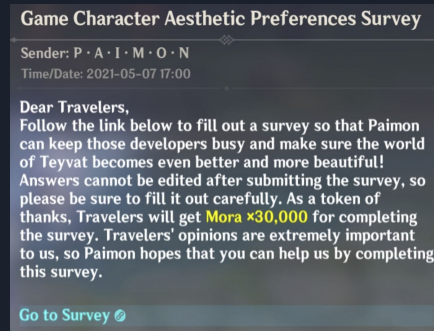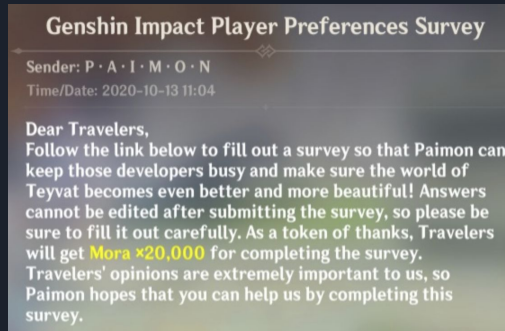
GI in-game mail survey links

Motivation: Where to Go From Here?

- Highlighted in this Udonis [blog post](#), GI has strong UA ads that focus on the following:
  - GI's vast world and exploration potential
  - Fun, exciting gameplay mechanics
  - Character personality, ability, and themes
- For GI's UA to be worthwhile, GI's retention systems in these categories must drive new players to return to the game to convert them into spenders.

Motivation: Where to Go From Here?

- As a possible response, Mihoyo could offer more primogems per day via login/dailies.
  - ARPU may decrease. However, players will have more opportunities to obtain characters that they saw in the advertisements.
  - As a result, players may play the game longer, explore gameplay mechanics, participate in GI's game loop, and become more likely to spend.
  - The decision may net more revenue over time; however, it also could do the opposite. If anything, devs will give a 1-time hard currency reward to stimulate the player economy.
- Another response is to look at GI's exploration. Exploration is an overlooked system that contributes to GI's retention rate of many casual players.

GI EXPLORATION

GI Exploration: The Old Standard

- Satisfying exploration is when players first discover and learn something in a game and enjoy it. GI succeeds in multiple exploration categories:
  - **Mechanical Exploration:** Involving elemental puzzles, environmental interactions, and combat mechanics, GI effectively introduces exciting game mechanics to new players.

Fire + Ice = Vaporize reaction

Totem that needs a fire element to activate

GI Exploration: The Old Standard

- Satisfying exploration is when players first discover and learn something in a game and enjoy it. GI succeeds in multiple exploration categories:
  - **Content Exploration:** Boss/Mini-Boss encounters have well-defined themes and attack patterns. Even normal monsters and collectibles have their weaknesses to different attacks.

Genshin Impact

Andrius - Ice themed wolf

Genshin Impact

Rock themed Geovishap

Crystal Chunk

Genshin Impact

Normal sword needs multiple attacks to get collectible.
Electro abilities 1-shots it.

GI Exploration: The Old Standard

- Satisfying exploration is when players first discover and learn something in a game and enjoy it. GI succeeds in multiple exploration categories:
  - **Geographical Exploration:** Treasure chests and region-specific Oculi rewards are scattered throughout the world to encourage players to explore areas they would not usually travel.
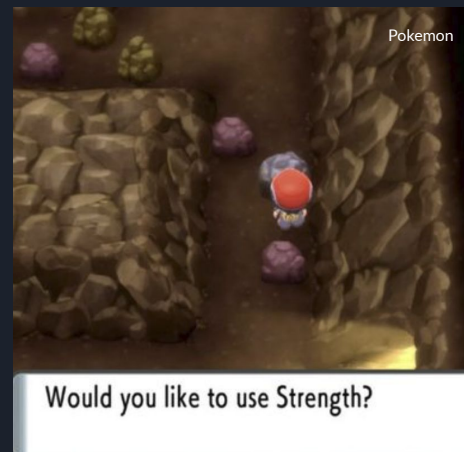

Credit: Reddit.

GI Exploration: The Pokemon Comparison

- GI's exploration qualities are reminiscent of Pokemon.
  - **Mechanical Exploration:** Pokemon allows players to discover type advantages on their own as well as how to utilize HMs to clear obstacles in the world (Combat/Environmental interactions).

Discover that Water is weak against Grass

Needs HM Strength to clear path

GI Exploration: The Pokemon Comparison

- GI's exploration qualities are reminiscent of Pokemon.
  - **Content Exploration:** Legendary Pokemon, Gym Leaders and Pokemon in general are well-themed and characterized. All have their own character that makes them stand alone.

Groudon - the personification of land.
Uses lava to create more landmass.

Bryce - an Ice themed gym leader with an ice themed puzzle.

GI Exploration: The Pokemon Comparison

- GI's exploration qualities are reminiscent of Pokemon.
    - **Geographical Exploration:** Pokemon likes to leave visible items adjacent to the main path so that players will return later. Additionally, Pokemon includes isolated scenic objects that usually contain hidden items to encourage exploration.

GI Exploration: What's the Issue?

- Both GI and Pokemon create worlds with engaging exploration. They reward players who revisit old places and search along roads previously not taken.
- However, in GI, once that reward is collected, the value of revisiting those places diminishes significantly.
  - In Pokemon, players can revisit old places to catch an undiscovered Pokemon or capture a specific Pokemon with certain traits.
    - The wide variance of Pokemon makes many regions repeatedly explorable.
- Because GI is F2P, GI needs to create repeatable exploration value to keep players engaged with the world. So what are some ways that GI could do this?

REPEATABLE EXPLORATION

Repeatable Exploration: How Players Travel

- Currently, GI offers players several fun movement abilities to traverse the world (climbing, gliding, dashing).
- Later, for convenience, it provides fast travel mechanics. (E.g. Teleport Waypoints)
  - Fast travel helps players quickly complete cross-map objectives, but it trivializes world movement.
  - The player experience becomes more focused on completing a task at a destination (grinding materials, finishing a quest, etc.).
- Instead of reducing the usage of fun movement abilities, GI should improve players' traveling capabilities as they progress.

Repeatable Exploration: A New Way of Travel

- Mounts
    - Mounts are a popular way to enhance the travel experience in open-world games. They are multivarious and change how players can travel by offering improved movement capabilities.
        - Players may have spontaneous encounters with them (e.g., Fortnite vehicles, BOTW horses)

Fortnite

BOTW

Repeatable Exploration: A New Way of Travel

- Mounts
    - Players may have different ones for different environments (e.g., Pokemon Arceus, Guild War 2).

    Pokemon
    Photo: Nintendo

    GW2

    - Mounts may have a progression system modeled after players' progress in the main story. Plus, mount cosmetics can provide additional monetization value.
    - Additionally, mounts maintain player immersion by keeping players from opening the game menu to use fast travel.

Repeatable Exploration: Revisiting Why Players Travel

- While Mounts may improve the traveling experience, it's necessary to identify why players travel in GI to start. Common motivations are the following:
  - Completing GI Main/Side quests
  - Completing daily commissions
  - Farming upgrade/ascension materials.
- After completing main/side quests, the latter activities are relatively trivial and tedious.

Repeatable Exploration: Revisiting Why Players Travel

- For players, the appeal of exploration comes from the following:
  - The autonomy to choose what to explore
  - Discovering new things while they explore
- From GI's UA ads, players are interested in learning more about the game's obtainable characters.
- If GI uses exploration to develop players' relationships with obtainable characters beyond the main storyline, players will excitedly continue exploring GI's open world.

Repeatable Exploration: Remaking Random Events

- GI [Random Events](#) are random encounters players have as they travel the world.
- With adjustments, Random Events can improve new player retention by deepening player-character relationships.
- Currently, random encounters feel meaningless.
  - These "special" encounters involve helping somewhat forgettable NPCs.
  - Rewards are often generic and impersonal resource items.
  - Additionally, with fast travel, random events are seldom encountered.

NPC Pallad from the quest "Pallad's Dilemna"

Repeatable Exploration: Random Character Events

- Random Character Events
  - Integrating obtainable characters with Random Events will allow for character development, specialized rewards, and more memorable experiences.
    - Narratively, character events will add details about the daily lives of GI characters.
    - For immersion, character voice lines can attract players to engage with the event.
    - Rewards are then tailored to the respective character.
      - Rewards could be character upgrade materials to prevent player burnout from overplaying.
  - Character Events create a comprehensive loop; find a character, help that character, and receive the character's rewards.

Repeatable Exploration: Random Character Events

- Random Character Events
  - The system also synergizes with the character Friendship Level.
    - Currently, performing generic world tasks while characters are in the player's party will raise Friendships.
    - Friendship Levels unlock character stories, voiceovers, and other extra content.
    - Players unwittingly unlock these rewards without having meaningful interaction with the respective characters, lowering the reward meaningfulness.
  - If events were the main driver of Friendship Level, they would create an overt action-reward loop. Players complete the event; in return, they receive more character narrative content.

Repeatable Exploration: Random Character Events

- Random Character Events
  - With the increasing number of GI characters, character events allow for repeatability.
    - Consider a rotation schedule for when certain characters will appear.
    - Players could select specific characters that they want to appear more frequently. (Similar to GI's Epitomized Path for Weapon Banners)
    - They could also give insights into how to respond to characters in GI's Hangout Events dating sim.
  - Seeing the obtainable characters roaming the world doing everyday tasks like during the Lantern Rite event will make the world feel alive.
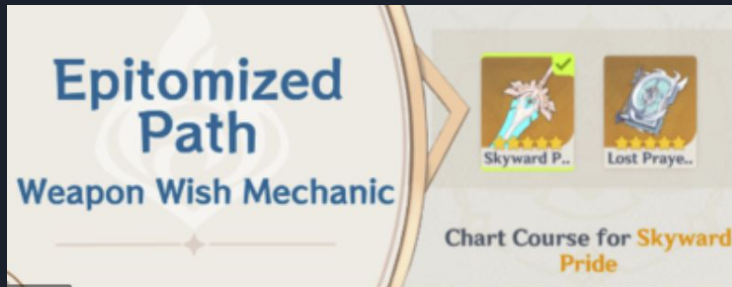
WRAP-UP

Wrap-Up

- With the influx of new GI players from UA ads, it's important to improve early retention.
- One way is to showcase that GI's exploration feels repeatable and endless.
  - Introducing Mounts with a progression system can provide a constant refreshing experience to in-game world travel rather than relying on fast-travel to reach a destination.
  - GI can also adjust systems like Random Events and Friendship to encourage players to invest in obtainable characters' lore and growth.
- Ideally, these suggestions will impact player retention rates positively and raise the floor of daily revenue and daily users between patch releases.