PhD Research | School of Design | The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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Last Updated:
10 December 2015

Profile Image:

PhD Title:
The Value Systems of Player and Their Relation to In-Game Behavior in a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-playing Game

Keywords:
Massively multiplayer online role-playing games, value system, player behavior, Emergent Cyclical Levels of Existence Theory, game design

Research Abstract:
We conducted a survey of 5,427 participants within the game Ghost II that measured their value systems based upon the Emergent Cyclical Levels of Existence Theory (ECLET). Our study showed that Chinese players are mainly operating at Blue value system, a core value that is to sacrifice self now in order to receive reward later. This study then further examined the relationship between player’s value systems and their actions in playing the Ghost II. A number of positive correlations were found between the score of Red value system and the in-game metrics that were collected to represent their playing behavior. With this work, we show that there is a correlation between in-game behavior and real-life behavioral attitudes as modeled by the ECLET. The study is significant in its research methodology (using commercial game data) as well as its findings regarding players’ core values and their relationship to in-game behavior.

Research Methodology:
With an innovative mixed methodology, this study brought together methodological approaches from self-report survey and game metric technique. Participants began by completing a web-based survey to assess their value systems, and other demographic variables such as gender and age were also gathered. The value systems of player was analyzed and further compared with instrument averages resulted from global measurement. And then the value systems profile of players was paired with their behavioral metrics within the game world. The correlation analysis was performed to determine the links between values system and gaming behavior online.

Results / outcomes:
1. Chinese players are mainly operating at Blue value system as modeled by the Emergent Cyclical Levels of Existence Theory, a core value that is to sacrifice self now in order to receive reward later.
2. There is a link between players’ value systems and their in-game behaviour.
3. Players that scored high on the Red value system also enjoy progressing and gaining power in the forms offered by game world, and spend more real money in the game.