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IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGH INFORMATION
PROCEEDINGS
ONLINE GAMING COMMUNITIES IN CROATIA

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Abstract

There is a big number of video games on the market, and a large variety of video game genres. They became a part of new media due to increase in popularity of computers, game consoles, and the gaming themselves, and we see emergence of e-sports and impressive revenues in gaming industry. Most of those games have fans who are a part of one or more gaming communities, which are dedicated to video games and are connected with the video game culture, which, by now, can be viewed as a specific subculture. The structures of such communities are complex, with an video game title in the center of them. A lot of community members self-identify as gamers.

This work explores and describes the most common online gaming communities in Croatia. The results will showcase which of the online gaming communities are the most prevalent in Croatia, as well as their structure.
Introduction

There is, despite the importance of phenomena of videogame playing, still relatively low amount of research of the field, which can be attributed to it’s relative recent appearance, as they appeared, on a massive scale, during the 1990s. (Griffiths, Davies, Chappel, 2003). Yet today, their impact on economy is bigger than of any other entertainment industry (Arena, 2015).

There is still no strict definition of gamers, as it still remains uncertain whether do any person who occasionally play video-games fall under that term, or do only people who are dedicated to video-game play and culture fall under that term (Krolo, Zdravković, Puze, 2015). Authors cite Crawford (2011) who offers several approaches to answering this dilemma. This research uses the first approach, whose aim is to answer the question of what kind of people play video-games through creating a psychosocial profile of video-game players.

The most important fact about video-games, especially when played on-line, is that they are, usually, played without direct contact with other people, unlike older, “pen-and-paper” games (Seay et al., 2004). This fact, that there is minimal amount of repercussions for negative behaviour due to anonymity of players, can bring out a variety of negative behaviours and attitudes towards other players of an on-line game. This work wants to show what kinds of attitudes towards other players, as well as what kinds of behaviour, prevail amongst gamers in Croatia.

Same fact also applies to various communities that grow around various video-games, and, combined with the fact that gamers do not form a homogenous community, as can be seen from demographic data that shows that gaming community is made up from people of various ages, genders, and backgrounds (Čirić, Volarević, Mrkela, 2015), and, therefore, it is important to see how do (if they do) attitudes and behaviours change as the demography of players changes.

Research goals

The aims of this research are to see which gaming communities do exist in Croatia, whether do connections between them exist, and how do they perceive each other, as well as determining their characteristics. In order to achieve those aims, we set out several goals:

To see the demographic and psychosocial characteristics of gamers.

1. How do they perceive players who play on other game consoles.
2. How do they perceive other players of their favourite games.
3. To see their attitudes towards gaming in general.
4. To check if there is any regularity considering personality traits.

Methodology

We used online survey via SurveyMonkey service to gather data. Information about survey were placed on social networks as well as gaming magazine websites and forums. Survey consisted of 194 items, and is divided into five parts: the first one gathers sociodemographics data, the second is about rating some of the most popular games in recent 6 months, the third is Hexaco personality questionnaire (Aston & Lee, 2009), the fourth part is about gaming community attitudes and behaviours, and the last one consists of the subject’s comments. We got 323 subjects, 166 of them entering survey completely, making completion rate 51.4%. Since middle parts of survey were rotated (those considering Hexaco, gaming community and game rating items) and each question on corresponding part were rotated also, we compensated for any systematic effects (i.e. fatigue, motivation loss, quitting); thus for any analysis provided number of participants may vary, and this data is provided. For inferential statistics, pairwise deletion of missing data is implemented.

Results

Our participants reported age span from 13 to 43 years of age (N=166 M=23.90 sd=5.54 Shapiro-Wilk=946 p<.01). Majority of (N=312) them were males – 76.3%, 204% females, while 2.9% identified them on LGBTQ spectrum. Almost half of participants (N=322) were pupils/students (45.7%), second major group being employed (36.7%). Their monthly budget is up to €500 for almost two thirds of them (61.7%), while only 11.1% claiming to have more than €1,000 on their disposal. Thus, monthly entertainment expenditure is for almost half of them (46.5%) less than €35, and 17.0% claiming to spend more than €100. We wanted to know if and how regularly they spend on activities such as buying ingame objects, game merchandise, cosplaying game characters or going to conventions. They almost never (95.5%) cosplayed, or went to conventions (77%), and just quarter of them (24.1%) sometimes bought merchandise, and almost half (46.1%) buying ingame items. Most common form of entertainment (multiple answers were possible) was computer games (85.9%), which is of no surprise since our target group were gamers. Two other most represented forms of fun were gathering with friends (N=319 65.2%), and watching TV (45.1%). In spite of the stereotype, a third of them (34.8%) reported to hanging with their partner, although less than half (N=317 44%) said they do have a partner; almost the same percentage reported having a pet (49.5%), although no significant correlation was found between those two answers. The majority (N=314 64.7%) of our participants reported to live in their own apartment, and to live with parents (N=318 48.1%), only fifth (20.3%) to live with partner. Results are no surprise if we check the age – median being 23 years, and mode 22. Our participant’s real-life social networks includes most commonly includes 5-10 member (44.2%) while one fifth reports to have between
11 and 20 friends, as well as less than five of them; only 15% reported to have more than 20 friends.

Considering gaming habits, the majority of our gamer sample reported to play on PC, both desktop (75.7%) and laptop (34.5%) (multiple answers were allowed); second most common platform was smartphone (44.7%), and the third was Playstation (26.1%); other options combined together makes less than 15% picks. They play almost exclusively at home (N=226 97.4%), either by themselves (46.5%) or online (45.6%), while just 8% plays in company of friends, thus making gaming experience solitude one, at least considering physical presence. When asked to identify gaming genre preferences, majority (N=226 71.7%) opted for eclecticism, only 11.5% being focused on one genre only. When asked to rank most preferred genres, they graded action adventures most favourably, then FPS, cRPG, MMORPG MOBA, and finally casual play. We used those categories in order to have comparable results with previous research finds on Croatian gamers (Krolo, Zdravković, & Puzek, 2016). This is in opposite to grouping average rating of 25 most popular games according to gaming magazines and website: highest graded were casual games (M=4.2), then MOBA (M=4.04), MMORPG (M=3.5), cRPG (M=3.26), FPS (M=3.15), and action adventures (M=2.6). The most favourite games were (alphabetically) Assassin’s Creed series, Battlefield series, Call of Duty series, Counter Strike: Global Offensive, Fallout series, GTA series, League of Legends, Overwatch and The Witcher series. The best feature of their most beloved game was either gameplay or the multiplayer option. The least favourite feature was community, graphics, and brief gameplay. We also asked player to pick the game-world where they would like to live and most of them picked The Elder Scrolls setting (Skyrim being the most frequently mentioned), and San Andreas from GTA was the second option. The least desirable game-world to live in was Fallout, then followed Dark Souls, World of Warcraft, Witcher, and GTA. It is worth noticing that one participant picked Playboy: The Mansion as the most desirable location. Considering additional activities related to their most favourite game, most of our participants did either discuss game on forums or meet with fellow players in real life; the least common activities were writing blog or visiting tournament. The last option is of no surprise since tournament scene is just emerging in Croatia. Provided there is opportunity, half of our gamers (50.0%) would be interested o very interested to go to e-sport tournament, but half of them (51.3%) disagrees or strongly disagrees with claim on building career as professional gamer.

We wanted to know where our gamers get their fix – majority buys games online (N=224 70.5%), piracy being the second option (56.7%), then comes bargain sales (46.0%), optical medias (15.6%), and, finally, borrowing from friends (14.7%).

When confronted with stereotypes, our participants are disagreeing (partially or strongly) with claims that “video games make no material gain” (52.2%), “typical gamer has no life beyond video-games” (86.2%), “cosplayers are weird” (48.9%), with exception of “smartphone games make no one a gamer” (20.7%). When confronted with female-gamers related stereotypes, disagreement rate is “female gamers are marketing gimmick” (60.2%), “female gamers are as successful as male gamers in action, strategy and shooters” (13.1%), “females gamers, even if they play computer games, they play them casually” (55.3%), while they are divided on question of “female characters in video games are over-sexualized” where majority answers are neutral (34.6%).

Participants also took Hexaco personality test. We correlated scores on each of six subscales (honesty-humility, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience), and some results are rather interesting. We found no significant correlation between any personality subscale and genre preference. Honesty-humility was correlated (r= -0.19 df=136 p<.01) with writing game instructions for one’s favourite game, extraversion was correlated with meeting with other gamers in ‘real-life’ (r=-.19 df=136 p<.01). When we asked them to rate the list of 25 games, some regularities were found: openness to experience seems to be related to cRPG games, honesty-humility to be negatively related with FPS and action adventure, and emotionality with action adventure games, but correlation factors are rather small (between .21 and .27).

We used scale for measuring video game problems (Salguero & Morán, 2002) and found comforting results – average score was 10.99 with range from 5 to 39 (theoretical maximum of 45). Results on this subscale were significantly correlated with all six Hexaco factors (r= -0.29; .33; 0.41; 0.46; -0.27; 0.70 respectively; p<.01).

Finally, we measured social distance between preferred gaming platforms. Participants were asked to estimate if majority of their friend use certain platform (PC, PlayStation, Xbox, Android), would they would hang around such players, befriend them or if they would be emotional partners with them. No significant distance results were found. The same procedure were taken for Pokemon Go players, no significant effect was found either. To test their perceived tolerance further, we asked them about acceptability of homosexuality, and effects could only be found on extraversion (r= -0.18 df=126 p<.01) and openness to experience (r=.20 df=126 p<.01). No correlation is found with genre preference, which is in disagreement of other research (Krolo, Zdravković, Puzek, 2016). The last question in survey was open type and offered opportunity to comment on results. Some of the participants expressed their disagreement with homosexuality question, and just three of them provided negatively connotated answer. Thus, we may conclude our participants are rather tolerant group of young people.
References


