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### THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL EXPERIENCE IN ONLINE GAMES – THE CASE OF SAUDI ARABIA

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#### ABSTRACT

Up to now, online video games have become popular. In the past thirty years, the video game industry has made great strides. One of the main driving forces is the social interaction between offline and online game players. In this era, massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG) provide an environment for millions of players in a virtual environment to interact with other players. Some online games have become a social experience and are considered e-sports in some countries. Unlike offline games, online video games enable users to share the experience of a virtual society and enjoy the collaboration of most activities. At the same time, addiction, mobility, loneliness and depression are the popular research topics within the influence of online games. There are limited resources available on the relationship between online gaming and social experiences in the real world, especially in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, this study determined the influence of social experience on playing time in online video games, and determined which social elements in online video games affect players' real lives. This study uses a quantitative method, and uses

a questionnaire survey method to collect data. The results obtained show that the influence of social behavior on online games is related to behavior in the real world.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Games are becoming more and more social, which shows the importance of understanding the experience and potential results of games. Numerous empirical studies also prove the positive aspects of social games, and study the role of online communities and game tribes in motivating online games [1-3].

Grouping is an in-game activity that can gather multiple players on the same server into a temporary collaborative team. Suppose these players share the same alliance or tribal faction, and these players cannot communicate with opponent's faction. The group can be formed according to the player's experience level or the mode of the selected game in order to gain the in-game experience together or to meet other short-term goals.

Sherlock [4] studied the social networking functions of and Blizzard's rhetorical stance toward grouping, and pointed out that Blizzard focuses on the social benefits of making new friends, which can be encouraged by reducing the difficulty of group games in some cases as compared to solo play [5]. Grouping is defined according to the division of labor, which depends on players using "different but complementary" skills, and successful negotiations enable players to work toward their goals more effectively [6, 7].

Groups also consist of social conventions. In social routines, participants will explicitly and implicitly evaluate the value of their group experience, and coordinate future actions [6]. These evaluation forms are distributed and merged in the extended grouping type ecology outside the game so that players can read the text to understand what constitutes a "good" grouping and how to identify possible problems with the grouping [4, 5].

Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing (MMORPG) is the latest Internet-only gaming experience. These are usually expressed in large, complex, detailed and evolving worlds based on different narrative environments such as Everquest (heroic fantasy), Anarchy Online (futuristic science fiction) and Motor City Online (classic car racing) [2]. In these games, non-player characters (NPC) are designed with advanced artificial intelligence (AI), which provides a rich and unpredictable environment for players to experience the virtual world through their own "player characters" [2]. The essence of these games is to provide a rich 3D world composed of millions of players. The game format includes visual and auditory, which is a fully developed multiplayer game world with advanced and detailed worlds [2].

The most popular and largest MMORPG is Sony Online Entertainment's EverQuest, which is reported to be played by more than 400,000 people [8]. The players must log in to the server hosting the Everquest world in order to play Everquest, whereby Sony currently supports 44 servers, each running a full version

of Everquest World. These servers can usually support approximately 2,000 players simultaneously. Although the latest five servers are located in Europe, the remaining 39 servers are located in the United States [8]. The game allows user to explore various identities and characteristics. In addition, the identity can change based on race, occupation, and consistency of the gods. As a result, each character can play a race that is kind or evil, friendly or unfriendly, and a profession that is seen as a team player or more lonely [8].

In addition, the player's decision making will directly affect the game, because the NPC will respond to the character's personal data. For example, the dwarf faction of the "player character" troll is along with the dwarf NPC, so initially it will be considered ignored (KOS) [8]. However, the faction can be improved by taking actions, which in the eyes of the dwarves makes the player the exception rather than the rule [8]. When the player enters the virtual world, social communication will be displayed through text on the screen. This can be done privately or in the "zone" (including all players in that zone) [8]. Zones are different regions in the game on the same server. Inter-regional communication is possible through guilds and private text messages. In addition, due to the visual richness of the game, it can be a visual "emotion" that expresses emotional states through gestures such as kneeling, saluting, and waving. In these independent worlds, various interactions between players (within the parameters of reasonable behavior) produce behavior controlled by rules [8].

Although computer games are now widely regarded as the mainstream of cultural entertainment, they are no longer just a part of youth culture, but very little is known about the psychology of online games, even basic data is scarce [8]. For example, the relationship between personality and game time has received little attention. The existing data show that, in general, online fantasy games are particularly associated with introversion, reduced compassion attention, and low awareness of female identity [9, 10]. While, Griffiths' report on the impact of online games shows harmful effects, although these studies focus on excessive use of online games, rather than occasional or regular use [11].

With the development of technology, future online social games are expected to show rich visual effects. The virtual online world will become an opportunity to explore the psychology of players in this new type of entertainment and the psychology of the world itself [4, 5]. Therefore, this study aims to determine the impact of social experience on the playing time of online video games and identify which social elements in online video games affect players' real lives.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology is the name of the methods and ways through which a research process is going to be completed and measured. This study is performed via pluralistic (mixed) research approach (quantitative and qualitative). It comprises of

distributing a questionnaire to a random sample of 100 customers online and offline in Jeddah selected randomly.

### **2.1 Quantitative**

Quantitative research refers to the systematic empirical investigation of social phenomena via statistical, mathematical or numerical data or computational techniques. It involves various research instruments to collect data such as questionnaires etc. In this study, quantitative data will include data collected from a sample of at least 100 people in Jeddah.

### **2.2 Qualitative**

Qualitative research is a method of inquiry employed in many different academic disciplines, traditionally in the social sciences, but also in market research and further contexts. Qualitative researchers aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior. As in this study, desk research was conducted to gather information and literature review from various online and offline sources on prior researches on the same or/and similar topic.

### **2.3 Designing the Questionnaire**

Questionnaire survey is a method to stimulate the feelings, beliefs, experiences, opinions or attitudes of certain individual samples. As a data collection tool, it can be structured or unstructured. Poorly designed questionnaires may be the biggest source of non-sampling error (direct or indirect). Questionnaires can affect the response rate obtained in the survey, the quality of the responses obtained, and therefore the conclusions drawn from the survey results.

The advantage of this questionnaire is that it is more practical and can collect a lot of information from a large number of people in a relatively cost-effective manner in a short time. Next, anyone can be investigated without affecting its validity and reliability. Likewise, the results of questionnaires can often be quantified quickly and easily by researchers and software packages. Compared with other forms of research, the obtained data can be analyzed more "scientifically" and objectively. After the data is quantified, it can be used to compare and contrast other studies, and can be used to measure changes. In addition, positivists believe that quantitative data can be used to create new theories and test the existing hypotheses.

The questionnaire is structured and consists of 10 multiple-choice questions. The multiple-choice questionnaire allows participants to focus on the content and shorten processing time.

### **2.4 Sample Size and Population**

Sampling can be defined as the method or the technique consisting of selection for the study or research. Sampling method is the process or the method of drawing a definite number of the individuals, cases or the observations from a particular target, selecting part of a total group for investigation. Sampling has the following advantages: very accurate, inherently economical, very reliable, high applicability to

different measurements and it takes less time. In cases, when the target is very large, then the sampling method is the only practical method for collecting the data. This study assigned questionnaires to a random sample of 100 online and offline customers randomly selected in Jeddah.

### 3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study successfully collected the results of a questionnaire survey of 100 participants in Jeddah. This study contains only one demographic question, namely the age of the participants. Figure 1 illustrates that majority of the participants about 74% are from 21-30 years old, followed by 18% of the participants are from 10-20 years old. There are 4% each from age group 31-40 and 41-50 years. In Figure 2, there are 68% of the participants are playing video game while the remaining 32% are not playing video game.

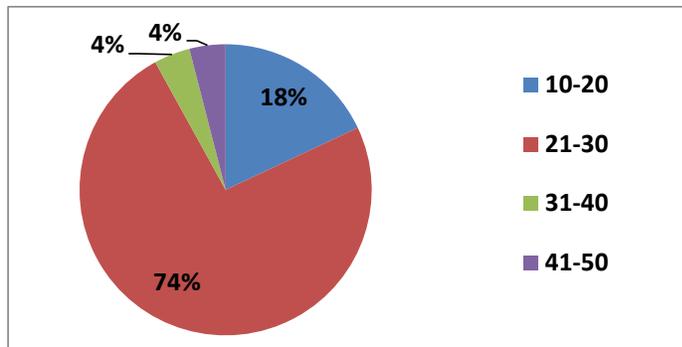


Figure 1: The age of the participants

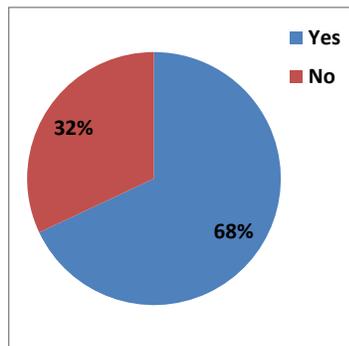


Figure 2: Participants playing video games

From the 68% of the participants who play the video game, 65% of participants used mobile devices to play games according to Figure 3. While there are 32% of the participants among the 68% of the participants who play the video game used

PlayStation to enjoy their game. In addition, among 68% of participants who play video games, only 2% and 1% use computers and Xbox, respectively.

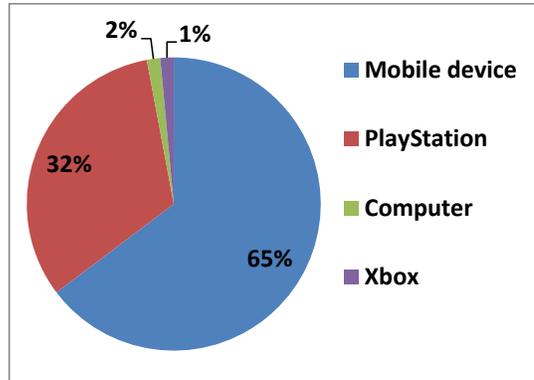


Figure 3: Devices used to play video game

Figure 4 demonstrates the participant's preferences for social games or personal games. Most participants prefer social games, accounting for 64%, and personal games accounting for 36%. According to Figure 5, among the 64% of participants who like social games, 37% and 30% play war games and logic games respectively. Besides that, about 22% of participants play action and adventure games, 6% play sports games, and 5% play racing games.

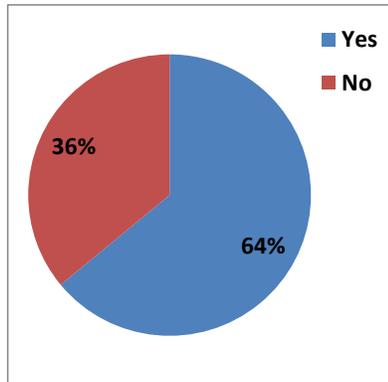


Figure 4: Prefer social games more than individual games

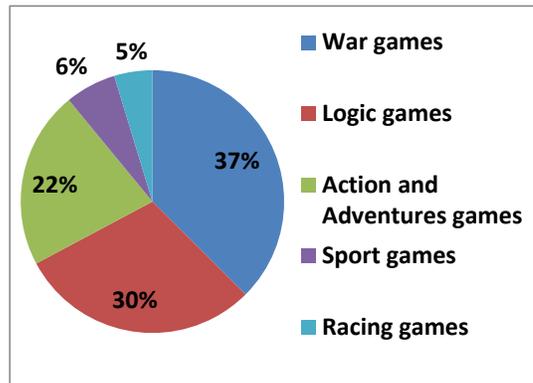


Figure 5: Types of social games

Figure 6 depicts the duration of the participants playing video games. About 36% of the participants did not play video games, and the remaining 64% played video games between 1 and 12 hours. According to Figure 6, majority about 37% of participants play video games between 1-2 hours, then 17% of participants play video games between 3-4 hours, and 8% of participants play video games between 5-7 hours. In addition, a few 2% of participants will play video games between 8 and 12 hours.

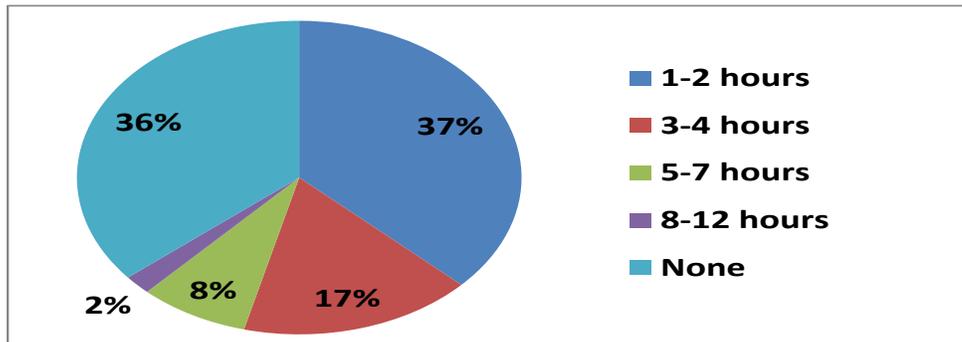


Figure 6: Duration of playing video games

The next question is about the potential of social games to meet new people. Figure 7 indicates that majority about 46% of the participants considered that they might have the opportunity to meet new people through social games. There are 37% of participants believe that social games can make new friends. While, only 17% of participants does not believe that social games can make new friends.

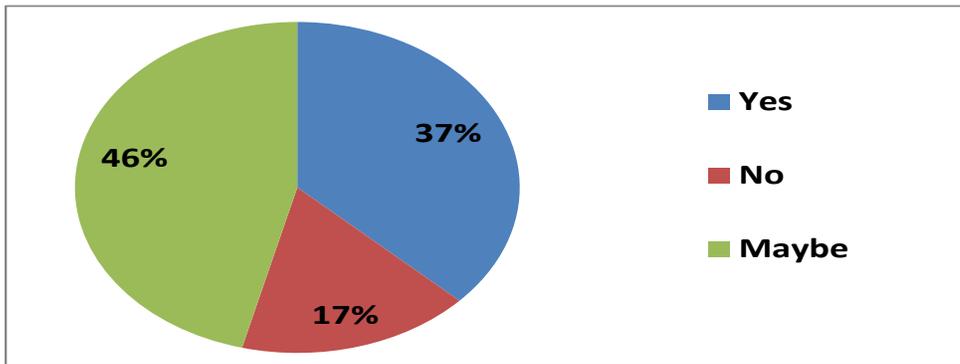


Figure 7: The potential of social games to meet new people

Figure 8 demonstrates the influences of social gaming in several aspects namely publishing their games on social media, emotional impact and purchase impact. First, the approximately 26% of participants claimed that they posted their games on social media, while 74% of the participants did not post their games on social media. Next, majority of 76% of the participants claimed that playing social games would change their mood, while 24% of participants were not emotionally affected when they played social games. Besides that, about 36% of participants claimed that social video games affect their purchase of goods in real life, while 64% of participants disagree that social video games affect their purchase of goods in real life.

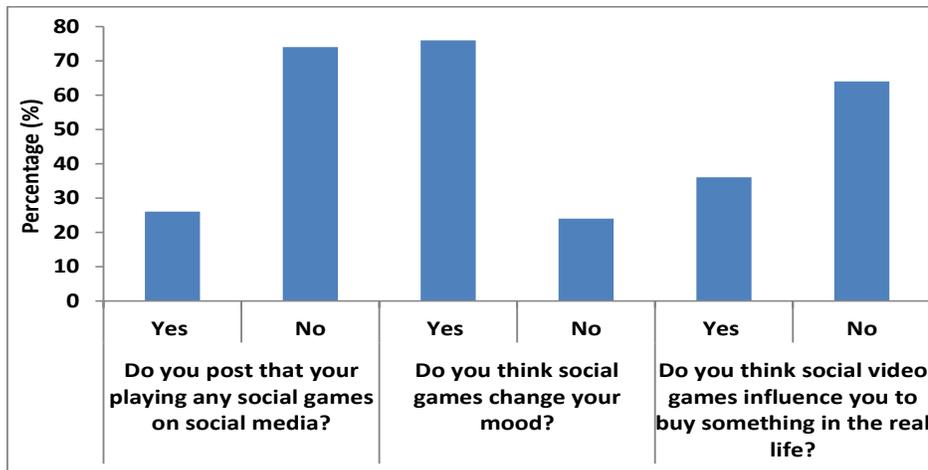


Figure 8: The influences of social gaming

All in all, this study collected survey data from 100 participants to determine the phenomenon of online video games in Jeddah. The study also identified the potential of social games to meet new people, as well as the influence of online video games, such as posting their games on social media, emotional impact and purchase impact.

Majority of the participants in the survey are young adult age between 21-30 years. Approximately two-thirds of participants are playing online video games and most of them using their mobile device and PlayStation. At the same time, more than half of the participants prefer social games rather than personal games. The participants' favorite social games are war games, logic games and action adventure games. Other social games, such as sports games and racing games are less preferred by participants.

Most participants who play online social games limit the game time to less than two hours, and some of them spend between three and four hours, also there is minority participants spend more than four hours. The potential of social games to meet new people received average feedback from participants.

The results of the influence of social games showed that about a quarter of participants posted their games on social media. Next, social gaming has caused nearly three-quarters of participants to experience emotional impact. Nonetheless, about one-third of participants admitted that they were influenced by social video games and bought goods in real life.

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this research is to explore the influence of social behavior in online games on behavior in the real world. The results obtained show that online social games have a certain degree of influence on participants, especially experiencing emotional shocks, followed by purchase shocks and publishing their games on social media. In addition, the results also reflect the communication with other players and as the role of virtual humans allow them to make friends in social games. As a result it is concluded that the influence of social behavior in online games is related to behavior in the real world.

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