Thesis Proposal – Existence of Fantasy:
Social Identity, Addiction and Technical Communication Among Online Role Playing Games

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Introduction

Digital technology has indeed broken barriers which divide imagination and reality. This is particularly true with regard to video games because they simply take the concept of fantasy a level higher compared to a film or novel. This is done by allowing users to influence a false reality directly. Role playing through online games even allow their players to create their personal identities, adapting to a new and different world. Despite the increase in visual complexity in these online environments, it seems that the internet has continued to be attached to the written language. It serves as the gateway towards understanding online games from tutorials which require users to directly interact with the computer to different social forums were various players meet and work with each other in order to construct more vivid fantasies. The gaming industry, in general, has achieved success, in terms of finance, particularly taking into consideration the fact that just less than 50 years ago, these games were just shaded pixels that move on the screen. Changes rapidly happened. In fact, in 2011, consumers have spent a total of $24.75 billion on games alone, as well as with other related accessories for famous games (Arthur, 2012). Seeing the way that it is currently moving now, it is clear that the industry will continue to grow in the future, particularly because current generation of modern gamers have already grown older, and newer players enter the market. Since the gaming culture has turned out to be so prevalent, worries and concerns regarding the effects of this industry on players range from the implications that video games result to violence and aggression, as well as potential health risks on the part of players as they spend all their time in playing games when they could have used the time in engaging in social and physical activity in the real world. This has been termed as 'gaming addiction' (Gallahan, 2014). Stories similar to this only result to anxiety regarding gamers, applying to both the actual gamers, and even non-gamers. As such, it has become more apparent that this concern needs further examination for the overall health and well-being of the community.

For this thesis, I will focus the research on the specific use of language in the popular MMORPG (Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game), with particular focus on the World of Warcraft. The intention is to discover whether problematic and excessive gaming can indeed, lead to gaming addiction, and whether the introduced technical communication platform used in the game, as well as the forums either allow users to spend more time playing the game, or if it tries to warn and attempts users about the potential dangers of detaching their real lives in lieu of their virtual identities. I will also consult both technical and rhetorical communication theories together with some psychological research performed regarding gaming addiction in order to further discover the potential inherent messages within the game and in the public forums, particularly those which may encourage some harmful habits. It is the obligation of the developers of the game as ethical communicators to pass on information regarding the possible physical and mental health risks that are associated with prolonged exposure to these games in the same manner in which casinos should also provide information regarding the dangers that are evident in gambling addiction (Rajoya, 1999).

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Problem Statement

Addiction to video games has become a pertinent issue which has been associated with the spread and popularization of the gaming culture all over the world. Studies from academic and popular sources have also highlighted the issue as a struggle of classification and definition. Treatment is mentioned hardly, and when it is mentioned, the descriptions are not that specific. Psychologists, scholars, and physicians have performed research regarding video game addiction, noting that it is a behavioral addiction which is based on surveys and case studies that are related to the issue (Gnomer, 2012).

References

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