Users and Uses of Multiplayer Games and Community Activities

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Community Network Game (CNG)

R&D project, built around Massively Multiplayer Online Games – real need for collaboration

The project aims to develop systems and applications which will:

- promote social interaction and support community activities;
  - IGIT In-game Graphical Integration Technology
- tools available in game; without changing the game code
- embed user generated content in MMOGs;
  - P2P architecture for content distribution (e.g., P2P live video streaming)

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[Logos of various organizations interacting]
Users and Uses of Multiplayer Games and Community Activities

**MМОGs are persistent gaming world able to support hundred of thousands of players simultaneously**

Source: PWC 2010

**Video games are becoming more popular everyday**

Source: iDate (in ICO Partners 2009)

**Growth of Entertainment & Media segments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>% CAGR 2010-2014</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video Games</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV Subscriptions and License Fees</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filmed Entertainment</td>
<td>6.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumer and Educational Books</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business-to-Business</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recorded Music</td>
<td>0.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>0.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumer Magazines</td>
<td>0.0</td>
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User needs research to understand gamers’…
- In-game communication requirements
  - *Why, what, how, where, when …*
- Interest in CNG functionalities

Two research methods:
- Semi-structured interviews
- Online questionnaire

Initial stakeholder feedback
- panel discussion with industry experts
Interviews

- 17 interviews
  - 10 male, 7 female
  - age 18 to 41 years

- Game platforms
  - PC, consoles and handheld

- Range of games
  - single and multiplayer
  - RPG, FPS, casual, mix-genre
Motivation to game

- Hardware/device (affects game/player choice)
- **Time** to invest
- Boredom
- Fun
- **Challenge** (process driven)
- Visible **rewards** (end goal driven)
- Escapism
- Promise of **social interaction**

"The thing that keeps me coming back is that [...] I’ve got friends, not real life friends, but in-game friends that you like to arrange to do activities with them [...] it’s like, ‘OK we can do this together’, as a group of us, you can accomplish something."

(P11, male, 18 years)
Why play socially?

- Game enrichment
  (cf. computer play mode)
- Promotes status (achievements)
- Social image
- ‘Feel good’ factor of sharing
- Place where to hang out
- Build relationships

“I like multiplayer because I find AI a bit stupid in some computer games. So it’s quite nice to challenge other people and also talk to them as well” (P3, male, 21 years)

“It’s quite satisfying knowing you’re helping other people, and if I help, I’d expect someone to help me, it’s like vice versa – I treat others how I’d like to be treated.” (P11, male, 18 years)
Support game progress
- Strategy, plans, intentions
- Direct information
- Walk through, guides
- Tips, hints
- Achievements (stats)
- Identity (‘gamer’)

Enhance relationships/game experience
- Affect, emotions
- Entertainment, humour
- Performance (show off)
- Mods, cheats, add-ons, extensions
- Out-game interests

Text chat (IM: e.g. Facebook chat)
Voice chat (Skype, Ventrilo, Xfire)
Emoticon, action keycode, macros
In-game achievement displays
Content capture (screen shots, Fraps)
Video tools (YouTube)
Forum
Game websites/wiki
Search engines (text/video guides, reviews)
Polling/voting
Community tools (Xfire, Steam)
Frustrations

- **Reduced immersion** in the game
  - Over use of UGC (resize/minimising game)
  - Speed; game experience; ads/pop-ups
- **Log-ins**
- **Difficulties using applications**: poor usability
- **Time**
- **Poor quality control** of UGC
- **Privacy/security**

“That [UGC] gives you a real life experience of a game so in a way it’s the benefit of it, but it also needs to be used quite moderately because sometimes it can ruin the game environment.”

(P6, male, 31 years)

“I find voice chat distracts me and it never seems to work properly anyway […] I find when people have voice chat they spend more time trying to make it work than actually chatting.”

(P17, female, 29 years)
Unmet needs

- Access/distribution of content **without game disruption**
- **Easier/Convenient communication**
  - social and co-presence, access
- **More customisation and control**
- One stop social and in-game **information space** for gamers
- **More personalisation and creativity**
  - e.g., recording, audio mixing, editing, art
- Applications that are **easier** to use (low effort)
- Match-making/similar gamers
- Opportunity to **fill ‘waiting’ times** (travel)
To quantify multiplayer behaviour, activities and interests interim data (now >1000)
- 79% male, 21% female
- mean age 29 years

Interest in 21 community functions
- 7 Video related functions
- 4 Customisation related functions
- 5 Communication related functions
- 5 Other functions
Multiplayer/MMO gamers

Categorising gamers’ levels of online (massively) multiplay

For the **57%** of the sample who play multiplayer/MMO games for **more than half** or **all** of their gaming time...
Interest in community related game functions across high multiplayer/MMO

High MPO/MMO: Interest in CNG functions

- Complex game statistics
- Availability of players across games
- Skill matching
- IM applications
- Built-in/in-game web browsing
- Pause/rewind live video game action
- Voice chat applications
- Video/audio record game play
- Click and share video
- Blogs and forums
- Create voting polls
- Chat room applications
- Live video broadcast/streaming
- Play recorded video
- Edit and annotate recorded video
- Create/insert 3D objects/textures
- Collaborative video creations
- Personalise character in video editing
- Create 3D object/texture collaboratively
- Exchange 3D objects/textures
- Video chat applications

Percentage of sample n=102

- Green: Somewhat/very interested
- Red: Not at all interested
Frustrations

Main reason for frustration: Minimising/resizing the game screen

Additional Application and Tools: Reasons for Frustration

- Minimise/resize game screen
- Technical Instability
- Reduced Immersion
- Pop-ups
- Security (Trojans/viruses)
- Usability of applications
- Visibility of game screen
- Too many chat channels
- Privacy
- Never used additional...
- No frustrations
- Coordinating team/guild...
- Too few chat channels
- Other

Percentage of Medium and High MPO/MMO players (n=152)
Initial reaction from the industry

- Acknowledged importance of community building tools
- Gamers drawn by the opportunities to socialise/share

Considerations:
- Maintain illusion is critical
- Gamers included – tools supporting user feedback
- Versatile service – personalisation
- Live video streaming
Key findings:

- amongst hi-MMOG players there is generally high interest in (need for) **improved tools to support communication and community activities** around their MMOG use;
- these needs are currently met through **standalone apps used by gamers, running in the background** to the MMOG (e.g., msn or Google talk for text chat; Skype or Ventrilo for VOIP, fraps for video capture; web browser for accessing forums);
- the **biggest frustrations** reported by MMOG players are delays and instability caused by the need to **minimise the game screen**/switch to an external application for community tools;
- **CNG is addressing a real need for gamers**, and gamers’ biggest frustration in accessing social tools currently.
- Next steps... **Segmentation** of gamers (attitudes/motivations, device, game genre, online activity, game expenditure) to better understand potential users of CNG
Thanks to:

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- the EU – ICT Programme FP7
- NEM organisers and sponsors, and
- you, for listening.

For more technical information visit the CNG stand here at NEM!